

**THE “DAY OF THE LORD” AS
RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JUDGEMENT
AND SALVATION IN THE “BOOK OF THE
TWELVE”.**

By

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SUMMARY OF THESIS

The earliest written reference to the “Day of the Lord” is found in the book of Amos. Throughout the prophets, especially the Minor Prophets, the term becomes something of a *Leitmotiv*, either in those words or in abbreviations such as “that day”. The “Day of the Lord” was to be one of judgement on the enemies of Yahweh. Such judgement in Israelite thought applied to Israelite enemies. To be an enemy of Israel was to be an enemy of God since the Israelites were God’s chosen people. Shockingly, Amos included both Israel and Judah amongst his list of the nations God had declared he would punish.

Judgement implied God’s wrath and punishment. This is variously depicted metaphorically as warfare, locust invasions, drought, fire and seismic events.

Nations to be punished were those who warred against the Israelite kingdoms. Either they had been part of the Israelite mini-empire under David and Solomon and had broken political covenant, or, like Assyria and Babylon, they had practised cruelty against the people of God and against their other subject nations.

The kingdoms of Judah and Israel were to be punished because they had broken the Sinai Covenant by becoming involved in worshipping images of the gods of the surrounding nations. Symbols of these gods were even set up in the Jerusalem Temple. They involved fertility cults which often practised temple prostitution. The Sinai laws were further disobeyed by the Israelites, who ignored ill-treatment of the poor, widows, orphans and aliens.

While Amos was aware of the inevitability of judgement, others, like Hosea, were aware of God’s love. God longed for his people to repent and receive blessing.

This created a tension in Israelite theology between the need for judgement, which God’s greatness and holiness required and God’s love, which desires to forgive and save. True repentance will bring forgiveness and salvation. Punishment may have to be endured, for example the Babylonian exile, but God will lead his people to salvation.

An analysis of judgement and salvation being reconciled on the “Day of the Lord” is first made by looking at the Minor Prophets in a historical and literary context and then how redaction sought to form them into a unified “Book of the Twelve”. In doing so, various critical methods, especially Form Criticism and Canonical Criticism are discussed.

In the “Book of the Twelve” the “Day of the Lord” proves to be the occasion when judgement and salvation occur. Judgement is necessary since it leads to acknowledgement of sin and repentance. Only the innocent and the repentant are saved. This involves a remnant of Israel and, later also applies to a gentile remnant which acknowledges YHWH.

Eschatologically, the “Day of the Lord”, at first, seems imminent. Later it is seen as a future event under God’s control. At first it is believed the “Day” will usher in destruction of Israel’s enemies, the re-establishment of a united kingdom under a

descendant of David and an everlasting time of peace and prosperity, free from control by enemy nations, from apostasy and social injustice.

After the defeats of the Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century by Assyria and of Judah in the 6th by the Babylonians, YHWH is understood as being the God of all nations who will use powerful (and sinful) nations to punish his people, while at the same time preparing their punishment at the hands of other nations. So Assyria is conquered by Babylon and Babylon by the Chaldeans.

For many, after the return from Babylonian exile, salvation seems to have been accomplished. The failure of expectations after the return leads to the “Day of the Lord” being seen as an even more distant event. It begins to take on apocalyptic overtones and becomes a moment at the end of time when there is judgement with salvation for the faithful and repentant. God’s eternal reign is inaugurated. Belief in salvation is beginning to move from deliverance being part of earthly life to other-worldly existence with God .

The seeming failure of the prophetic earthly ideal may have led to the end of prophecy as a recorded scriptural genre and to the redaction of that genre in post-prophetic times to bring the “Book of the Twelve” into line with contemporary deuteronomistic and priestly outlooks.

The Israelite view of the “Day of the Lord” has become a belief that on that “Day” there will be judgement for those who have not repented and at the same time salvation for a remnant which has either remained faithful or has repented. It will usher in an eternal time of divine blessing for the saved who will be a new Israel. Sin leads to God’s earthly punishment. If there is no repentance, judgement becomes eternal.

OPSOMMING VAN TESIS

In die boek van Amos vind ons die eerste verwysing na die “Dag van die Here”, wat in die Klein Profete ietwat van ‘n *Leitmotiv* word. Op die “Dag van die Here” sou sy vyande geoordeel word. Vroeër het die Israeliete gedink dat “daardie dag” die oomblik van veroordeling van hul vyande sou wees. Omdat hulle Jahwe se uitverkore volk was, was hul vyande sekerlik ook Jahwe s’n. Dit was ontstellend dat Amos Israel en Judea in sy lys van Jahwe se vyande ingesluit het.

Oordeel impliseer God se toorn en straf. Metafories word straf onder meer as oorlog, sprinkaanplae, droogte, brand en aardbewings uitgebeeld.

Die volke wat teen die koninkryke van Israel en Judea oorlog gemaak het, sou gestraf word. Van hierdie nasies het verbonde, wat ten tye van die ryke van Dawid en Salomo gesluit is, verbreek. Die wreedheid van die Assiriërs en Babiloniërs teenoor hul onderdane was welbekend. Daarvoor moes hulle gestraf word.

Israel en Judea moes gestraf word omdat hulle die Sinaiverbond geskend het. Hulle het die gode van buurstate aanbid, en afgode van hierdie gode is selfs in die Tempel opgerig. Baie was gode van vrugbaarheid, en hul aanbidding het tempelprostitusie ingesluit. Die Sinaiwette, wat die mishandeling van armes, weduwees, weeskinders en vreemdelinge veroorloof het, is deur die Israeliete verder verontagsaam. Vir Amos was straf onvermydelik. Andere, soos Hosea, was meer bewus van Jahwe se liefde. Jahwe het verlang dat Israel berou sou toon, sodat hy hulle weer kon seën.

‘n Grote en heilige God moet sonde veroordeel. Terselfdertyd wou ‘n liefdevolle God vir sy onderdane vergifnis en verlossing verleen. Ware berou sou daartoe lei, al moes hulle die straf van ballingskap in Babilon verduur.

Die versoening van oordeel en verlossing op die “Dag van die Here” word in hierdie tesis eers in ‘n historiese en letterkundige studie van die Klein Profete geanaliseer. Daarna probeer ons verstaan hoe ‘n redaksieproses hulle in ‘n “Boek van die Twaalf” byeengebring het. Etlike kritiese metodes, veral Vorm- en Kanonkritiek, word ook bespreek aan die hand van hierdie ondersoek.

In die “Boek van die Twaalf” is die “Dag van die Here” die oomblik wanneer oordeel en versoening plaasvind. Oordeel is nodig want dit lei tot skulderkenning en daarna berou.. Slegs die onskuldiges en die wat berou het, word verlos. Die verlosdes behels net ‘n gedeelte van Israel. Mettertyd verwys dit ook na ‘n gedeelte van die heidene wat Jahwe erken.

In eskatalogiese terme word eers geglo dat die “Dag van die Here” naby is. Later word dit as ‘n toekomstige gebeurtenis, wat onder God se beheer is, beskou. Oorspronklik is dit ‘n “Dag” wanneer Israel se vyande verpletter word. Daarna sal ‘n herenigde koninkryk onder een van Dawid se nakomelinge heringestel word. Ewige vrede en voorspoed, sonder buitelandse beheer en binnelandse geloofversaking en onregverdigheid, sal heers.

Nadat die koninkryke van Israel in die 8ste eeu VC deur die Assiriërs en Juda in die 6de deur Babilon oorrumpel is, word Jahwe beskou as ‘n God van alle nasies. Hy

gebruik magtige lande om sy eie mense te straf. Terselfdertyd beplan hy die straf van hierdie lande weens hulle sondes. So word Assirië deur Babilon, en Babilon deur die Chaldeërs, oorheers.

Baie Israeliete het eers die terugkeer uit Babiloniese ballingskap as verlossing beskou, maar van hulle verwagtings het niks gekom nie. Die “Dag van die Here” word nou as iets in die onbepaalde toekoms gesien. Dit het apokaliptiese tendense begin toon – ‘n finale oomblik wanneer veroordeling plaasvind en daar verlossing is vir diegetroues en dié wat berou toon. God se ewige koninkryk word ingestel. Geloof in aardse verlossing begin verskuif na ‘n geloof in die hiernamaal waar God sal regeer.

Na Maleagi het die profetiese genre doodgeloop. Die “Boek van die Twaalf” word in lyn met kontemporêre deuteronomistiese en priesterlike beskouings geredigeer.

Onder die Israeliete het ‘n gedagte ontwikkel dat die “Dag van die Here” ‘n “Dag” sal wees wanneer dié wat nie berou toon nie, geoordeel sal word. Terselfdertyd sal daar verlossing wees vir ‘n oorblyfsel wat getrou en berouvol is. Dit sal die begin wees van ‘n ewige tydperk van God se seën vir dié wat gesalf is. Hulle sal ‘n nuwe Israel uitmaak.. Sonde lei tot straf. As ‘n mens nie berou nie, duur God se oordeel ‘n ewigheid.

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“THE ‘DAY OF THE LORD’ AS RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION IN THE ‘BOOK OF THE TWELVE’ “

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the thesis will attempt to set out the approach to the topic and to define the basic terminology used in the title and required by the method of approach.

1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The title poses the question as to how the “Day of the Lord” in the “Book of the Twelve” can reconcile judgement and salvation – concepts which, to some extent, may be regarded as opposites.

To show links between judgement and salvation it is necessary to move outside ‘The Book of the Twelve’ to understand how such concepts were linked in Israelite understanding of God’s dealing with his people in their history. In doing so, covenant, law, “hen” and “hesed” need briefly to be looked at.

There will be an introduction to the “Day of the Lord” and its associated concepts of eschatology and apocalyptic. An outline will be given of the terms prophecy and the “Book of the Twelve.”

1.2. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.2.1 JUDGEMENT

“Wrath”, “anger” and “retribution” are all suggestive of judgement. Amongst the early prophets, the wicked would suffer and the good would be rewarded. Since it was apparent that the good sometimes suffered, later prophets pushed the “Day of the Lord” and judgement forward to an undisclosed time [Hos.1:5] when there would be a new age of blessing and restoration, in other words salvation. Later thought moved from earthly restoration of justice to a cosmic last judgement, when the living and the dead would be judged (Light 2000: 1153 – 1155). As with judgement, it became eschatologically and then apocalyptically pushed forward in time (Light 2000:1154).

Modern use of the term “judgement” tends to have purely legal connotations. In Israelite society, divine and human law were one. To break covenant with God was to bring judgement in the form of divine retribution; the Law itself was part of the Mosaic covenant. In applying the Law, Israelite judges would be pronouncing God’s judgement. Justice is part of God’s nature, is an aspect of his mercy and his relationship with humanity. In obeying the Law people were showing to others justice and the divine-human relationship (Brown: 2000 754 – 755)

Judgement then can be seen as the consequence of breaking God’s Law and Covenant, which required fulfilment of one’s duty to God and one’s neighbour. God (Yahweh) is the ultimate judge not only of Israel, but of the whole world, of individuals as well as nations (Mafico 1992:1106). Even if God’s judgement, at first sight, seemed unfair, causing the just to suffer, in eschatological terms the just would be rewarded and the unjust punished (Brown 2000: 754 – 75).

1.2.2 SALVATION

The people of Israel were aware that God had saved them often. God's greatest act of salvation was his freeing of the nation from bondage in Egypt and his accompanying them through the wilderness, despite frequent rebellion on their part, to the Promised Land. When the nation and their rulers remained faithful, they understood Him to have fought on their side and enabled them to defeat their enemies, frequently against formidable odds. In doing so, God had fulfilled his side of the Covenant agreements with His people. In the midst of the prophetic age, God freed his people from their Babylonian exile. However, Israel continued to remain subservient to foreign powers and the hope of salvation began to take on an increasingly eschatological and apocalyptic nature (Light 2000 1153 – 1155).

We can thus define Salvation as God's saving of an individual or his people from situations in which the person or nation is unable to find freedom. It requires obedience to Law and Covenant, particularly the practice of social justice, which ensures the release of God's "hen" and "hesed", bringing "salom" (peace) into the life of individual and nation (Ps.29:11; 55:18). At first salvation was seen as occurring within history, but later took on an eschatological and apocalyptic form (Light 2000: 1154).

1.2.3 COVENANT

The Israelite understanding of Covenant is thought to have come from suzerainty treaties between more and less powerful kings whereby in return for protection the less powerful obtained protection against enemies by the more powerful in return for certain duties. Failure to fulfil these duties would involve prescribed penalties, the most serious of which might be forced abdication by the subservient king or even destruction of the kingdom.

Obedience to the terms of the treaty would bring friendship and blessings. The gods, particularly the gods of the superior power, were invoked and copies of the treaty were kept in the major temples of the gods of both nations (Anderson 1988: 98 -1010). Thus, apart from human sanction, covenants had a divine authority.

In God's Covenants with humanity, and especially with his people Israel, God is the superior partner. Obedience will bring divine protection and salvation, disobedience God's anger and punishment, even destruction. In God's Covenant history with humankind we can look at five major Covenants.

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden which was his to care for and to use to satisfy his needs provided he did not eat from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Disobedience led to Adam and Eve being cast out of paradise to a life of labour suffering and death (Gen 2:7 – 3:24).

With Noah God initiates two Covenants. In the first, before the flood, he promises that, if Noah and his family enter the ark with the required number of creatures, they will all be saved, although the rest of sinful humanity will be destroyed by the coming flood (Gen 6:18-22). The second Covenant is in the form of a reward for Noah's obedience. Noah's descendants and those of all the animals will be spared for ever from a like universal cataclysm (Gen 9:8-17). Obedience by a faithful small

number or remnant brings salvation not only for the obedient few but also for humanity.

With Abraham, God initiates one of the great Old Testament Covenants. If Abraham is faithful and worships Him, He will give to Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan as their own possession and through him will bless all nations (Gen.12:3; 15:8, 18; 17:6 – 8). The circumcision of Abraham, his male followers and descendants will be the sign and seal of the Covenant. As a further sign of the beginning of a new relationship with God, his name is changed from Abram to Abraham (Gen.7:5, 11). The covenant will be maintained with Isaac and his descendants for ever Gen. 17: 19).

Obedience to the Covenant will ensure its continuance and God's "hesed" – mercy and love. The greatness of God's love springs from his generous, unasked-for approach to humanity, especially in view of his previous experience of humankind's response to Covenants (Murray 1970: 265; Lillback 1988:173).

On Mount Sinai, God sealed with Moses, His chosen leader of the descendants of Abraham, the great Covenant involving The Law. From now on they would be a people chosen by God from amongst all other peoples (Ex 2:25; 4:37; 7:6-8; Hos 13:5; Am 3:1-8), a redeemed people (Ex 6:6-8; Deut 7:8;), God's children (Ex 4:22-23; Deut 8:5; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:6, 2:10). The human response to this divinely given relationship of "hesed" is to be obedient to God's commandments, The Law (Murray 1970: 266). From such obedience spiritual and material blessings will flow. Disobedience will bring God's curse (Ex 19:5; Lev 26:1 – 13; Deut 29:9).

In addition to his Covenants with Abraham and Moses, God covenanted with David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne for ever (2 Sam 7:12-17;13:5; Ps 89:3,4,26 – 27; 132:11 – 18). David had been chosen by God as king in succession to Saul. Unlike Saul he proved obedient to God's commandments and able to acknowledge his faults. The Covenant with David came to be interpreted as a Messianic Covenant especially in Isaiah (42:1-6; 49:8) and also in Malachi (3:1).

Although God, as shown above, seems to have made successive Covenants, they are all linked and become one. Each in turn applies to successive generations, binding all generations in one (Gen 6:18; 17:7; Ex 2:24; 6:4-5; 20:4-12; Lev 24:42; 2 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:16-17) (Lillback 1988:173 – 174).

1.2.4 LAW (TORAH)

The basis of God's Covenant with Moses was The Law given on Mount Sinai. The core of The Law and its development was the Ten Commandments (Ex 20) which balanced duty to God against consideration of neighbour (Lev 19:18; Ex 21:1 – 23:9). Failure to worship God or consider the rights of one's neighbour was apostasy and would bring divine punishment as happened to those who were killed for worshipping the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain with God (Ex 32:25 – 29; ch.35).

Disobedience to God's commands issued through the chosen leader of his people would also bring divine punishment as in the case of the putting to death of Achan and his family who kept articles which had been placed under a divine ban after the fall of Jericho (Jos 7). Blasphemy brought a death sentence by stoning (Lev 14:14 – 16). Sexual sins such as adultery, bestiality and homosexuality brought moral

judgement not only on the perpetrator but on the nation as well (Lev 18:19 – 30). Such offences required the death penalty to purge society of its guilt (e.g. Deut 22:22).

For less serious offences, sacrifices could be offered to restore the relationship of the individual and the nation with God. This could involve a breach of faith with God (Lev 5:14 – 19) or unwitting sin (Lev 4:1 – 10).

Being guilty of harming one's neighbour required both making restoration to the neighbour as well as sacrifice to God (Lev 6:1-7). In order to salve the relationship with God and the community, a person had to offer a sacrifice as a sign of a change of heart. The danger was that such sacrifice could become a ritual without change of heart and sinful habits. It was against this that the prophets were to protest (e.g. Am 5:21 – 24).

According to the prophets, society had become so corrupted by individual and communal sin that God's judgement was almost unavoidable. What was needed was national repentance of heart, not reliance on the temple cult (Jer 7:1-7). The book of Jonah brought home to God's people that foreigners, even the nation which had destroyed the Kingdom of Israel, were prepared to repent when a prophet was sent to them. Repentance like that of the king of Nineveh and his subjects would release God's "hesed" (Jer 3:12 -14; Hos 6:1; Am 5:14). "Hesed" appears frequently in the psalms being translated as "mercy" (5:7; 23:6; 56:3), "goodness and mercy" (52:1 & 8), and "loving kindness" (89:33) (Stringer 1970: 491). "Hesed" is a sign of God's "hen" meaning "undeserved favour to humanity" which is often translated as "grace" (AV) or "favour" (RSV, REB, NIV) (see Gen 33:8; Jer 31:2). Altogether the term "hen" is used some 64 times in the Old Testament. While humankind can show "hesed" to one another, only God can show "hen" for no one is able to do God a favour (Stringer 1970 491). Because individuals and the nation were reluctant to repent, they could only escape judgement for failing to obey God's covenant through his "hen" and "hesed".

1.2.5 THE "DAY OF THE LORD"

The earliest use of the term the "Day of the Lord" or the "Day of Yahweh" is to be found in Amos 5:18. Amos saw the Day as one of judgement for Israel (so also Isa 2:12 – 22; Ezek 13:5; Jl 1:15, 2:1; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1). But it was not only Israel who had sinned against God, as other prophets were aware. Other nations too would have to face the "Day of the Lord" (Isa 13:6 – 9; Jer 46:10; Jl 2:31; Obad 15). Subsequently the term is used in both the major and minor prophets, but its use in the minor ones is more frequent (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Jl 1:15, 2:1, 11, 3:4, 4:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 3:23). Sometimes "A Day of the Lord" is used (Isa 2:12; Ezek 30:3; Zech 14:1). Related expressions are "a day of retribution" (Jer 46:10), "the Lord's day of retribution" (Isa 34:8), "the day of the Lord's wrath" (Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:18), "the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph 2:3) and "the day of the Lord's feast" (Zeph 1:8), "My Lord Yahweh of hosts has a day of tumult and din and confusion" (Isa 22:5). Further references in the prophets are found such as "on that day" (Hiers 1992: 84). Punishment might come through war (Am 5:6) or a natural disaster such as a locust invasion (Jl 1&2). These will be followed by the coming of the Lord and only the genuinely repentant will be saved (Jl 2:22 – 28) (Wright 1970:296).

Since God had frequently intervened in history to save His chosen people, “The Day of the Lord” was at first regarded as a day on which God would intervene in order to save them from any danger which threatened to overwhelm the nation. To this concept the prophets added the idea of judgement, not necessarily only of Israel’s enemies, but also of Israel herself for breaking God’s Law and covenant. As Israel did not always repent after hearing God’s voice through the prophets, nor even after disaster befell her, the belief that the nation would find salvation through a faithful remnant developed.

Detail involving “The Day of the Lord” and His coming in Judgement are often referred to as “eschatology.” As prophecy continued, a new aspect began to enter Eschatology. This aspect introduced elements which went beyond the usually historical nature of prophecy, of seeing the “Day of the Lord” as an event within historical reality, but as an occurrence at an unspecified future date, and described in mythological and colourful terms (Cody 2004: 353). Such an approach is referred to as “apocalyptic” and elements are already to be found in the prophecies of Second Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah (especially chapters 9 to 14), Ezekiel and Third Isaiah as well as in the so-called Apocalypse of Isaiah to be found in First Isaiah chapters 27 to 29. Most noticeably it is observed in the book of Daniel (Collins 2004: 298 – 303).

The “Day of the Lord” is a moment of divine judgement, at first within history, in which God would save his people and judge their enemies. With the prophets it became also a time when God would judge Israel for neglect of God, Law and Covenant. The coming of this day gradually became seen as postponed by God’s divine purpose and ultimately became an apocalyptic event at the end of time in which the just of all nations were saved, the evil punished and God’s eternal reign inaugurated.

A more detailed consideration of the “Day of the Lord” will be given in Chapter 4 where the role of this day as the point of reconciliation between judgement and salvation will be discussed.

1.2.6 PROPHECY

In the Old Testament we read of schools of prophets or “nabi”. These prophets were often cultic prophets attached to one of the shrines at Bethel, Shiloh or Gilgal. Such schools had often been contaminated by syncretistic Canaanite – Israelite religion and so were not reliable speakers of God’s word. The king might also have a band of prophets whose interest was in prophesying what was favourable to the king, and themselves, or at least in avoiding prophesying things which the king and court would not like. These became regarded as false prophets, although some scholars think Habakkuk and Joel may have come from amongst the cultic prophets (Motyer 1970: 1041; Nowell 2004: 261; Mallon 2004: 399).

True prophets may be defined as those who had been called by God, the author of true prophecy, and would only utter such prophecies as had been divinely revealed to them, prefacing their utterances with a statement that these were the words of the Lord. They were particularly aware of God working in the history of his people and of the failure of his people to be fully aware of this or particularly concerned about it. They had a deep ethical, social and spiritual concern for the welfare of Israel and a

great horror of the nation's neglect of God and of his Law. They foresaw, in historical terms, the political, social, moral and spiritual consequences of neglect of God and His commandments and as a result were concerned about the disasters that such neglect would cause, seeing in such disasters a time of judgement for the nation, although there might be salvation for a faithful remnant. The later prophets tended to see judgement and salvation in increasingly eschatological and apocalyptic terms.

1.2.7 THE "BOOK OF THE TWELVE"

"The Book of the Twelve" is a collective title for the Old Testament books often referred to as the Minor Prophets. These consist, in order of Biblical, but not chronological, arrangement, of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Chronologically their probable order is Amos (ca 780-740 BC), Hosea (ca 750-730), Micah (ca 740-690), Zephaniah (ca 640-610), Nahum (ca 612), Habakkuk (ca 626-587), Haggai (ca 520), Zechariah (ca 520-499 – chapters 1-8; 440-435 – chapters 9-14), Malachi (after 515), Joel (probably before 515 although some date it ca 837-800), Obadiah (after 587 but before 312), Jonah (probably late 5th century, but before 200) (Barre 2004: 209; McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 217; Wahl, Nowell and Ceresko 2004: 255-264; Cody 2004: 349-361; Mallon 2004: 399-405; Ceresko 2004: 580)

Emphasis on Canonical Criticism, an approach which seeks to determine why the Biblical text is arranged as it is, led critics such as Brevard Childs, Ronald Clements, Davie Napier and others to study the links amongst the twelve minor prophets. While the books are generally chronologically arranged, more importantly they provide a thorough condemnation of sin, especially in its breaking of the covenant relationship with God, its social nature and its national consequences. As a general structure the first six books (Hosea to Micah) deal with the covenantal and cosmic nature of sin, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah with the punishment of such sin and Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi with restoration. Critics discern a plot in the books' arrangement, a pattern of introduction, complication, crisis, punitive action and resolution (restoration or salvation). In literary, not humorous terms, this may be regarded as a comic plot. (House 1990: 26-27; 72-75; 118-119; 124-1250.)

Throughout "The Day of the Lord" is a central topic, giving the Book a unity (Rendtorff: 2000: 77). God is the stern yet compassionate hero and his people and their surrounding nations the villains, except for a saved international remnant (House 000:128-129]. Hosea 1-3 and Malachi provide the frame, a kind of introduction and conclusion (Sweeney 2000:560).

Thus we can say that the twelve minor prophets collectively may be referred to as "The Book of the Twelve" since they have been arranged and edited to provide a unity in a developing theological theme of sin, punishment and redemption, as well as attempting a unity in literary form.

1.3. HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis which this thesis will attempt to substantiate is that "The Book of the Twelve" makes use of the concept of the "Day of the Lord" to reconcile judgement and salvation.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology involves a study of available research on judgement and salvation as theological concepts in the “Book of the Twelve in particular; and similarly for “The Day of the Lord.” Chapter 2 will give a brief survey of 19th and 20th century biblical criticism with reference to the “Book of the Twelve”, the “Day of the Lord”, Judgement and Salvation, while the third chapter will look at the development of Israelite monotheism as background to the topic of the thesis. Chapter 4 will give an analysis of “judgement” as understood by the “Twelve” after a consideration of the significance of the two main Hebrew terms for judgement. Chapter 5 will do similarly for “salvation”. In chapters 4 and 5 the previously mentioned terms will be looked at from a Form Critical point of view to illustrate their historical development. A fuller consideration of the “Day of the Lord” will be given in the sixth chapter which also discusses the development of the concept of a remnant. Both concepts will be looked at in terms of Canonical and Redaction Criticisms. The same two types of criticism will be used in chapter 7 in discussing how the “Day of the Lord” reconciles judgement and salvation. The final chapter seeks to give a summary of the findings, as a contrast and comparison of the critical approaches used.

CHAPTER 2 A BRIEF SURVEY OF 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY BIBLICAL CRITICISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE “BOOK OF THE TWELVE,” THE “DAY OF THE LORD,” JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION”

Although there had been a slow growth of textual and biblical criticism since the Reformation, it was during and after the 18th century enlightenment that it began to come into its own, particularly so in the 19th century, when historical, philosophical and linguistic developments inspired scholars to approach the Old Testament in a manner not coloured by predetermined theological viewpoints.

2.1 SURVEY

2.1.1 NINETEENTH CENTURY CRITICISM

W.M.L. de Wette (1780 – 1849) used firstly grammatical and rhetorical means to obtain as accurate a view of the Biblical message as he could. Then he turned to investigation of the historical background to the book seeking to situate it in its time. This he believed would enable the reader to penetrate the milieu of the author and so understand the circumstances and concerns which caused the writer to produce the book (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1118) With regard to the prophets, this would enable the reader to situate them in their context, so highlighting the concerns of the prophet and his listeners as well as analysing the effects of metaphor and language used to express the prophetic concerns.

H. Ewald (1803 – 1875) emphasised that the history of Israel was essentially religious history, a striving for perfection, and so used a critique of both revelation and history. He regarded the prophets as the spiritual centre of Israelite religion since they sought to stimulate an awareness of God and his requirements in the chosen people. E. V. Reuss also emphasised the role of the prophets. He taught that the requirements of Leviticus could not possibly, in all their detail, have formed part of the religious code of a migrant people and were a post-exilic development. Hence the prophets were earlier writings than much of the Pentateuch (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1119).

Frequently, 19th century scholarly interpretation tended to emphasise the prophets’ concern with morality and ethics taking the form of social justice, even to the extent of maintaining that certain prophecies rejected the cult (Am 5: 21-25; Hos 6: 6; Isa 1: 11 – 15; Mic 6: 6 – 8). It is more probable that they were only rejecting cultic worship when it is not accompanied by living out *Torah* in practical terms (Motyer 1970: 1043; Vawter 2004: 193). For the “Book of the Twelve” this is important since it makes plain the prophetic claim that righteousness is as vital as ritual or cultic correctness and is a matter of the spirit: a person is demonstrating love of, and obedience to, God by obeying the command to show justice to fellow human beings.

The works of such scholars provided a background against which Julius Wellhausen (1844 – 1918) could produce his work which has been seminal in the development of late 19th and of 20th century scholarship. In the first six books of the Old Testament he believed that it was possible to isolate four main documents. The earliest (J and E) represent the Yahwist and Elohist traditions of Judah and Israel respectively and date from ca 870 to 770 BC. Their editing together was followed by later Deuteronomic

(D) editing about 680 and the whole was re-edited to add Priestly (P) material during and after the exile. Further editing took place probably during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, about 450. Once again such discoveries served to show that the original sources making up most of the prophets, before they were edited in their turn in the exilic and post-exilic periods, antedated much of the Hexateuch (Gordon 1995: 3 – 4; Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1119).

If prophetic writing antedates the Hexateuch, it raises the question of how much did prophetic calls for justice, and threats of judgement, perhaps influence the redaction of the Law. Wellhausen's layers of editing in the Hexateuch would later lead to analysis of the layers of editing in the Minor Prophets. T.H. Robinson, in 1923, regarded the prophets as going through four stages of development. Firstly there had been short oral units which later became short written documents which were expanded to longer ones by gathering more sayings and traditions about the particular prophet. Finally there was the stage of canonical editing (Gordon 1995: 16).

Another scholar who studied under Ewald was Bernard Duhm (1847 – 1928). In 1875 Duhm published a work on prophecy. He regarded the prophets as trying to break a cultic stranglehold on Israelite religion by emphasising that God's essential requirement from his people was ethical and moral righteousness in God's sight, involving justice within the community. This was not just communal righteousness, but that of the individual as well. In the "Book of the Twelve" the prophets stress that showing justice is more important than ritual correctness. He also determined that Isaiah was made up of the works of three prophets and that the last section, chapters 56 to 66, could be dated to the post exilic period in which Malachi was composed.

Duhm later emphasised the importance of the inner life of the prophet as part of his vital, spiritual role (Gordon 1995: 4 – 6; Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1110). In the Minor Prophets the inner spiritual life of a prophet is vividly portrayed by Hosea's experience of a faithless wife whom he loves making him aware of God's yearning love for the repentance of his people and their turning to him as their source of support and blessing.

In 1914 Gustav Holscher published a work in which he considered the characteristics of prophetic psychology. The emotive and ecstatic nature of prophecy, which he found in Ezekiel, was originally expressed in poetic form. That most of the prophetic writings are in poetic form had been pointed out in the 18th century by R. Lowth (1710 – 1787), who had also indicated the parallelisms of Israelite poetic structure. One of the topics on which Hermann Gunkel (1862 – 1932) also concentrated was how the prophets mediated to their hearers their mystical, prophetic experience. The work of these scholars led to a psychological study of prophecy. Prophecy was seen to involve not only ecstatic utterance, but also dreams, visions and even translocation. Other scholarly names associated with this are T.H. Robinson, H. Wheeler-Robinson, S. Mowinckel, H.H. Rowley, J. Lindblom and G. Widengren. Rowley denied that the bulk of biblical prophecy was ecstatically driven, while Gunkel had maintained that, in some degree, ecstasy was common to almost all prophetic utterances. The psychological approach to prophecy also led to comparisons of Israelite prophecy with prophetic utterances found in the literature of other Middle – Eastern nations. After the 1960s the psychological approach seemed to have filled its purpose, but in the 1980s there was a renewal of interest (Gordon 1995: 6 – 9; Blenkinsopp 1996: 19

– 20). The forcefulness of prophetic emotion is evident in the “Book of the Twelve” in the prophecies of God’s judgement, especially in the strength of many of the metaphors which are used to express how violent and dreadful that judgement will be. We have images of war, of locust plagues, of drought, of seismic events, of the end of the world. Such images are common to many of the prophets. At the end of Habakkuk we have an ecstatic faith in God, despite all the disasters threatening Judah (3: 17 – 19). Amos and Zechariah often had God’s word mediated to them in the form of visions. God’s longing love for his disobedient people is reflected in Hosea’s longing that his faithless wife will return to him.

Comparisons between Israelite religion and that of the nation’s Middle – Eastern neighbours led to study of the history of these religions and religion in general. H Winckler (1863 – 1913) emphasised the influence of Assyrian and Babylonian religious ideas on the development of Israelite religion. H Gunckel in his *Schopfung und Chaos* studied Middle - Eastern mythology of creation and the end of the world and showed how this was reflected in Jewish religious thought. This comparative approach as well as the historical critical approach since Wellhausen caused a reaction amongst both conservative Protestant and Roman Catholic biblical scholars.

Such an approach Protestant scholars felt took away from the traditional understanding of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, which illustrated how God had worked in and through history with his chosen people, Israelite and later Jewish and Gentile Christians, in his plan of Salvation.

Roman Catholic scholarship was equally conservative and had at first taken little note of the work of Wellhausen and his followers. It was only with M – J. Lagrange (1855-1938) that an historical and literary approach to biblical scholarship began to find acceptance in Roman Catholic circles and was ratified under Pius XII in 1943 with his pronouncement *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1120 – 1122) . In certain fundamentalist Protestant circles in the year 2007 the suspicious attitude to the various forms of biblical criticism remains little different from what it was in the first quarter of the previous century.

2.1.2 TWENTIETH CENTURY CRITICISM

2.1.2.1 FORM CRITICISM

Hermann Gunkel developed an approach to Biblical criticism which is termed Form Criticism. This he felt took the critic closer to what the text meant than did historical or literary criticism. The task of exegesis was to separate out the various oral and early traditions on which written documents had been based. He determined certain speech forms used by the prophets such as songs, liturgy, parables and priestly torah. Other speech forms involved warfare, the law courts and popular wisdom. Specifically prophetic usages, such as “The Lord says,” he regarded as indicative of the oldest sources (Blenkinsopp 1996: 23; Hayes 1999: 315 – 316). Only when secondary material had been separated from the originals, would it be possible to determine what the original text was trying to say. At its best it would reveal the complexity of the situations and the characters, especially those of the prophets and their subsequent editors. Once such exegesis had been done, informed hermeneutics would be possible.

Gunkel founded a school of criticism, although some of its members were to add their own emphases to Form Criticism. H. Gressmann (1877 – 1927) was one of Gunkel’s closest disciples. G. von Rad (1901 – 1971) was of the opinion that to concentrate too closely on original sources might obscure what the final form of the document was trying to say. Both form critical and literary analyses were necessary. Analysis had to be followed by synthesis. In synthesis he felt that certain biblical themes such as exodus, conquest, covenant, God’s saving acts, had to be determined. Albrecht Alt (1883 – 1956) studied biblical law and classified it. It was he who provided the distinction between *apodictic* and *casuistic* law.

In Scandinavia, especially S. Mowinckel (1884 – 1965) made a name for himself. A follower of Gunkel, he emphasised the importance of cultic and mythological aspects of scripture, especially in the psalms. He also suggested that certain of the Twelve had been cultic prophets, specifically Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah and Joel. Other members of the Scandinavian school laid especial emphasis on oral tradition (Blenkinsopp 1996: 2006; Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1123 – 1124).

Form criticism has allowed critics to determine the basic outlines of the redaction of prophetic books and the details of the genres involved. In very broad outline a prophetic book is composed as follows. There are individual variations. It begins with a superscription announcing how and why the book has been written (Isa 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Jl 1:1; etc). Contents includes judgement against Israel and/or Judah; judgement amongst the nations. Promises are made to Israel and or Judah and the nations and there is a general focus on punishment and restoration, mostly with emphasis on the latter. The order of presentation may be chronological (Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah); narrative (Jonah); prophetic exhortations (Isaiah, Zephaniah); prophetic disputation (Nahum) and prophetic pronouncement and prayer (Habakkuk) (Sweeney 1996: 17 and 2005: 34).

The setting for reading the book was usually the Temple. This helped determine the liturgical form of some of the genres used. Such liturgical genres include acrostic which is a poem in which each line begins with a letter of the alphabet in its order. Psalm 1 is an example. Psalms were religious poetry designed to be sung as part of the Temple liturgy. Much of the prophets, especially direct speech, is written in the poetic form of the psalms. This helps to emphasise the liturgical role that the writers and redactors of the prophets wished their books to have (Sweeney 2005: 34).

Further genres include autobiographical accounts of the prophet’s call (eg Isa 6). Much of Jeremiah is autobiographical, describing the prophet’s battles with authorities and his sufferings at their hands. Ecstatic utterances and the prophet’s meditations thereon are reported. Visions are recorded (Jer. 38: 21 – 23) as well as symbolic actions (Jer 13: 1 – 11). In the historical books of 1 and 2 Kings prophetic legends about Elijah and Elisha are narrated. As part of Israel’s history the actions and words of various prophets are recorded in the historical books. Consequently, in the Jewish Scriptures, these books were referred to as the Former Prophets (Sweeney 1996: 18 – 22; 2005: 33).

As has already been mentioned, prophetic utterances are usually introduced or concluded by “This is the word of the Lord” or an equivalent phrase. Since prophecy

was essentially a verbal form of communication and was later written down and edited, we should expect most prophecy to be couched in speech forms. The prophets utter oracles which may have been requested by someone in authority or which may be unsolicited (eg Am 5:4 – 5; Zeph 2: 3).

Prophetic pronouncement declares how God's words will work themselves out in daily life (Mal 1: 2 – 5). The prophet may speak as if he is acting as divine messenger (Isa 6: 8 – 13). The commonest prophetic speech genre is announcement. Often this involves declaration of God's judgement (Jer 22:10). Judgement usually involves disclosing punishment against a person or nation (Am 7:14; Hos 2:7). Sometimes punishment for the unrepentant is published and salvation for the innocent or repentant. Judgement and sentence are often set within the metaphor of a trial in which an accusation is made and there are disputation speeches (Mic 2: 6 – 11) (Sweeney 1996: 23 – 28).

In considering the "Day of the Lord" as a point of reconciliation between judgement and salvation the trial genre and announcements of judgement, punishment or salvation are of particular importance. We find references to various aspects of court procedure, such as speeches of accusation, defence and of disputation as well as the passing of sentence in many places in the prophets, and especially in the "Book of the Twelve" (for example Hos 4; Mic 2: 6 – 11; Mic 6; Isa 1; Jer 2; Hag 1: 2 – 11; Mal 1: 2 – 5) (Sweeney 2005: 41). The crime committed is breaking the divinely given Law, which is part of the Covenant of Sinai. The Law had both religious and social connotations. False or corrupt worship was to deny the sovereignty of God. To ill-treat or defraud one's neighbour was not only a crime against the affected individual, but also a crime against the community as a whole and against God. All Israelite Law had a divine and social dimension.

Speeches of judgement were sometimes combined with a messenger formula and obviously provide God's reason for sentence (Mic 3: 9 – 12; Jer 11: 9 – 12). The purpose of the punishment speeches is that the sentenced will hear God, repent and so acknowledge Yahweh and his infinite power. Speeches of salvation bring assurance of deliverance, restoration of relationship with God and blessing. A special form of blessing, foretold by some of the prophets, was the announcement of the coming of a royal saviour of David's line, a righteous king (Isa 11: 1 – 10; Mic 5: 1 – 4) (Sweeney 2005: 38 – 39).

We have seen in the "Book of the Twelve" that the prophets' concern was that God's people had not remained true to their covenant with him. In terms of covenant law he was entitled to punish them. If we take the Ten Commandments as one of the earliest forms of law, expressed in apodictic form, we see how, according to the prophets, the Israelite people had effectively broken them all. God's judgement was the consequence.

A question that exercised scholars was in how far the Old Testament could be regarded as providing reasonably accurate historical information. M. Noth and G. von Rad were amongst those who had serious reservations. Others, like W.F. Albright (1891 – 1971), felt that archaeology might provide a background against which history in the Old Testament might be measured.

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Israeli archaeologists took over much of the work that had hitherto been done by American or European archaeologists in the Holy Land and expanded it. The discovery of the Qumran scrolls and their restoration, deciphering and interpretation provided an impetus not only to archaeology, but also to historical and textual study.

Prior to the Qumran discoveries and independence, Jewish scholarship had taken issue with the mainline of Protestant scholarship. U. Cassuto (1883 – 1951), born in Italy, but who ended his career as Professor of the Bible at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem from 1939, rejected Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis. He proposed instead one in which the Pentateuch evolved from oral tradition and various poetic epics. Y. Kauffman (1889 – 1963) who succeeded Cassuto in 1949 also rejected Wellhausen. According to his thesis, monotheism was not a development from the age of the prophets, but had existed in Israel from the time of Moses. Torah and prophecy were parallel, yet independent developments in Israel's monotheism. He upheld the historicity of the conquest and the period of the judges (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1125 – 1127).

2.1.2.2 REDACTION CRITICISM

Redaction Criticism, which seeks to determine how writers and subsequent editors have interpreted or re-interpreted sources and texts in order to give them a specific slant or meaning which would address contemporary concerns, was a development of the 1950s. Writers such as G. Bornkamm and H. Conzelmann developed it in their studies of the gospels and it later became applied to the Old Testament and especially to the prophets (Kselman and Witherup 2004: 1144; Brown and Schneiders 2004: 1158).

Redaction criticism is both literary in that it determines by means of a form of Rhetorical Criticism the purpose of the writer and possible redactor(s) with regard to the reader. It is also Historical in that it seeks to determine at what date the document was written or when it was edited. This becomes important in the Minor Prophets as critics seek to uncover layers of deuteronomic and priestly redaction to discover what likely prophetic sources are. Modern focus in Redaction Criticism of the prophets has concentrated on the more recent layers of redaction as representing the concerns of the community of the time and how this expanded and adapted earlier material (Gordon 1995: 17).

2.1.2.3 RHETORICAL CRITICISM

In the late 1960's J. Muilenberg renewed focus on the Old Testament as literature. The methodology he proposed for study of the final form of the text he termed Rhetorical Criticism. This required close reading of the text and employment of the techniques applied by literary critics to determine the effects the writer wished to produce on the reader. In Narrative Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism is applied to the story aspects of biblical texts (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1127 -1128; Brown and Schneiders 2004: 1159 – 1160). Apart from studying the writer's methods of persuasion, close reading also involved the linguistic and structural features of the text, including how an earlier text has been adapted and partially rewritten (Gordon: 1995: 23).

Apart from style and structure the 1960s was a period of more scientific approach to Semitic philology and lexicography. J Barr published *The Semantics of Biblical Language* in 1961. Scholars became concerned with why a writer chose a particular word rather than another and why he continued to use that same word in certain contexts: so for example why the prophetic writers tended to use *mispat* rather than *dyn* when dealing with God's judgement (Sawyer: 1982: 233 – 235).

We have seen how in the “Book of the Twelve” it is helpful to discover what significance a fairly precise interpretation of words and phrases such as the “Day of the Lord,” judgement and salvation has, by referring to their Hebrew etymology. In a sense, then, Rhetorical Criticism was a development of Redactional Criticism. In the same way Canonical Criticism is, in part, an outflow from Rhetorical Criticism, for when we ask ourselves what effect the writer or redactor is wanting to have on the reader, it becomes logical to ask ourselves why the editors of the Old Testament, as a whole, sought to arrange the books in the order they did.

2.1.2.4 CANONICAL CRITICISM

Canonical Criticism becomes of importance in the Minor Prophets, when we come to look at them not so much as individuals prophesying at a certain point in the history of Israel and Judah, but when we look at them as the “Book of the Twelve”, arranged in a certain order which contradicts the actual dates of their prophetic progenitors. Instead of isolating and determining the dates of the earliest literary units, a book is looked at as a whole and in relationship to the books preceding and following it [Blenkinsopp: 1996: 25]. The concern of Canonical Criticism is the text's final form. B.S. Childs, although he did not reject historical method, felt that biblical theology should only be based on the canonical text. An Old Testament text should be historically and textually studied. This should be followed by a history of its exegesis and finally by a theological interpretation of the canonical text (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1128).

Child's criticism of the literary-critical method was that by trying to distinguish “genuine” from “non-genuine” sayings, an impression has been created that one saying is inferior to another. Form Criticism broke the text up into pieces that were too small, ignoring the linkages, and redactional and sociological criticism introduced into biblical scholarship by a predetermined, semi-political agenda. Instead it is better to seek out the literary and theological currents helping to form biblical literature, particularly in the post-exilic period, so that it would become authoritative for its readers. Ultimately the form of the biblical text is a reflection of an encounter, over a long period, between God and Israel. The final form is a witness to this history of revelation.

Childs suggests eight general effects of editorial shaping of prophetic literature: 1. Original prophecy is expanded by being placed in a wider prophetic context, for example the addition of the “salvation ending” to Amos; 2. The shaping changes the level on which the prophecy works theologically; 3. The prophetic material becomes part of new theological context; 4. In turn a wider body of prophetic tradition is edited in terms of a larger body of prophetic writing hence the eighth century prophets are edited in terms of the rest of the “Twelve”; 5. In terms of an overall theology a

prophet's message may be edited and placed out of chronological sequence; 6. The original message of a prophet is now interpreted according to the faith-outlook of the period of its final editing; 7. Prophecies which were originally uttered in a variety of situations are arranged in a pattern serving to foretell God's coming rule, so the "Day of the Lord," judgement and salvation; 8. Prophetic symbolism is re-interpreted to give a new overall, eschatological outlook foretelling the coming "Day of the Lord" (Childs 1987: 44 – 47).

An implication of the canonical shaping of the "Twelve" is that the books have to be seen as a unit reflecting a developing interpretation of prophecy in the course of Israelite history. This means that it is unwise to interpret any book in isolation from the others. The relevance of a prophecy for today is that it must be seen through the prism of the "Twelve," otherwise interpretation will be incomplete and inaccurate. In the "Twelve" that prism allows us to separate out the rays which provide a spectrum of views involving the "Day of the Lord," salvation and redemption (Childs 1987: 47 – 49).

Much of current scholarly criticism of the "Book of the Twelve" is from the point of view of Canonical Criticism. This has certainly shown the close connections amongst the various prophets which have been brought about by post-exilic editing. However, in order to show how the canon has received its shape Canonical Criticism has to rely on other forms of criticism, especially historical and redactional, in order to ascertain when the individual prophets were written and how they have been edited in order to take up their position in the canon.

This applies in particular to Joel and Jonah, both probably written in the post exilic period. Both have been slotted into the canon as if prophets of 8th century Israel.

In writing this thesis the prophets have been considered in two ways. In the chapters on judgement and salvation they have been considered in their historical context, while in chapter four, which deals with the "Day of the Lord" as reconciliation between justice and salvation, the "Twelve" have been considered in their canonical context. This has been done to show that each school of criticism does not stand on its own, but is part of the development of an ongoing critical process. Each school has its strengths and weaknesses and a new school usually arises in order to address the weaknesses of a previous school or schools.

J.A. Sanders has gone further by proposing that Canonical Criticism should not just end with the final text, but that the process of how that text became canonical as it addressed the needs of the community should be studied. This would involve a kind of *midrash* in which it was shown how earlier traditions were re-interpreted in new biblical contexts (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1128). Sanders believes that there were times of intensive canonical editing such as after the first fall of Jerusalem in the 6th century BC and after the second fall in 70AD when Scripture was adapted to answer the identity and lifestyle needs of the Jewish community. Thus we should write about a Canonical Process rather than Canonical Criticism. The scholar should concentrate on the process rather than on the final form when the canon became frozen in time (Anderson: 1988 638 – 639).

This kind of approach is obviously partly reliant on Redactional Criticism. Sanders's approach enriches the understanding of the development of the "Book of the Twelve, for example when we study the canonical ending of Amos and compare that with its probable original ending. We begin to understand how post-exilic attitudes to the "Day of the Lord", judgement and salvation differed not only from Amos's outlook, but also from that of pre-exilic prophesy. More recently in their work on the Twelve, scholars have been studying the structural patterns, phraseology and vocabulary which have been used by redactors to bind the Twelve more closely together to present a more unified vision of judgement and salvation within a context of the "Day of the Lord" (Gordon 1995: 24).

Sawyer indicates that the Jewish and Christian canons of the Old Testament are not necessarily the same. The contents may differ if, as with the Roman Catholics, the apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphical books are included as part of the biblical text. Even if the latter are excluded the Christian Old Testament follows the order of the Septuagint, while the Hebrew version follows that of the Massoretic text. Obviously this creates problems for Canonical Criticism.

Jewish biblical criticism has its own history of interpretation, which differs from the Christian approach, which has often been coloured by regarding the Old Testament as foretelling the New. Such an approach is likely to lead to different conclusions from those of scholars who believe that primarily Old Testament texts should be interpreted in terms of Israelite history and religious belief Sawyer 1982: 242 – 246). In this thesis the version of the "Book of the Twelve" has been from a Protestant English bible, *The Revised English Bible, 1989*. The approach has been to interpret the "Twelve" as to the "Day of the Lord", judgement and salvation in terms of Israelite history and belief.

2.1.2.5 MORE RECENT CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

More recent forms of criticism involve the use of sociology and anthropology in exegesis sometimes using a form of Marxist sociology as, for example, interpretations of the upheavals in Canaan at the time of the Israelite invasion and subsequently. Anthropology has been used by R.R. Wilson in determining the role of the prophets in Israelite society, not only through comparison with the prophetic role in surrounding nations, but also by their interaction with a divided society. Some of that society rejected them as divine intermediaries, others reacted positively to their call, while many were apathetic (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1128). Once again we see this in Amos, when Amaziah, the priest of Bethel accuses him to King Jereboam of starting a conspiracy, and then tells Amos to go to Judah and prophesy there and not at Bethel (7: 10 – 13). Yet, Amos, while denying that he can call himself a prophet in the sense of belonging to the group of semi-official prophets, remains true to his calling and does not shirk from announcing the "Day of the Lord" as a day of judgement for Israel.

R.P. Carroll has used the theory of *cognitive dissonance* from social psychology to address the problem of how the prophets sought to deal with the fact that prophecies failed (Suelzer and Kselman 2004: 1128). This has bearing in the "Book of the Twelve" on eschatology and the development of apocalyptic. The "Day of the Lord"

gradually began to be seen not so much as occurring within history, but at the end of time accompanied by dramatic events and inaugurating a new age of God's kingdom.

Carroll has proposed that the book of Jeremiah should be regarded as a Deuteronomic production of the exilic and post-exilic periods and that there was no such person as Jeremiah, a radical proposal which finds approval from Hans Barstad in *No Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (Barstad: 1996: 107 – 108).

K Jeppesen suggests that Micah should be read as a coherent rather than redacted composition dating from the time of the exile in order to give hope to the exiles. There probably was no such prophet as Micah and the writer or editor may have been responsible for editing Isaiah 40 – 55. By contrast A.G. Auld is concerned that we should try to find out all we can about the persons who were the prophets. Further Auld regards the word “prophet” as a late form of reference dating from after the exile.

Prior to the exile the prophets were known as poets and would have been appalled to be referred to as prophets because of the dubious, frequently politically slanted utterances of those who belonged to the houses of prophets.

Barstad points out that among modern scholars there is a tendency to date prophetic writing more and more to the post-exilic period. If prophecy is overwhelmingly post exilic that poses problems such as, ‘Was there a prophetic gap between Elijah and Elisha and post-exilic prophecy, and, if there was no gap, what was the nature of pre-exilic prophecy after Elisha?’ Barstad’s criticism of Carroll and Auld is that they pay too little attention to what is in the text of the prophets and that they are too theoretical in approach (Barstad 1996: 108 – 113).

A tendency to date much of the “Book of the Twelve” to the post-exilic period would have serious implications for the hypothesis behind this thesis. It would then make the “Day of the Lord,” judgement and salvation into largely post-exilic beliefs. We should be unable to trace satisfactorily any development of these concepts from pre-exilic sources. Also we should have to review the idea of the prophets as having redactional layers.

If Micah is largely an unedited text, how many of the others may come to be regarded as virtually unedited compositions, written to address certain events? We should have to review our outlook on prophecy and its development. If we are to have open minds we should be ready to do so, yet, at the same time, it would probably be wise to regard the mainline of scholarly critical development as a safer option and to regard its development as a gradual process of thesis and antithesis reaching some kind of synthesis

Liberation Theology, in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s, and its “option for the poor” has significance for all the prophets, pre- and post-exilic, as they call for compassion for the poor, widows, orphans and strangers, or those who today would be called the “marginalised” in society. In a society, as in any society in any age, the tendency of the wealthy and powerful was to ignore the weak or to feel able to cheat them by using false weights, withholding wages or using bribes in the legal process. Especially

among the twelve Amos, Hosea, Micah and Malachi called for justice for the oppressed. Feminist Theology, as a part of Liberation Theology would see women in the patriarchal system of the time as part of the oppressed and as represented by the widows whose rights would be ignored or not fulfilled by a male-dominated society.

Carol Dempsey, writing from a feminist perspective on the prophets, has difficulty with a God whose intolerance of injustice leads to what she sees as an aggressive use of power in punishing those responsible for injustice, especially when punishment may be destructive of people and creation. She regards the use of power in this way as likely to promote further injustice because of its injustice and of not producing life-giving solutions. Even aggressive punishment of the Israelites' enemies has negative connotations. What is needed is a new paradigm of divine-human and human-human relationships. This new paradigm obviously comes through forgiveness and salvation (Dempsey 2000: 183 – 184).

Presumably, according to this approach, if God saves only a remnant, instead of aggressively punishing the majority, he would leave the majority to suffer the consequences of their misdoings until such time as they repented. Attractive though this approach is at first sight, it is reading into the prophets an anachronistic world view that they would have been unable to appreciate since it is outside their understanding of God and the world. To them punishment was not necessarily some type of divine revenge, but an inevitable and just result of the breaking of a covenant relationship. Further it restored purity and wholeness to God's people and to God's creation, the lack of which was an affront to divine integrity. That God was prepared to forgive those who repented was in itself a sign that he was a God of mercy rather than one of vengeful punishment.

Linked to Liberation and Feminist Criticism is Reader – Response Criticism in which the reader comes to the text to see if he or she can find it an answer to his or her own needs. A Liberation Theologian would approach the text to discover what it has to say on the topic of oppression (Gordon: 1995: 25). While the text must speak to particular human needs, there is the danger that an answer may be found out of context.

To approach the text with knowledge of the main schools of criticism is more likely to give a balanced idea of what the text is saying and what it is not saying, as well as showing how Israelite ideas altered and changed with the experiences of the nation. An example of this is how the perception of judgement changed. As we have seen, prior to Amos, God's judgement was regarded as applying to Israel's enemies. Amos's shock application of it to Judah and Israel, as also being covenant breakers, gave judgement and the "Day of the Lord" new dimensions. Later prophetic understanding of salvation understood a compassionate God as ready to save a faithful remnant of his people, while the rest would come under judgement. Salvation was even later understood as applying to those Gentiles who acknowledged the power of Israel's God and the moral standards he demanded.

2.2 CONCLUSION

This summary of biblical, critical scholarship in the 19th and 20th centuries is intended to show that in writing this thesis use has been made of various aspects of the

scholarship of the past two hundred years. By using the results of historical and literary criticism the various prophets have been situated in the eras in which the prophecies were originally compiled. This enables the student to be aware of differing prophetic concerns at different moments in Israelite history. Most striking here are the differences between the pre-exilic prophets and post-exilic ones like Haggai and Zechariah whose primary concern was the rebuilding of the temple. Literary criticism allows one to become aware of the force of the metaphors used to suggest judgement and punishment and how they reflect the fears and experiences of an agricultural people of 2500 years ago. Reference to choice of vocabulary involving the “Day of the Lord,” judgement and salvation helps to determine what is meant by a day, and how the form of God’s judgement is more tinged with mercy than with retributive judgement. Salvation flows from God’s mercy and reflects his love for humanity and creation. Redaction Criticism illustrates the various editorial layers in the Twelve as redactors have sought to reinterpret the “Twelve” in terms of the concerns of their life and times. Redaction Criticism in turn leads on to Canonical Criticism which illustrates how various redactors have deliberately linked the Minor Prophets by use of common vocabulary, phraseology, imagery and themes such as the “Day of the Lord”, justice and salvation. Even Liberation Theology emphasises for us the prophets’ concern with the collapse of justice in society in the lack of concern for, and the deliberate cheating of, widows, orphans and aliens.

To have attempted to use one form of scholarly criticism only would have narrowed the scope of the conclusions one could have come to in studying the topic of this thesis. Scriptural understanding is an ongoing process. Criticism of the shortcomings of the different schools of criticism is necessary in order to be able to develop new insights, but no new school of criticism develops in isolation from the various approaches which have preceded it. Perhaps the best way of approaching any texts is a balanced eclecticism with regard to critical approaches.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAELITE MONOTHEISM AS BACKGROUND TO THE “DAY OF THE LORD”, JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION”

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Historical-, Form- and various types of Literary criticism have made us aware of how pericopae from differing periods of Israelite literary history have been edited together during the development of the Old Testament. When passages are analysed fairly closely, it becomes apparent that Israelite understanding of God changed with the passage of time as the nation sought to come to terms with God’s role in its history.

Prior to the age of the prophets, for convenience, we may divide the Israelite understanding of God into four periods: those of the patriarchs, the Exodus, the settlement of Canaan and the beginning of the monarchy.

3.2 THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

In the patriarchal period God is often named “God of our Fathers” (Deut 26:7) or “the Mighty One of Jacob” (Gen 49:24). This suggests a special relationship between the founders of the nation and God. He becomes the patron of a family which develops into a clan, and then a nation made up of various tribes. Unlike many of the gods of the time, the God of the patriarchs is not a mere local god, powerful in a specific area, but one who commands Abraham to leave Haran for Palestine and protects him in the lands through which he travels. This concept of a “high god” is probably derived from the Ugaritic pantheon. He is a God who guides and who rewards if obeyed. His command to, and relationship with, Abraham implies a covenant which is renewed with Jacob and is the forerunner of the Sinai Covenant. However, worship of this mighty God, biblically referred to as El, does not seem to have precluded the worship of other gods as we learn in Genesis 31:30 – 35, when Rachel, having stolen her father, Laban’s, household gods, figurines called teraphim, hides them under her skirt while Laban searches her tent, apologising for not rising in his presence by explaining she is having her period.

Although Genesis 12:6 states that, at the time Abraham entered what was to become the Promised Land, the Canaanites were still living there, this is improbable. If they had been, there would probably have been much earlier mention of the worship of Baal which was to play so notorious a role in post-settlement Israelite history. Joseph’s account of the dream he had, in which the stars, moon and sun bowed down before him, annoyed his brothers and earned Jacob’s rebuke shows, at least, that the patriarchs were familiar with the cult of worship of the heavenly bodies (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmeyer 2004: 1225). The Joseph story is used to illustrate a God who has a plan of salvation within history to save his followers.

Such information suggests that the patriarchs were not monotheists but polytheists who acknowledged the power of a “high god”. The Rachel episode suggests that their “high god” did not necessarily object to the worship of minor family gods.

3.3 THE EXODUS AND SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN

The next great revelation of which we read is Moses confronted by God during the epiphany of the burning bush when he is out herding the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro [or Reuel (Ex 2:18) or Hobab (Judg 4:11)] (Douglas 1970: 529), a Midianite priest at the foot of Sinai. God reveals his name to Moses as YHWH and instructs him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 3). Early Egyptian texts suggest that YHWH was a Midianite God and that by the 14th century BCE he was worshipped by groups of Midianite and Edomite nomads. The Kenites also began to worship him and with the Midianites, through trade, spread the worship of YHWH into Canaan where Habiru tribes, who had not descended into Egypt, may have also begun to worship him. YHWH's worship may have been reinforced in Canaan by the arrival of the originally Habiru Exodus wanderers who had entered into a covenant with YHWH at Mount Sinai (van der Toorn: 1999 911 – 913).

The revelation of the meaning of the name, YHWH, to Moses as “I am who I am” or “I shall be who I shall be” may well be a later Israelite theological explanation. The epiphany to the Exodus Israelites on Mount Sinai with the pillar of fire, the clouds, the thunder and the shaking of the mountain suggests that YHWH may originally have been understood as a powerful storm God (van der Toorn 1999: 915-916). The Israelites already may have worshipped in Egypt the concept of an almighty God, since the God revealed at Sinai fits in with the patriarchal revelation of a “high god” who promises great things if his worshippers remain obedient. The idea that God would use Israel's enemies to punish disobedience is shown by Israel's defeat because of the sin of Achan (Jos 7).

Yet the God of Abraham was a more approachable God than the God of Sinai. Although, for example, he demanded much when he instructed Abraham to slay Isaac, God at the last minute stayed Abraham's hand. He was also a God who spoke and ate with Abraham, appearing to him in human form (Gen 15:1 – 15). Throughout much of Israel's history there was a tension between a deity who was a transcendent God whose covenant demanded much and a closer god who not only was in heaven, but also often present with his people on earth. The patriarchs, acknowledging God's concern for them, may have worshipped him as El Shaddai (“God who is able to fulfil his promises”), although this is questioned by some scholars (Manley 1970: 47).

YHWH seems to have become associated with El (“Father of Years” or “Ancient of Days”), especially after the settlement in Canaan. As “high god” El presided over the Council of the Gods. His consort was Asherah, who became transferred to YHWH as consort, hence the later appearance of Asherah poles in the Jerusalem temple, during the monarchy, and at the shrines where YHWH-El was worshipped. So YHWH began to be worshipped in association with other gods in a form of poly-Yahwism (van der Toorn 1999: 916-919; Armstrong: 1999: 29). It is significant that, although the Baals and other gods may have been worshipped in the Temple under the form of images, this does not seem to have been the case with YHWH, except, earlier, in the form of the Serpent from the Wilderness and the Golden Calf of Sinai (Lang 1983: 23; 36 – 37).

3.4 THE EARLY MONARCHY

Scriptural passages describing events of the early monarchy have not had polytheistic practices completely edited out. Saul consulted the Witch of Endor, who called up the spirit of the dead prophet, Samuel, despite Saul's having supposedly banned séances (I Saul 28:3 – 25). David, who seems to have been a staunch worshipper of Yhwh, also must have worshipped idols representing minor gods, for we are told that after he had married Saul's daughter, Michal, and had to escape from that king during one of his fits of jealous rage, Michal placed one of the household idols in David's bed to try to deceive those sent to capture him (I Sam 19: 11 – 17). Under Solomon we are told that the temple was used as a place of worship not only of YHWH, but also of the gods of his foreign wives (I Kings 11: 1 – 13).

The major part of the books of Kings describes, from a Deuteronomist point of view, the polytheism into which the Israelites descended under the leadership of unworthy kings. The altars of the gods of surrounding nations were set up on the high places, at shrines like Bethel and Schechem and even in the Temple itself. It was not that YHWH was not being worshipped, and that the rituals of the cult were being ignored, but that other gods were being worshipped by the Israelites at the same time. This form of polytheism was probably following the practice of the Canaanite peoples amongst whom the Habiru, both the Exodus ones and the others, lived. After the nation split into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah ca 931 BCE poly-Yahwism became the norm in both kingdoms until the rise of what is sometimes referred to as a "YHWH – alone" party. The attitude of such a group is exemplified by Elijah's slaughter of the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (I Kings 18), by the reforms of kings like Hezekiah (716 – 687) and Josiah (640 – 609) and by the preaching of the canonical prophets (Lang 1983: 20 – 30; Block 352; Smith 1990: 120; Albertz 2000: 92 – 98).

That the empire of David and Solomon declined became seen as punishment for the worship of foreign gods by Solomon and his successors in both Israel and Judah. Defeat by enemies was a part of this punishment.

3.5 THE AGE OF THE PROPHETS

3.5.1 THE 8TH CENTURY BCE PROPHETS

Increasing literacy and use of writing from about the mid-ninth century BC led to the writing down of the words of prophets and to the production of the book of Deuteronomy. This brings us to the period of the canonical prophets who practised their calling from the 9th century through the periods which led to the fall, first of Israel in the 8th century BCE, and then of Judah in the 6th century. They continued to prophecy during and after the Babylonian exile until about the mid 5th century.

The prophets were followers of the "YHWH-alone" party (Smith: 1990: 147 -150). The ninth century prophets, Amos, Hosea, Proto-Isaiah and Micah were concerned about the righteousness of the people of Israel according to the Law of Yahweh. Amos was mainly concerned about the ruthless brutality of Israel's enemies and about social injustice within Israel. Hosea prophesied about the worship of false gods (4: 11 – 14) instead of YHWH alone. He likened worship of foreign gods to prostitution. Proto- Isaiah regarded the worship that was given to Yahweh as being divorced from righteous living (Is 1:10ff). Proto-Isaiah and Micah, like Amos, condemned social

injustice, for example the lack of recourse to law for the poor (Isa 10:1 – 4) and the expulsion by wealthy landowners of the smallholders of land (Mic 2: 1 – 3). Both Proto-Isaiah and Hosea condemned the governments of their day for placing faith in agreements with fallible, unreliable allies, rather than reposing trust in God (Hos 5: 12 – 14; Isa 10: 1 – 4). For Hosea the only hope for his people was that they should be sent into a place of exile, as they were when they were sent by God to wander in the desert before they could enter the Promised Land. Then there would be a new possibility of the nation redefining itself religiously and rediscovering itself as a nation set apart by God: judgement followed by salvation (Albertz 2000: 94-95).

Followers of Amos and Hosea probably fled to Judah after the destruction of Israel by Assyria. There they would have promoted religious reform in conjunction with followers of Proto-Isaiah and Micah. Reform took place during the reign of Hezekiah (ca 716 – 687 BCE), when it is probable that the “Book of the Covenant” (Ex 20 – 23) was written. Images were banned (cf Ex 20: 3- 6), worship was centralised at official sites, especially Jerusalem and the high places were destroyed, debt-bondage was reformed (Ex 21: 2 - 6), justice for the poor as well as the rich was required (Ex 23: 1 – 80, the weak were to be fairly treated (Ex 23: 20 – 26), there was to be rest for all on the Sabbath (Ex 20: 8 – 10; 23:12) and fields were to be left fallow and what regrew on them was to be left for the poor (Ex 23: 10 – 12) (Albertz: 2000: 95 – 96).

To sum up, the Israelites had not yet become monotheistic. YHWH was the God of Israel who required worship from all Israelites. Other nations might worship other gods. Yahweh might indeed be the high God whom Amos imagined punishing the nations for their brutal treatment of their enemies and for not acknowledging him as such (Am 1 and 2), but other nations might worship their own, albeit inferior, gods. Thus we would say that, while the reforms of Hezekiah lasted, Israel was monolatrous rather than monotheistic. Monolatry was a development from the polytheistic-Yahwism of previous times. Socially, too, concern for the poor and marginalised, including slaves and labourers, was a definite advance (Smith: 1990: 150 – 152).

3.5.2: DEUTERONOMY AND THE 7TH CENTURY BCE PROPHETS

The social and religious forces of the past were too strong for the reforms of Hezekiah, and, under kings less zealous about the worship of Yahweh alone, Israel slipped back into polytheistic-Yahwism under his successors, Manasseh (687 – 642 BCE) and Amon (642 – 640 BCE). However there was now a much greater impetus to worship only YHWH, because of Hezekiah’s reforms which had been stimulated by the prophets. Upon the death of Amon, it would seem that a reform coalition of the Jerusalem bureaucracy, priesthood, rural nobility, the prophetess Huldah and the young Jeremiah succeeded in putting the eight year old Josiah on the throne. Josiah’s name itself means “YHWH supports” and perhaps they felt that they would be able to influence him (Waite 1970: 664 – 665; Albertz 2000:96 – 97).

It was during the reign of Josiah that what is probably the core of the book of Deuteronomy was found in the Temple and read to the king who then initiated the Josian reforms. No-one is sure who wrote the core of Deuteronomy. Perhaps one may be a little suspicious of its “convenient” discovery by the reforming party and it may have been a deliberate production of the reformers, who later became known as the

Deuteronomists. It has been suggested that it was the work of the priest, Hilkiah, and Josiah's secretary, Shaphan (Armstrong 1993: 65; Lang 1983: 38 – 41).

The thoroughness of the reforms shows that by the time Josiah was adult the reformists were confident of the support of the king and of their own position of power. Regional shrines of YHWH at Bethel in the north and Hebron and Bethlehem in the south were destroyed and all worship centralized in Jerusalem. The Temple was cleansed of all artefacts to do with the worship of other gods. Even family sacrifices to YHWH could only be offered in the Jerusalem Temple on the occasion of pilgrimage festivals. Ancestor worship was permitted, but necromancy forbidden. Children were to be taught a summary of Yahweh's relationship with his people Israel (Deut 6: 20 – 25). When offering a personal sacrifice to God at the altar in the Temple, the giver recited an account of God's dealings with his people (Deut 26; 1 – 11) (Albertz 2000: 96 – 97).

Apart from these ritual reforms, social reform was more thorough than before. Debt was to be remitted every seventh year (Deut 15:1-3;7-11). Those Israelites who had been sold into slavery because of their debts were to be given start-up capital on their release from slavery (Deut 15: 12 – 18). Every third year tithes were to be given to the needy (Deut 14: 28). At the pilgrim festivals, when the people travelled to Jerusalem, the wealthy were to share their feasts with the poor (Deut 16: 1 – 17). The Deuteronomists saw exclusive worship of YHWH in Jerusalem as encouraging national and racial unity (Albertz: 2000 97 – 98).

Deuteronomy emphasises the importance of Moses as God's lawgiving prophet. He came to be seen as the writer of the book. God's role in the settlement of his people in the Promised Land was also emphasised as Deuteronomy was developed and edited. The writing of Deuteronomy began the emphasis on "the book" in Israelite religion. This was later to be extended to the rest of the Pentateuch and the whole Old Testament. The Israelites were taught to see themselves as a chosen people in an unique covenant with God. It is perhaps debateable whether all of the reforms were enforceable and not just utopian in outlook, but they gave the nation a sense of a high moral calling and provided a basis of theology which was extended during the exile (Albertz: 2000 97-98). It is significant that the reforms were both ritual and social, reflecting the outlook of the prophets, both of the ninth and eighth centuries BC. This shows how great the importance of the prophets was not only in recalling the people to their covenant relationship with God, but also in developing the theology of the Israelite community towards monotheism rather than monolatry.

Amos had been the first to prophesy a day of judgement for Israel and saw little hope of redemption for the nation. Hosea, conscious of God's intense love for his people, saw a chance of redemption for those who would repent. Proto-Isaiah was conscious of the holiness and power of YHWH. False worship and oppression derogated from his holiness. Yahweh worked through historical events and had a plan for his people involving punishment and redemption for a remnant (Jensen and Irwin: 2004: 230). Micah saw the people of Judah as living under a false sense of security, neglecting the requirements of YHWH by permitting social injustice and adapting God's word to the prevailing attitudes of society, thus ignoring the requirements of covenant. God would punish Judah, but through a remnant he also foretold redemption (Laberge 2004: 250).

The prophecies of destruction of the kingdom of Israel, as foretold by Amos and Hosea, took place in 722 BCE with the fall of Samaria to Assyria. It seemed they had been proved to be true prophets. Proto-Isaiah's prophecies, insofar as they referred to Israel, had also been proved true. The political threat of Assyria to Judah was so acute that it seemed very likely that his prophecies and those of Micah might well prove to be true for Judah as well. The role of the prophets had been given added importance and influence by the truth of their predictions.

The approximately one-and-a-half centuries between the fall of Israel to Assyria and the fall of Judah to Babylon, doubtless led in Judah to a decreasing sense of the immediacy of disaster if God's law and covenant were not obeyed. A new generation of prophets arose in the seventh century to predict the fall of Judah. For Zephaniah (active 640 – 609) the dominant theme was the coming of the Day of YHWH when he would punish the unfaithful ex-vassal states of the Davidic kingdom and Judah itself for their false worship. The rebellious and arrogant would be destroyed, but a small number of purified and repentant people would be saved. A later editor, who saw these prophecies fulfilled in the fall of Judah to Babylon, magnified the hope of restoration in 3:9 -20 to encourage the exiles.

Nahum foresaw the destruction of Assyria, the destroyer of Israel and enemy of Judah. Although the destruction of Israel may have been divine punishment, the cruelty of Assyria to Israel and other defeated nations had offended God's sense of justice and Assyria too would suffer cruelly and fall. The third of the 7th century Minor Prophets, Habakkuk, questioned whether there was any justice for those on earth. God showed his hatred of hubris, greed, social injustice and idolatry and revealed that he himself would appear prior to a battle with the forces of chaos, which would bring fear to humanity and then salvation. What was required was obedience and faith (Wahl, Nowell and Ceresko 2004: 255; 258; 261).

3.5.3: PROPHETS OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

These prophecies were strengthened by those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah's prophecies spanned the last years of the kingdom of Judah and the opening years of the exile. He sought to define what true worship of YHWH entailed and warned that the war threatening Judah was punishment for Judah's sins. In the book of Jeremiah we learn the frustrations and mental and physical suffering that being a prophet could bring, including having his prophecy proved true and yet not accepted, even despite the exile. Jeremiah foresaw a restoration of Judah and Jerusalem under a righteous descendant of David (chaps 32 – 33) (Couturier 2004: 266 – 269). Haggai and Zechariah, the immediately post-exilic prophets, were to pick up on this idea of a messiah as found in both Isaiah and Jeremiah and to see in Zerubbabel a hoped-for fulfilment of such a righteous descendant. Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon during the exile. Both he and Jeremiah were opposed to the attempts of Zedekiah to shake off Babylonian control by forming an alliance with Egypt. The exile was God's punishment and both prophets saw it as God's call to the nation to prosper in the situation in which it found itself until God used events to restore his people. The people were to be obedient to God's vision, not their own fallible one. Israel's primary call was obedience to Yahweh.

The book of Ezekiel shows signs of various redactions, especially a priestly one. Chapters 38 and 39 seem to be an addition in apocalyptic style to bring the book into line with the general trend of the redaction of the prophetic books. Redemption and restoration would occur after a final battle of good against evil and God would return in glory to a new temple with a purified cult to rule his people (chaps 40 -48) (Boadt 2004: 306-309). Deutero-Isaiah pictured salvation in terms of a new exodus under a servant of God who would be a champion of justice. However, salvation was not through any human leader, but, through Yahweh, Israel's redeemer and re-creator [Stuhlmüller: 2004: 329 -332]. The prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah appeared to become true, when, under Cyrus, Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem, with permission to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the cult.

The exile was to prove a turning point in the Israelites' understanding of the nature of God. He was no longer the God of Israel who punished his people, or the God of gods who punished those nations which acted cruelly towards Israel and other peoples against his will. He began to be seen as a God in whose control was history and who used the nations as he wished to fulfil his will. From this conception of God, it was but a small step to regarding him as the only true God. Israelite understanding of God had moved from monolatry to monotheism (Lang 1983: 44 -46).

Deprived of the Temple and its worship, the Israelites felt impelled to record their history and religious experience so that it could be taught to scattered exiles in order that they and succeeding generations might know and learn their heritage as God's chosen people. The religious leaders gathered together the traditions of their people which may already have existed to some extent in written form. Much of it was probably still oral. A process of selection and editing took place. The Yahwist tradition of Judah, fused with the Elohist tradition of Israel was given a Deuteronomist interpretation. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy became an amalgam of tradition, history, revelation and legal requirements, the last of both a cultic and a social nature (Albertz 2000: 101 – 106).

The probable leaders of the Deuteronomist group who undertook this overhaul of Israelite religious tradition were the families of Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah, and of Hilkiah, the high priest. The books were attributed to Moses, not because he had written them, but because he was the towering, central figure of Jewish history to whom God had revealed himself and who had received the basis of the Law at Sinai. This process of editing was one that was to go on for about two centuries not only to the Pentateuch or the Law, as the first five books came to be called, but also to the oracles of the prophets and to the historical literature. Such editing, which would be regarded as unauthorised in our day, was not regarded as cheating or a form of plagiarism, but as adapting the scriptures to God's revelation given to his people during the course of their history. It was only when people began to regard scripture as something which ought to remain fixed and immutable, that we began to acquire the Talmud and later commentaries. During the exile it is possible that the first development of synagogues took place as places where Israelites could gather to worship and learn about God through reading those scriptures which had been produced, and to strengthen each other to uphold their faith and customs amidst foreign and pagan influence (Lang 1983: 41-44; Albertz 2000: 101 - 106).

The fall of the Babylonians may have helped the Israelites to begin to believe that God was indeed working on behalf of his people. He had allowed the cruel Assyrians to be destroyed by the Babylonians, now the Babylonians had in turn been overthrown by the Persians, who had had no hand in the destruction of Israel or Judah. The Israelites themselves had been punished for worshipping false gods along with Yahweh. The Persian religion of Zoroastrianism adopted by Darius I, with its belief in the one God, Ahura – Mazda, and a perpetual battle between the forces of good and evil, was much closer in alignment to Israelite belief, and would indeed, for example, in the matter of the existence of angels, come to influence it (Millard 1970: 971). From Zoroastrianism also Israel probably acquired some of its apocalyptic ideas, such as that of a final battle between the forces of good and evil as well as creation myths, such as the one added by priestly redactors to the beginning of the book of Genesis (Lang: 1983: 46 – 48). Under Persian rule the Israelites were freer to worship YHWH, who may have been regarded by the Persians as Ahura – Mazda in another guise, and were allowed to return to Jerusalem and re-establish Temple worship. Most likely the return was mainly due to a different political approach in treating subject peoples and retaining their loyalty.

At the time of the return, the Israelites were not completely united in political or theological outlook. Those who wrote Deutero – Isaiah saw in Cyrus Israel's saviour (Is 41:2ff) who had been ordained by Yahweh from the beginning of time to restore Israel (Is 41: 22ff; 46: 9ff). Yahweh was the God of not just the history of Israel, but of the whole world. Yahwism as a faith was open to all. Israel had not been called to rule the world, but to be an example to the nations (Is 43: 10 – 12; 44:8; 55:4) as Yahweh's servant and to help to bring righteousness to the nations (Is 42: 1 – 4), even to be a scapegoat (Is 52: 13 – 53: 12). The covenant with David became a covenant with Israel as a nation (Is 55: 1 – 5) (Albertz: 2000: 106 -107).

A priestly party developed around the priestly prophet, Ezekiel, but went beyond Ezekiel's thinking. Ezra, whom Artaxerxes I sent to those Israelites who had returned under Cyrus, was a priest and scholar of the Law (Ezek 7:11). He was allowed to take Israelites who wished to return to Judah with him. Under Ezra and Nehemiah many of Ezekiel's ideals were to be put into practice. Ezekiel was keen to have priestly control of the Temple and religious authority protected from a restored monarchy or from the secular power. (Ezek 43: 1- 12; 44:4; 46: 2 – 8) He proposed a new organization of post-exilic Israel (Ezek 45: 1- 9; 46; 47: 13 – 48:29) in which the Temple was to be separate from the city and royal palace. Priests and Levites were to live adjacent to the Temple. The king would provide the animals for the regular sacrifices and the tribes would have land re-allocated. This would provide for a just kingdom, in which the king had been allocated his own land, so that there would be no reason for royal oppression. A pure cult could be maintained under priestly authority. In his proposals Ezekiel showed that he was well aware of the religious, political and social problems which had dogged pre-exilic Israel and against which earlier prophets had inveighed (Albertz: 2000: 107 – 108).

Going beyond Ezekiel's prescriptions, priests of Zadokite descent created a group known as the Levites, who were kind of second class priesthood. The Levites consisted of the descendents of the priests of the non-Jerusalem shrines whose purity had been compromised by having been involved in sacrifices to idols. To give this arrangement authority they backdated it to the time of Moses. This backdating was

done during the editing of material which became part of the book of Numbers (Num 16: 8ff). It was not only priestly purity that was of concern, but also national purity. Marriage with outsiders had led to the worship of their false gods within Israel and by Israelites. When the fact of marriages between returned Israelites and foreigners was brought to the attention of Ezra, he summoned the people and made them divorce their foreign wives (Ezek 9: 1 – 10: 44). Ezra is reputed to have been the leader of the priestly editors of the books of Chronicles. Chronicles gave a priestly account of Israelite history from the time of David through the period of the kings (Wright 1970: 408 – 409; Albertz 2000: 107 – 108).

The Deuteronomists, during the exile, revised the book of Deuteronomy adding detailed regulations for Israelite society and for its worship. They looked for the restoration of the Davidic line of kings. At first they could be hopeful that this was part of God's plan, since Zerubbabel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin, returned with the priest Joshua as leader of those Israelites who came home in 537 BC. Together with Joshua he was responsible for the laying of the foundation of the Second Temple and of taking the lead in further rebuilding in 520BCE. There seems to have been a movement to make him king and, perhaps, because of this, he suddenly fades from the scene. Possibly, having gained wind of this movement, the Persian authorities recalled him (Wright 1970: 1359; Lang 1983: 44 – 45).

3.5.4: THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

The period of the Restoration was not without its prophets. Haggai and Zechariah helped mobilise the people into rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 5: 1ff). Haggai declared that the reason for the people suffering poverty was that they had looked to their own interests first, building comfortable houses instead of acknowledging God by rebuilding the Temple. Only when the Temple had been rebuilt, would God favour them with good harvests and wealth (Hag 2: 6- 9). Both prophets saw in Zerubbabel hope for the restoration of David's line. Zechariah prophesied increased power for Judah and when questioned on fasting declared that fasts in the new Israel would become feasts. It is possible that the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, when they came to the ears of Darius II via his representatives in Judah, may have helped lead to Zerubbabel's recall (Albertz: 2000: 109).

Henceforward there was to be no Israelite governor-general in charge of Judah. A Persian satrap supervised two colleges who administered local affairs. These were the colleges of elders and of priests. This delegation of authority satisfied the leading families in the land who made up the college of elders, as well as kept the priests happy. The failure of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, concerning the re-establishment of the royal line under Zerubbabel, proved a blow for prophecy. Such prophecy as was still to come began to be more eschatological in outlook and was influenced by apocalyptic thought.

The process of editing of scripture continued in the post-exilic period and Zechariah was rehabilitated, as it were, by the addition of chapters 9 to 14. Indeed chapters 9 to 11 may be the result of one redaction and 12 to 14 of another. Both these additions are apocalyptic in nature, foreseeing the coming of God, judgement punishment and the salvation in Jerusalem of the faithful. In the post-exilic period the twelve minor prophets are considered to have undergone redactions which unified them by

highlighting repeated themes and giving them an eschatological and apocalyptic vision of the “Day of the Lord”, so that together they came to be referred to as the “Book of the Twelve”(Albertz 2000: 110).

Several prophetic works were still to come. Firstly there were the prophecies of the school of Isaiah which still had a following in the post-exilic period. Trito-Isaiah did not share the narrow nationalist religious views of Judah’s leaders and was not satisfied with the increased ritualism which was becoming a facet of Israelite religion. The authors regarded the worship of Yahweh as open to all. They foresaw a time when the true faithful would be comforted, false religious leaders would perish, the New Jerusalem would come as prelude to a new heaven and a new earth when all true believers in Yahweh would worship him in his house.(Stuhllmueller 2004: 332). Reaction to such prophecies from those in authority seems to have been scornful (Is 66:5).

Malachi was concerned about the state into which the rituals of the re-established cult seemed to have fallen. He condemned the offering of imperfect animals. Those who offered full tithes of the best of their crops would win divine favour. He was concerned about foreign marriages. Had the repudiation of foreign wives been less thorough than the book of Ezra leads us to believe, or had marriages with gentiles taken place again? He was also concerned about callous divorce of Israelite wives and warned that God was their protector. Only those who were faithful to God would be blessed. The original version ended with a day on which the proud and evil would be burnt. For the obedient it would be the dawn of a new day (Mal 4: 1 – 2) Malachi was also subject to editing. Two appendices were added in chapter 4 verses 4 to 6. The second of these in verses 5 and 6 prophesied a coming “Day of the Lord”, for which Elijah would come as forerunner (Albertz 2000: 110; Cody 2004: 359 – 360).

Later additions to the “Book of the Twelve” were Joel, Obadiah and Jonah. Joel was probably written in the last part of the 5th or the first part of the 4th century BC. The metaphor of a plague of locusts is given a cosmic significance. A destructive army invading Judah becomes a symbol not only of national judgement, but of a battle which will accompany God’s judgement on the nations in the Valley of Jehosaphat, giving to the end of the book an eschatological and apocalyptic tone (Mallon 2004: 400). In the very short book of Obadiah, from much the same period as Joel, the destruction of Judah’s enemy, Edom, is foretold. This will be followed by a “Day of the Lord” on which the punishment of the nations will occur (Mallon 2004: 404).

Dating Jonah is more difficult. Although set in Assyrian times, it is variously dated by scholars as having been written from somewhere about the beginning of the 6th century to the end of the third century BCE. Its topic is judgement and forgiveness. The prophet longs for Assyria to be judged, but is sent to pronounce to the Assyrians that, if they repent with genuine sorrow, they will receive forgiveness. Judgement may be avoided, in other words, by genuine repentance. This is a warning to all humanity and especially to the Israelites (Ceresko 2004: 580 – 581).

3.6: THE AGE OF REDACTION

The attitude of the Persian government towards its subject peoples had far reaching effects on Israelite society and religion. It was ready to uphold the various peoples' laws and religious customs. This gave impetus to the codification and editing of Israelite law. The Councils of Elders and Priests set about codifying all laws, religious principles and practices so that these could apply to Israelites throughout the empire. This code would receive imperial backing. What was produced was something of a compromise between the interests of the Elders, representing the laity, and the priesthood (Albertz: 2000: 112).

Lay theologians emphasised the role of the call of lay leaders in Israel's history. The history and traditions of the patriarchs were stressed. So was the role of Moses as the lawgiver and greatest of the prophets (Num 12: 6 – 8). To minimise the role of the priesthood Israel was defined as "a kingdom of priests, my holy nation" (Ex 19:6). As legitimization of the Council of Elders, seventy elders were seen as appointed by Moses to share with him in the judging of the people (Num 11: 11ff.).

The priests sought to stress the cultic aspects of Sinai (Ex 25 – 31) and of the service of God in the Tabernacle (Ex 35 – 39), of which God, himself, had dedicated the sanctuary (Ex 40). Sacrificial rituals were worked out in detail (Lev 1 – 7) and a series of holy days such as Yom Kippur (Lev 16) instituted which would make the Temple, as successor of the Tabernacle, the centre of worship and holiness through sacrifice (Lev 4: 5; 5: 15ff). It would be the unifying focus of the nation and would be under priestly control. Only the sacrifices of the Zadokite priesthood could avert God's anger (Num 16 – 18). The emphasis on the consecration of Aaron as high priest and of his direct descendants (Ex 28 – 29), as appointed by God at Sinai, allowed the priesthood, in the absence of a king, to develop the position of High Priest who could fulfil the role of a national leader. The Creation Story in Genesis 1 was a priestly addition which allowed co-operation with other nations as descendants of Adam. This had the effect of giving religious sanction to co-operation with the Persian authorities (Albertz 2000: 111 -114).

As we have seen, the priestly emphasis on Israelite purity had its effect on families where there had been mixed marriages. The development of a detailed ritual code made it difficult for many amongst the poor, especially farmers, to maintain ritual purity, for example, regarding work on the Sabbath. Many poorer citizens were almost bankrupted by Persian taxes and temple tithes. A split developed between rich and poor and many of the grievances of the poor are to be found in the psalms in which the rich are accused of having wealth as their god (Pss 37; 49; 52; 62; 73;94; 112). Those amongst the wealthy who were concerned about the plight of the poor, and sought to help them, became known as the Righteous or Pious.

The book of Job is a discussion as to why a righteous man who helped the poor should suffer rather than a callous person. The poor upheld the teaching of the prophets concerning social justice and the protests of Malachi are a contemporary condemnation of social evils (Mal 3: 4 – 5). The poor began to regard themselves as the righteous, perhaps in view of Malachi's condemnation of the Priests and Levites who allowed imperfect sacrifices and the wealthy who offered them (Mal 1 and 2). They and the wealthy who regarded themselves members of the righteous met in homes and synagogues where they studied the growing number of Scriptures. They became the forerunners of the Pharisees and Scribes and began to look forward to the

“Day of the Lord” and salvation for the righteous. (Ellison 1970: 981 – 2; Albertz 2000: 115 – 117).

During the early post-exilic period a complete split developed between the Samaritans and the Judean Israelites. The Israelites who had remained in Samaria after the Assyrian deportation of the major part of the population were amongst the poorest of the people. The Assyrians had replaced the deportees with people imported from elsewhere in their empire and over the years intermarriage had occurred between the remaining Jews and the new inhabitants. Exilic and post-exilic Deuteronomistic history portrayed the Samaritans as a group of impure Israelites who practised syncretistic worship.

After the return of the Israelites from Egypt, at first the Samaritans came to worship at Jerusalem at the Second Temple. The attempts, under Zerubbabel, to get greater independence for Judah caused Samaritan opposition. The Judean Council of Elders was suspicious of Samaritan intentions. Besides there were tribal frictions: the Judeans being members of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. These racial, political, social and religious frictions led to the banning of Samaritans from the Temple (Neh 7: 5ff; 13: 28). Later, under Alexander the Great, the Samaritans gained permission to build their own temple on Mount Gerizim. They accepted the Zadokite priesthood and the Torah. The enmity continued and, under the Maccabean king, John Hyrcanus, in 128 BCE, the Gerizim temple was destroyed as well as the Samaritan shrine at Shechem (Albertz 2000: 117 – 119).

3.7: THE SELEUCIDS AND APOCALYPTIC

Apocalyptic thought had not yet reached its full development. It was to do so during the reign of the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes IV who sought to stamp out Israelite religion and replace it with Greek beliefs. Between 537 and 333 the Israelites had had a time of comparative peace in which they were free to worship as they pleased under relatively beneficent Persian rule. The Persian Empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great in 333 BCE. After his death, Judah fell to the lot of the Ptolemies, who favoured the Israelites or Jews as they began to be called. There was a large, wealthy, educated diaspora population of Jews in Alexandria who proved useful to the Ptolemies as traders and financiers. It was in Alexandria, under the Ptolemies, that the first Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures, called the Septuagint, was to be made. A Jewish colony and Temple were even set up at Leontopolis on the Nile under a sacked high priest, Onias III.

Judah became something of a battleground during the internecine wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, both dynasties being descendants of generals of Alexander the Great. In 198 BCE the Seleucids captured Judah and their rule was far less sympathetic, culminating in the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The attempts to stamp out the Jewish faith led to the Maccabean Revolt of 166 – 163 BCE after which, for a hundred years until the Romans under Pompey captured Jerusalem, the Jews had a precarious independence under the descendants of Judas Maccabeus, who led the rebellion against the Seleucids. Collectively these kings were known as the Hasmoneans (Kitchen 1970: 1064 – 1065; Good News Bible: 1977: 355 – 358 (timeline)).

So oppressive was Seleucid rule that in order to foster Jewish courage and nationalism, books such as Daniel and Esther were written. In order not to enrage the oppressor these stories were ostensibly set in Babylonian and Persian times. Readers or listeners would automatically know that the Babylonians and Persians represented the Seleucids. Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, became concubine, then wife of the Persian emperor and was able to save her uncle and people from the anti-Jewish machinations of Mordecai, the emperor's chief minister.

Daniel is set in the Babylonian and Persian eras. Daniel, a handsome, intelligent young Israelite deportee was chosen to be trained for high administrative office. He remained true to the Jewish faith, refusing to eat food that was not kosher and to worship both Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus when ordered to do so. Three of his equally heroic friends, Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego, who are caught worshipping Yahweh in the time of Nebuchadnezzar were saved in the fiery furnace by God. Daniel, in the time of Cyrus, was saved in the Lions' den. Daniel was given exceptional spiritual insight by God so that he could interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar.

These stories sought to strengthen the Jews by showing that God would save those who stood up valiantly for their faith. Yahweh gave to his faithful followers a spiritual insight that not even the most skilled pagan magicians had and showed that imperial power was as nothing to God's power. So great was Jewish suffering, that some scholars consider editors added to Daniel chapters 7 to 12 which tell of apocalyptic visions dealing with the timing of the end of the world. These chapters contrast with the narrative form and the presentation of dreams to be found in the first part of the book. In Daniel we find the most developed apocalyptic writing in the Old Testament (Hartman and di Lella 2004: 406 – 409).

3.8: MORE REDACTION AND RESISTANCE AND WISDOM LITERATURE

Meanwhile further books were added to Scripture. The Samaritan question and the growing Hellenization of the 3rd century BCE led to a re-interpretation of Jewish history in the two books of Chronicles, which laid emphasis on the Jerusalem Temple, a matter of priestly concern, and on a somewhat sanitised version of David's kingship. Doubtless in the political situation of the time, the priestly writers began to feel again that the only hope for God's people was the coming of a powerful, devout king, of David's line, who, like David, would re-establish an Israelite kingdom and defend it against the surrounding powers. Deuteronomy was further revised by priestly redactors to also lay emphasis on Temple worship and the monarchy. Prophetic texts generally were revised to provide the same emphases and were elevated to the status of scripture along with, though of lesser importance than, the Pentateuch. So the Major Prophets and the "Book of the Twelve" entered scripture (Albertz 2000: 119 – 120).

Apart from resistance literature like Daniel and Esther, a variety of literature which is almost contemporaneous with them is Wisdom Literature, which comes from a practical lay viewpoint such as Ecclesiastes, also named Qoheleth, and in the Septuagint, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, alias Ecclesiasticus. This so called Wisdom Literature is part of an old Israelite tradition, earlier examples of which are to be found in Proverbs and in some of the poetry of the

Psalms. The Septuagint also included further examples of resistance literature such as Tobit and Judith. Such books form part of what is called the Apocrypha in Protestant Bibles. Versions of the Apocrypha may include various other books of this type as well as the two books of Esdras, which are of an apocalyptic nature. It has already been mentioned that the Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Old Testament made by, supposedly 70, Jewish scholars in Alexandria in the 2nd century BC. *Septuaginti* is the Latin for seventy (Albertz 2000: 121).

3.9: CONCLUSION

From the time of Amos, the theme of the “Day of the Lord” bringing divine judgement both on the Israelites and their enemies for their sinful neglect of YHWH, his laws, covenant and majesty became a *Leitmotiv* of prophecy, especially in the “Book of the Twelve”. A just God, however, would not punish the righteous and would surely forgive those who repented. So salvation for a few, or a remnant, became associated with judgement and the “Day of the Lord”. A problem was how to determine when the “Day of the Lord” would come. At first it was thought the “Day” would come soon, but, when this seemed unlikely, it began to be viewed in an eschatological sense, which later became bound up with apocalyptic. For some, at first, the return from exile in Babylon seemed to be the “Day of the Lord”. However, when expectations were not fulfilled, it was apparent that that day was still to come. Eventually the “Day of the Lord” with its judgement and salvation of a faithful remnant became an event which would occur in God’s own time there would be a new creation under his reign..

The “Day of the Lord became the point in Israelite and world history to which all the righteous looked forward: a day on which they would be saved, the unrighteous condemned and God would begin to reign eternally.

CHAPTER 4: JUDGEMENT IN THE “BOOK OF THE TWELVE

In order to understand judgement on Old Testament terms it is necessary to have some understanding of what is meant by Law or *Torah*. Further it will help to have an idea of the nuances of the Hebrew words involving judgement.

4.1 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON TORAH

In order to consider “judgement” it will be necessary to give an overview of the Israelite conception of “Law”.

According to the Israelite point of view, law or TORAH was given by God either directly, as at Sinai, or through human intermediaries such as Moses [Murray: 1970: 718]. Torah is derived from a Hebrew singular *tora*, the plural of which is *torot*, which more accurately could be translated as authoritative teaching, direction or instruction. It came to apply not only to the specific teachings which were taken as divine instruction or law in the so-called five books of Moses, but to the whole of the Pentateuch (Dahlberg 1990: 503; Selman 2003: 509).

In the Pentateuch we find Torah embedded in the story of God’s revelation of himself to Israel, his chosen people and to their ancestors, the patriarchs. We are shown God acting in the history of his people as he saves them from Egypt, makes known his laws and leads them into the Promised Land (Dahlberg 1990: 503; Selman 2003: 500).

It was the role of the priests to teach and explain Torah to the people and of the prophets to recall the people to obedience to the law, to remind them of God’s saving mercies and to warn them of God’s wrath and its consequences when his teachings were disobeyed (Murray 1970: 718).

The two main types of law are often referred to as Apodictic Law and Casuistic Law. The former take may the form of a direct command: either “You shall...” or “You shall not...” The Ten Commandments are the great example of this kind of Law (Ex 20). Because of their brevity it is likely that the Ten Commandments go back to the earliest laws formulated by the Israelites or even their nomadic Semitic ancestors.

Frequently, apodictic law is couched in personal rather than general terms and is usually in the negative: “You shall not” However, while retaining its direct command form it may be phrased at times like casuistic law, or what the critic Fohrer called “casuistic law in apodictic formulation” and be more general in address: “Whoever kidnaps a man shall be put to death” (Ex 21:16). Here command, situation and consequence are combined (Boecker 1976: 194 – 207; Dahlberg 1990; 504; Selman: 2003: 508).

Casuistic Law is situational in approach. Firstly a series of conditional situations is given, after which the legal consequences are given. The “conditional situations” lay out the facts of the case: *When a man removes the cover of a cistern or digs a cistern and leaves it uncovered, then if an ox or donkey falls into it, the owner of the cistern must make good the loss; he must pay the owner the price of the animal and the dead beast will be his (Ex 21:33).*

In Apodictic Law the accused is either clearly guilty or innocent and the required or usual punishment must be administered, even though this may not be stated. Casuistic Law requires more discernment and therefore careful weighing up of the case (Deut. 17: 8) and judgement by a competent judicial authority: the leader of the people, the elders, or the priests. Casuistic law is a form of case law in which certain penalties have been suitable to fit the offence and have been recorded as legal precedents (Boecker 1976: 150 – 155; Dahlberg 1990: 504; Selman 2003: 508).

A curse, which would take effect whether the violator was detected or not, was another form of law which could be used when other forms of enforcement could not be used (Dahlberg 1990: 504). If the violator was undetected, it was because the crime was a “secret” one, committed when there were no witnesses. This was a primitive form of justice. Because the crime could not be dealt with via the judicial process and the perpetrator was an unknown member of the community, the community became tainted by guilt. In pronouncing a curse on the perpetrator, the community was cleared of guilt, and the perpetrator effectively handed over to divine justice, since God would know who the perpetrator was. A curse is phrased like apodictic law, but the curse is itself the sentence: *A curse on him who misdirects a blind man* (Boecker 1976: 197 – 201).

It is uncertain when Torah became supported by a judicial system. It may have been during the time of the monarchy, especially, perhaps, under the strong centralization of Judah under Hezekiah and Josiah. The judicial system probably was strengthened after the exile under Ezra and Nehemiah, possibly influenced by Persian legal procedures (Selman 2003: 508).

Some scholars divide the Law into seven collections: the Decalogue or Ten Commandments; the Ritual Decalogue; the Litany of Twelve Curses; the Covenant Code; the Deuteronomic Code; the Holiness Code and the Priestly Code (Dahlberg 1990: 504 – 505).

The Ten Commandments (Decalogue), in substantially the same form, are to be found in Exodus 20: 1-17 and Deuteronomy 5: 6- 21. Its briefness, simplicity and apodictic form suggest that it is very old and may go back to Moses. It deals with everyone’s respect for God, parents and neighbours. The Ritual Dialogue (Ex 34: 11 – 26) are ten apodictic, cultic laws, the giving of which is described when Moses returned to the mountain after destroying the first tablets of stone at the sight of the golden calf.

These laws probably actually date from Judah in the eighth or ninth centuries when the Israelites formed a settled agricultural society, had become a monarchy and had a fairly well-organized and developed religious cult. The Litany of Twelve Curses is found in Deuteronomy (27: 15 – 26) and supplies curses for the breakers of eleven laws. It takes the form of a litany summarising basic sexual, moral laws and treatment of one’s neighbour. It is probably early in date and is associated with the shrine at Shechem.

The Covenant Code (Ex 21: 1 – 23: 33 and also probably 20: 22 – 26) is named by association with the covenant ceremony described in Exodus 24: 3 6 and is a mixture of cultic and civil law, both apodictic and casuistic and may probably be dated to the

early monarchy. The civil law component deals with treatment of slaves and neighbours. It illustrates the principles to be found in the Ten Commandments. (Dahlberg 1990: 504 – 505; Selman 2003: 502).

The Deuteronomic code is introduced by chapters 1 – 4 of Deuteronomy which describe God’s mercy to Israel and this is followed by seven chapters of sermons by Moses to the People of Israel before their entry into the Promised Land. Many of the laws in the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12 – 26) are to be found in the Covenant Code or in other places in the Pentateuch, but a great deal of it is new. For example limitations are placed on the power of the king (17: 14 – 20) and there is emphasis on sacrifice at a central but unspecified temple.

The concern with motivation to obey the Law has caused some to refer to this code as “preached law”. This suggests that the basis of Deuteronomy formed the scroll found in the Temple which was read to Josiah and which stimulated his reforms, and that it may be dated to the later period of the monarchy. The Code also contains the Shema (6: 4 – 9), the Jewish confession of faith central to their subsequent worship. Much of the Code is cultic, but much too involves civil law and treatment of one’s fellows (Murray 1970: 719; Anderson 1988: 375-6).

The Holiness Code (Lev 17 – 26) is so-called from its desire to motivate keeping of the Law (19: 2; 20: 26). In this context holiness is a form of purity or undefilement which must approach that of God. In Leviticus 11, after a long list of creatures unfit to eat, God instructs his people: “For I am the Lord your God; you are to make yourselves holy, because I am holy” (v45). Apart from food laws, the code also deals with sacrifices, forbidden sexual practices, the liturgical year and purity for the priesthood.

Chapter 19 deals with social relationships, with verse 18 summing up the second part of the Decalogue in the command to love your neighbour as yourself. That the various codes deal in slightly differing ways with much the same topics, in no particular order, would seem to indicate that all are considered of equal importance in the people’s relationship with God (Dahlberg 1990: 505; Selman 2003: 503 – 507).

It is difficult to date the Holiness Code. It seems likely that it consists of two collections and that the earlier compilation (Lev 18 – 23) is prior to Deuteronomy, probably having been compiled in the first decades of the 7th century BCE. The later part of the code (Lev 25 – 26) probably dates from the exile and depends on Deuteronomy (Boecker 1976: 186 – 189).

Lastly the Priestly Code is regarded as the work of priestly editors, starting during the exile in Babylon, as they began the editing and expanding of what is now called the Pentateuch. During the exile, cut off from worship in a destroyed Temple, the Israelites found strength in Torah and this provided stimulus for its redaction and expansion (Murray 1970: 720).

As a result their work is to be found spread out throughout the first four books, starting with the creation story found in Genesis 1 and ending in Numbers 36. It tends to be largely cultic, dealing with the sanctity of blood as seat of divinely given life (Gen. 9: 1 – 7; Lev 17:10- 11), circumcision (Gen 17: 1-7), instructions about the

feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12: 1 -20, 24 – 27), the Tabernacle, its furnishings, priestly robes and consecration (Ex.25 – 31).

The longest section of priestly law is to be found in Leviticus and involves sacrifices and liturgy. The concerns of this code are to find a sanctified background for Temple worship in the worship of the Tabernacle and to emphasise the need for the holiness of the nation so that it can approach God holily in a holy worship. The emphasis on rules of physical cleanliness and of diet were an attempt to ensure holiness by ensuring a separation from anything that might be regarded as contaminating God's chosen people (Dahlberg 1990: 505).

The Law, or Torah, expressed the will of God and its instruction was part of his merciful nature, because in the Law he taught his people the way of holiness that he desired. They did not live “on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh” (Deut 8:3). Torah was set in the context of God's overall covenant which included the covenants with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, the succeeding patriarchs and that of Sinai. If Israel would be obedient, it would have God's blessing and protection. To keep Torah was to have life and to express love for God. To disobey could bring God's curse and death. In keeping it Israel reflected to God, creation and humanity, both Israelite and alien, God's own all-embracing love (Selman: 2003: 509 – 513).

4.2 THE ROLE OF VOCABULARY IN UNDERSTANDING ISRAELITE CONCEPTS OF JUDGEMENT

To arrive at as full an understanding as possible of the word “judgement” as used in the “Book of the Twelve”, it will be necessary to look at the use of the word, and its Hebrew cognates, in the Old Testament as this will provide background for the way in which the minor prophets understood the term and its associated words [Mafico: 1992: 1106]. Especially we shall look at the derivatives of two root Hebrew words *spt* and *dyn*, both of which have in English the meaning “to judge”.

A derivative of *spt* is *mispāt* which may be translated as *judgement* (Brown, A 2000: 754). It has been suggested by HW Hertzberg that the original basic meaning of *spt* may have been *to carry out one's will*, perhaps indicating a decision by choice (Liedke 1997: 1393). If we go back to Akkadian literature we find two *spt* homonyms: *spt I* is used in legal matters (along with *dyn*), while *spt II* indicates *to threaten, to warn* (Mafico 1992: 110).

This indicates that in the earliest understanding of the word(s) there were suggestions not only of legal process but also of force, the kind of force that ensures that a decision is obeyed. The use of *spt* and its derivatives is not limited to legal meanings. When used with prepositions meaning “between” it implies the restoration of a previous *shalom* (peace or sense of agreement). Here the sense of *spt* is more one of mediation. There is also the implication that the one who performs *spt* is a person who is righteous and holy (Mafico 1992: 1105 & 1106).

A performance of *spt* may apply to restoration of unity within a community or between two or more people. In bringing about this unity at least three parties are

involved: two individuals or groups in disagreement and a judge or mediator who usually has the backing of the community, the law, the government, or God. In Exodus 18:16 we read of Moses saying, *Whenever there is a dispute among them, they come to me, and I decide between one party and the other. I make known the statutes and the laws of God.*

In Numbers 35:24 the Law lays down how to resolve disputes caused by unintentional homicide: *the community is to judge between the attacker and the next-of-kin according to these rules* and then proceeds to give a list of them (Liedke 1997: vol. 3: 1393). Although sixty percent of the judgements implied by *spt* refer to human decisions, the other forty percent apply to God's judging (Schultz 1997: vol. 4: 214).

A near synonym of *spt* is *dyn*. Like *spt* it has various derivatives, for example: *din*, judgement; *dayyan*, a judge; *madon/madhon* or *midyan* meaning strife or contention. As a verb it is used 25 times in the Old Testament, and as a noun 24 times, whereas *spt* is used some 144 times and as a noun, *mispal*, 422 times (Botterweck 1978: 189-190; Liedke 1997: 335-6; Liedke 1997: 1392-3]. *Dyn* occurs more frequently in poetic and post-exilic writing. Richard Schultz in his article on the use of the word in van Gemeren sees its use in terms of establishing and maintaining order as well as in restoring order through judgement (Schultz 1997: vol.1: 939).

The author of the article in Jenni feels that on the whole *dyn* and *din* have a more legally based meaning than *spt* and *sopet*, involving a binding judgement in a legal case, frequently of a punitive nature (Liedke 1997: vol.1: 335). When judgement is pronounced, justice is created, and in this sense the legal meaning of *dyn* begins to shift towards that of *spt*: it may begin to take on a moral nuance of compassion. Sometimes it can be difficult to differentiate between the meanings of words, as in Psalm 140: 12 with *din* and *mispal*:

*I know that the Lord will give to the needy their rights
And justice to the downtrodden .*

That *dyn* and *spt* and their derivatives sometimes contrast and sometimes coalesce in meaning helps to emphasise that the nature of God's judgement is strict, fair and yet compassionate. The poor and those suffering injustice are always assured of God's compassion, but the oppressor who acknowledges his misdeeds and starts to act justly, is not outside that compassion and will be forgiven (Botterweck and Hamp 1978: vol.3: 186 -193).

4.3 A STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF JUDGEMENT IN THE "BOOK OF THE TWELVE"

In considering "judgement" in the "Book of the Twelve", the various prophets' approach to the topic will be studied according to the times in which the individual books were written or finally edited. The dating of the books has been taken from Brown, Raymond E et al: 2004: The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; Bangalore; Theological Publications in India, since this is the most recent commentary I have found available.

First to be dealt with will be the prophets preceding the Assyrian conquest of the Kingdom of Israel: Amos and Hosea prophesying to Israel and Micah to Judah. Next will be the Minor Prophets who preceded Judah's Babylonian exile: Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk. Then will come the prophets closest in time to the return from Babylon: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, followed by the prophets from a later date: Obadiah, Joel, and finally Jonah.

4.3.1 THE 8TH CENTURY BC PROPHETS

4.3.1.1 AMOS AND JUDGEMENT

Amos came from a village in Judah just south of the border with Israel, the kingdom against which most of his prophecies were directed. His headquarters there were probably at the royal shrine of Bethel which was also close to the border between the two Israelite kingdoms. He came from a humble background, describing himself as a livestock breeder and a pricker of Sycamore figs which needed to be pierced in order to ripen.

Amos prophesied during a period of prosperity towards the end of the eighth century BCE which occurred between the period when Shalmaneser III (859 – 825) and Adadnirari (811 – 782) exacted tribute from Jehu (841 – 814) and Jehoash (798 – 783) of Israel and the time when Tiglath – Pileser III (745 – 727) conquered the Kingdom of Israel in 721. Prosperity brought about a decline in religious and moral values (Barre 2004: 209).

Some scholars have felt that Amos may have been a cultic prophet attached to the shrine at Bethel who was able to step outside the normal patriotic concerns of cultic prophets. Until the time of Amos, God's judgement was largely seen by Israelites in terms of God's wrath against the enemies of his people. Amos in chapters 1:3 to 2:26 declares judgement against the nations. These are the surrounding enemies of Israel and Judah, but what is remarkable is that he includes Israel and Judah in the list of those nations with whom God is offended.

The first six nations, Damascus, meaning Syria, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, had all been part of David's empire. Their betrayal of Judah and Israel, and the cruelty of some of their actions are seen as a form of covenant treaty betrayal of the Israelite peoples. Amos foretells their punishment by fire, and, Damascus and Ammon are also to be punished by exile; both fire and exile are disasters that would overtake a conquered nation (1:3 – 2:16) (Barre 2004: 211).

Judah is threatened with destruction by fire for having spurned God's law by worshipping false Gods. It is for Israel, however, that Amos reserves his greatest wrath. Israelite has sold Israelite into slavery, temple prostitution has profaned God's shrines, especially Bethel. Pledges which should have been returned to the poor have been kept and dedicated as sacred offerings, God's shrine has been desecrated and Nazirites have been corrupted (2:6 – 9).

This, as it were, is just range-finding, for Amos reserves his accusatory broadsides for chapter 5 where Israel is accused of corrupting justice to the extent that society connives with wrongdoers (5: 7 &10), threatens the innocent and refuses justice to the

poor (5:12). The poor are overtaxed to the benefit of the wealthy (5:11). Worship is insincere, ritually correct, but unconnected with the righteousness of justice (3:4-5; 5:21-24), so that Amos cries out: *Let justice flow like a river and righteousness like a never-failing torrent* (5:24). In chapter 8, the prophet condemns cheating on weights and measures (vv.4-7). Justice is the basis of a healthy society.

It is significant that Amos's condemnation of Israel is almost entirely in terms of injustice: corruption of the intention of God's Law and injustice to the poor. When it comes to cultic matters his concern is that cultic worship has become hollow since its validity is denied by corruption and injustice. Israel has been faithless to the Sinai Covenant while God has remained faithful: faithful to them in the wanderings in the desert, faithful in leading them into the Promised Land, faithful in raising up prophets like Moses to guide them and to reveal God's will and faithful in raising up holy men like the Nazirites whom they had sought to corrupt (2:10-11) (Barre 2004: 212).

Amos view of the Day of the Lord falling on Judah and Israel was novel in Israelite terms. As God's chosen people they had regarded God's wrath as primarily reserved for their enemies. Amos proclaims it as a day of doom, especially for Israel, a reversal of what they thought and believed:

*Woe betide those who long for the day of the Lord!
What will the day of the Lord mean for you?
It will be darkness, not light; (5:18).*

To Amos's listeners such a prophecy was shocking. Instead of being able to gloat over God's punishment of the nation's enemies, Israel itself would be under judgement, a judgement, from which, owing to the darkness, escape would be impossible. The very reversal of expectations helps to emphasise how much Israel was in need of judgement (Nogalski 2003: 204).

In chapters 7 and 8 Amos experiences a series of visions illustrating God's anger. Firstly God shows him a hatching swarm of locusts which devoured all the vegetation in the land (7:1-3); next a flame of fire which would destroy earth and hell (7:4-6); then a plumbline against the straightness of which the crookedness of Israel was measured. Divine judgement led to the destruction of the shrines of Israel and of the Royal house.

Lastly, Amos sees a basket of ripe summer fruit signifying that the time is ripe for the fall of Israel (8:1-3). Although it seems that God repents of the wholesale destruction symbolised in the first two visions, there will be grief, death and destruction in the land (8:3). It is not only the men and the leaders who have become corrupt. The women, through their desire for luxury and a life of sybaritic ease, have caused the poor to be oppressed. In a passage of scorn, Amos foretells for them a brutal end (4:1-3) Barre 2004: 212).

Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, who commanded Amos never again to prophesy at a royal shrine, would die in a heathen country, his wife would be forced to become a prostitute, his sons and daughters would be killed and Israel would be deported (7: 10 - 17). At this point Amos is prophesying directly and foretelling the future without

specifying any time frame. Elsewhere, as with most of the prophets, his threats of judgement are metaphorical and allusive.

The metaphors he uses are such as would resonate with a people who had become largely agricultural and who were accustomed to the ever-present danger of war. So in chapter 4 we find images of famine (v6), drought (v7-8), blight (v9), plague (v10) and destruction (v11). Added to these are images of earthquake and eclipse with their, at that time, supernatural connotations (8:8-14).

God's power as creator and destroyer has already been indicated (5: 8 - 9) in beautifully poetic terms. Apart from God's relenting from a total destruction suggested by the metaphors of fire and locusts in chapter 7, Amos's view of God's judgement on the day of the Lord is a bleak one, befitting the day of the Lord being one of unrelieved darkness. God's anger is stressed with little sign of his compassion towards even his own people. Exile is their fate.

An interesting image is to be found in chapter 9 verses 1 to 4 where, in a fifth vision, the prophet is commanded to strike the pillars of the porch of the Temple so that it may smash down on the heads of the people. It recalls the picture of the captured Samson using his regained strength to cause the portico of a Philistine temple to collapse on the enemies of God's people. Here God's own people have become his enemy, even to the extent of the destruction of his temple, since the people's worship has been false.

The first half of chapter 9 is bleak in describing the horrors leading to the coming exile. Only verses 8b to 15 of this last chapter offer any hope for a spared and restored remnant that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, the Davidic line restored and that there will be peace and prosperity, expressed in terms of abundant harvests.

Many scholars, however, regard these last verses as an editorial addition and conclusion which give Amos a more optimistic outlook in terms of the salvation of Israel and bring it into line with other classical prophets in whom destruction was not God's final word (Barre 2004: 210 – 216). At the same time 9: 14 acknowledges the horror and severity of the judgement which befell Israel: ruined cities and destroyed agriculture (Westermann 1987:117).

Nogalski finds thematic links involving mourning at the "Day of the Lord" and judgement, for example between Amos 5: 16 – 17 and Joel 1: 10 – 12 and 2: 12. This helps to suggest that there was detailed redaction in arranging and linking the books of the Minor Prophets (Nogalski 2003 204-5). House finds further close thematic links amongst Amos 4: 6 – 13; Hos. 6: 1 – 3, 14: 1 – 3 and Joel 2: 1 – 17 where the key to avoiding judgement is to return to the Lord (House 2003; 325). Judgement on the "Day of the Lord" becomes a developing and uniting theme in the books of the prophets.

4.3.1.2 HOSEA AND JUDGEMENT

Hosea's period of prophecy from about 750 to 732 probably overlapped with Amos's later years. Little is known about his background and he lived during a period when the renewed threat from Assyria to the Kingdom of Israel was becoming ever more

threatening. Within Israel a series of palace revolutions had helped lead to a rapid succession of six kings during the last twenty years of Israel's existence.

Two of them, Zechariah and Shallum were assassinated - Shallum having been Zechariah's murderer. Menahem, himself the murderer of Shallum, had to accept Assyrian overlordship and pay heavy tribute. Menahem's son, Pekahiah, was murdered by Pekah who was anti-Assyrian and made an alliance with Damascus against Judah to overthrow David's descendant in order to replace him with a king who would join the alliance against Assyria. Assyria dethroned Pekah replacing him with the seemingly compliant Hoshea and taking Galilee and Transjordan. Hoshea joined Assyria's enemies and the remainder of Israel was taken, its population deported and replaced with alien settlers (McCarthy and Murphy 2004:217 – 21)].

For Hosea the anarchy of Israel was a symptom of a disorder deeper than political chicanery. Israel had forsaken God, its true king, in favour of the Baals, the fertility gods of Canaan. The cult of Yahweh was contaminated with the fertility rites of Baalism including religious prostitution and consequent abuse of Yahweh's laws involving sex. Instead of sacrifice being an act of thanksgiving or an acknowledgement of human sin and need of God, it became a means of bribing God for the favour of good harvests and fertile stock, gifts which a loving God wished to shower on a faithful people.

To Hosea the behaviour of Israel in forsaking Yahweh, the God of Israel, for the Baals was akin to harlotry. Israel had a case to answer before God and so Hosea in many of his prophecies uses the form of judgement called *rib* in his accusations against the nation. In relying on other nations for protection, rather than on God, Israel is denying the power of Yahweh who led them out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land, driving their enemies before them (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 218 – 219).

The underlying image of the book is the parable put into practice of Hosea marrying a harlot as symbol of the marriage between God and his people having been betrayed by them. God, as faithful and loving husband of Israel, is personified by Hosea, who threatens and cajoles Gomer his faithless wife (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 217 – 219).

The names of Gomer's children become symbols of Israel's fractured relationship with God: Her elder son by Hosea is named Jezreel since God will punish the house of Jehu for its bloodshed in the Valley of Jezreel; her daughter's name, Lo-ruhamah, means "no future love for Israel" and her son's, Lo – ammi, "not my people" (1:6 & 8), the implication being that these were the children of prostitution (2:4-5). Hosea's threatening, followed by cajoling of his wife, illustrated especially in chapter 2, reflects God's desire to restore the covenant relationship with Israel (2:18-23).

Chapters 4 and 5 set out God's case against Israel and verse chapter 4 stresses it is God himself who brings punishment. Faith, loyalty and acknowledgement of God have vanished from the land. Oaths are broken. Murder, robbery and adultery take place in contravention of the basic tenets of the Mosaic Law. It is the priests and prophets who have set the bad example by being ignorant of what God's covenant

demands, worshipping idols, using divination, consorting with temple prostitutes, offering sacrifices at pagan shrines (4: 1-14).

The very depth of immorality to which Israel has sunk is such that it prevents Israel from returning to God because the nation has lost all sense of morality and of God's righteousness (5:4). Hosea warns that the land will become so desolate, that the wild beasts, birds and fish will disappear (4:3) and an invader will lay waste their fields (5: 7-9). The suffering of the nation will be ongoing, for God describes his vengeance as being like a festering sore and a canker (5:12).

Israel's answer to divine punishment through enemy threats has been to seek help through alliances with the most dangerous enemies, including Assyria, rather than to rely on God (5:13). God's intention is to leave the people to their own devices until they choose to seek him (5:15). In chapter 6, the first three verses are ironic, if not sarcastic in tone, representing the insincere words the nation may use in claiming to return to God. There is no real repentance, but an expectation that God will restore them if they acknowledge him. God's response is to both Israel and Judah (6:4 & 11). Some regard the inclusion of Judah at this point as a later editorial gloss (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 223), others as a natural prophetic impulse since both kingdoms were inhabited by God's chosen people (Cole 1980: 703).

God's response through Hosea is to remind the people:

*For I require loyalty, not sacrifice,
Acknowledgement of God rather than whole-offerings (6:6).*

It is easy to pretend to be ritually correct when sacrificing to Yahweh, while still practising injustice and worshipping the Baals at the same time. Religious sites like Admah, Gilead and Bethel had all been desecrated by Israel's apostasy (6: 7 – 11). It is not only priests and prophets who have failed to set the example, but also the king (7:5). King after king falls from power. Their fault is that they seek help through intrigue rather than from God (7:5-7). Time after time Hosea warns that, unless the nation repents, it faces destruction: 7:12; 8:8-10; 9:3; 10:5-8; 10: 13-15; 13:17-16.

What differentiates Hosea's accusations from those of Amos is the tone of anguish in which the prophecies are made. At the beginning of chapter 11 Israel is spoken of as a loved but errant child who, despite God's love, deliberately disobeys by consorting with those who will do him or her no good (11:1 – 6), vacillating between alliances with various nations instead of relying on God (Mackintosh 1997: 400).

Consistently God, through the prophet, pleads with Israel to turn back to him and to practise loyalty and justice. God's judgement differs from humanity's. Human punishment is negative, involving retribution, even destruction. God's punishment is designed to provoke penitence (11: 9) (Mackintosh 1997; 465). The cultic prophets have ignored his visions (12:10).

Chapter 13: 1 – 16 is a moving poem of love and of condemnation. It falls into four parts: in verses 1 – 3. God accuses Israel and announces his judgement on the land; in verses 4 – 8 God reminds them that he had saved them in the Wilderness, that he is their saviour whose deeds they ignore to their cost; verses 9 – 11 deal with the

foolishness of trusting in political leaders and in verses 12 –16 God passes on his people the verdict of death.

The dreadful fate that awaits an unrepentant Israel is expressed in vivid images of wild animals and their prey (13:4 – 8), and the horrors of the sacking of a city, when even babies are put to the sword (13:16). The book ends with a final impassioned plea for Israel to return to God, to confess their sins, to repudiate false gods, and to acknowledge that there is no help from worldly allies. If the nation does so there will be healing and growth (14: 1 – 3) which is expressed by similes drawn from the abundant growth in nature (14: 4 - 7)

So deeply sunk are Israel and its leaders in sin that they are incapable of recognising their sinful state (4:7; 5:4; 10:3). Warning will no longer have any effect. All that the prophet can do is to announce judgement (Gottwald 1996: 144). Hosea does not prophesy a specific Day of the Lord, but it is very apparent that the day of Israel's judgement for her sins is imminent.

Hosea's relationship with the errant Gomer enables the expression of God's love for his people as similar to that between husband and wife. Israel's failure to acknowledge God by worshipping foreign gods (thus creating a syncretist form of religion) is regarded as the equivalent of harlotry, a comparison also employed by later prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. 3 and Ezek. 16). Repentance, Hosea indicates, can take place at once, provided it is sincere, for Amos it is scarcely a possibility.

Both prophets have a burning desire for justice as the basis of the faith and a concern for the poor. Cultic correctness has no value, unless the heart is proved to be right with God through right living. Hosea's use of the imagery of accusation in a court of law (*rib*) is contrasted by God's pleading with his people to return to him and avoid judgement. The metaphor involves a father who has made a case against his son (Mowley 1991: 150). The *rib* metaphor fits in with *dyn* and *mispāt*, which we have seen denote judgement. Judgement, for Hosea, is God's last resort, for he is a God of mercy and salvation more than one of rigid justice. For Amos, God is essentially a stern, impartial judge. The extent of God's desire to save his people will be more fully described in the next chapter.

4.3.1.3 MICAH AND JUDGEMENT

With Micah the prophetic attention in "The Book of the Twelve" turns from Israel to Judah. Micah came from the village of Moresheth-gath and his prophesying covers the years 740 to 687 BCE. He was a contemporary of the first Isaiah and he followed closely and even overlapped slightly the latter years of Hosea's activity. The arrangement of the book, as with Hosea, consists of prophecies of forthcoming doom interspersed with promises of hope. Judah was suffering from a false sense of security, seemingly unaware of how far they had backslid from God's covenant requirements in the Law, while still believing God was in their midst (3:11).

Like Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, Micah is concerned with social justice. The rich batten on the poor and the religious leaders adapt God's word to suit what their listeners

wish to hear, so that evil and good become confused. The cult and worship as a result become sterile (Laberge 2004: 249).

Micah's message of hope is that, under a remnant, a new Israel will emerge in which the Temple will be re-established as a place of true worship, a centre of Israel and of the world, and God's steadfast love will be shown as in the nation's early history (Laberge: 2004: 249 – 250). The book opens with a reminder of God's kingly power; the creator of the mountains and hills will come to destroy both Judah and Samaria for their sins (1:2 – 7).

A deadly blow has struck Judah as it had Samaria, the prophet laments. Cities besieged by Sennacherib are mentioned; it is Jerusalem that will suffer next (1:8 – 16). The people should turn to performing mourning rites (1:16). Their sin, as with Samaria, has been idolatry (1:5-7). Their grief should mirror God's. God's accusations against his people are expressed by the prophet in chapters 2, 3 and 6. Chapters 4 and five are ones of hope and future redemption and chapter 7 one of hope despite the nation's sinfulness. In Micah, passages of judgement precede those of hope of salvation. For example Micah 2: 12 – 13 and 4: 9 – 5: 4 promising hope and victory follow on passages of judgement. In other words, judgement, according to God's plan, is a prelude to salvation (Westermann 1987: 106 – 107).

The sins condemned by Micah are seizing the property and homes of the poor and enslaving the owner and debtor (2:1-2); the judgement for this is loss of their own land at the hands of the enemy, at that time Assyria. Then there is theft from travellers, returning soldiers and women and children who have no one to protect them (2:8-10). The perpetrators of such acts are masters of what today is called spin, putting a good interpretation on something that is wrong (2:6 and 11).

At the beginning of chapter 3, Micah employs an image of savagery and cruelty to describe the actions of the powerful. They hate good and love evil and in this perversion it is as if they are flaying the skin from the poor and carving up their flesh like butchers and devouring the people as if they are cannibals (2:1-3). When they have the temerity to call upon God he refuses to give them any answer (2:4). Prophets, priests and leaders sell their favour for bribes. They give the people false assurances of security (2:6-11) (Laberge 2004: 251).

The result of such cruelty and dishonesty is destruction so complete that Jerusalem and Mount Zion will become levelled like ploughland and as barren as moorland (2:12). At the beginning of chapter 6 the idea of crime and judgement is reinforced by court imagery in which even the mountains are called to hear God's case against his people (6:1-2).

By ignoring Law and Covenant Judah has forgotten what God did for his people in their time of great vulnerability, when he guided them out of Egypt and gave them leaders like Moses, Aaron and Miriam, who led them to victory against powerful enemies (6:3-5). The prophet's tone in this reminder, expresses God's sorrow at the inability of his people to be faithful, as he is faithful to them. In response to this accusation, it is as if the people ask what kind of worship and sacrifices God requires for the relationship to be restored (6:6-7) (Laberge 2004: 253).

God's answer through Micah is the same as that he gave Israel through Amos and Hosea:

*The Lord has told you mortals what is good,
And what the Lord requires of you:
Only to act justly, to love loyalty'
To walk humbly with your God (6:8 cf Am 5:24; Hos. 6:6; 10:12; 12:6)*

Cultic correctness is of no value unaccompanied by justice. This is stressed as the prophet continues to speak in a tone of sorrowful anger, piling up further accusations God has against Judah; false weights and measures, violence and lies (6:9-12). Judah has followed the evil examples of Omri and Ahab by introducing the worship of idols and the Baals (6:16 cf I Kings 16: 23-34) [Laberge: 2004:254]. The nation will not enjoy the blessings that harvests should bring because God will bring on them the disaster their sins deserve (6:13-15).

Chapters 4, 5 and 7 are the chapters of hope. On a day to be appointed (4:6), God will restore Jerusalem, Judah's enemies will be defeated, warfare will cease and they will be his people and God will again be their loving God. All that is corrupt in behaviour and worship will be banished from the land. Chapter 7 begins with a dreary litany of Judah's sins: the people have lost any sense of integrity, murder is committed, officials including judges are venal, confidence may not be placed in friends and not even in wives and sons: family relationships have collapsed (7:1-6).

In other words we have a picture of a society in a state of complete moral collapse. Despite this, the prophet is resolute that he will remain faithful to God. He will endure punishment for his sins, just as the nation must endure punishment. Faith and confession will release God's mercy and love. God will re-establish his people, exiles will return and enemies will be punished (7:7-13). The book ends with a prayer (7:14-17) and a hymn (7:18-20) (Laberge 2004: 254). In Micah, as in Hosea, we find a contrast between God's angry yet just judgement and his desire to show love and mercy, expressed in terms of longing. The nature of this mercy will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.3.2 THE 7TH AND 6TH CENTURY PROPHETS

4.3.2.1 ZEPHANIAH AND JUDGEMENT

In time we move forward about a century before we encounter the next three prophets of "The Book of the Twelve". The first, in chronological order, is Zephaniah, who prophesied during the reign of Josiah (640 – 609 BC). The introduction tells us that Zephaniah may have been a descendant of King Hezekiah (716 -687), who had sought to reform the religious corruption of his time. Zephaniah was thus, probably, a supporter of the religious reforms of Josiah who sought to undo the corruption which had taken place during the reign of Manasseh (687-642), Hezekiah's successor.

Zephaniah foretells a Day of the Lord which will fall on Judah for its apostasy as well as on the nations: Philistia, Moab and Ammon, former vassals of the House of David, which had turned against Judah, and on Assyria which had defeated Israel, deported

its people and made Judah its vassal. A weakening Assyria was now under threat from growing Babylonian power (Wahl 2004: 255).

Zephaniah's message begins with an abrupt, dramatic utterance of universal destruction, similar to that in the time of Noah (1: 2-3). This prepares the listener for the horrors described in 1:15 – 16 and for the threatened destruction of the centre of the Israelite world (Gowan 1998: 115). God's wrath is directed at Judah and Jerusalem for the apostasy of those who have inaugurated priests of Baal and Milcom and turned their backs on Yahweh. Since they can have no excuse, they are commanded to keep silent and are warned that the Day of the Lord is near (1: 4-7) (O'Brien 2004: 102 – 103).

Those to be punished are the royal house and its chief officials, those who dress themselves in foreign clothing, presumably the vestments of the apostate priests, those who perform dances in the temple before alien gods or, in some translations, "leaping over the threshold", an action dedicated to the god Dagon. The people are condemned for violence and fraud, both as actions against fellow citizens, as well as against God, by introducing corrupt worship of other gods into nation, city and temple (1:8-9) (Wahl 2004: 256).

In pronouncing God's judgement against Judah and the nations, the "Day of the Lord" becomes a *Leitmotiv* which is repeated in various forms some 11 times (1:7,8,9,10,14,18; 2:2,3; 3:8,11,16) and referred to more obliquely (*when that time comes*) twice (3:19 & 20) (O'Brien 2004: 101). The most detailed description is found in 1: 14 – 16 which has an echo of Amos's definition. Apart from being a day of darkness and gloom, it will be one of wrath, anguish, torment, destruction, devastation, trumpet-blasts and battle cries. The people will suffer acute distress; there will be bloodshed; the land will be consumed by the fire of God's jealousy; they will be unable to ransom themselves and the end will be sudden. The only hope is for the nation to humble itself (the need for humility is mentioned three times), to be obedient to God's laws and to seek righteousness.

As for the erstwhile vassals, Philistia and its cities will be destroyed and the inhabitants driven out and the fertile coastline used as pastures for the survivors of Judah (2:4-7). Moab and Ammon which insulted God's people and encroached on their territory will be laid waste and become like Sodom and Gomorrah (2:8-9). The Cushites will be slain by God's sword (2:12). All these nations have been guilty of pride in the sense that in taking revenge on their former overlord they have been taking it on that nation's sovereign Lord, Yahweh (2:10-11).

As for Assyria it will be so laid waste that it will become a haunt of wild animals and birds (2:13-14). Delbert Hillers sees here language derived from treaty curses against nations which had broken their side of the covenant (O'Brien 2004: 119). Zephaniah might have in mind that under David and Solomon the surrounding nations were under Judean control and that, in turning on Judah, they are guilty not only of breaking confidence with Judah, but also with the nation's God.

At first sight it would seem that "tyrant city" (3:1) refers to Assyria, but the detail makes it apparent that Jerusalem is being referred to. Jerusalem has failed to put its trust in God (3:2) [Roberts: 1991: 212 – 213]. Its prophets and priests have been

disobedient to their high calling. God is just and has shown his judgement, which has been ignored (3:1-7).

The prophet then returns to the idea of universal punishment. All the nations will be gathered together and consumed by God's jealous anger so that they may be purified (3:8-10). In verse 8 the word *wait* suggests that God will act in his own time; his mind is made up, judgement is inescapable. As Judah is judged so will the nations be (Szeles 1987: 105). Ironically the word *wait* usually has a connotation of a future blessing, rather than judgement, *mispāt*. Although God's nature is merciful, humanity's depravity is such that it must face God's wrath. However, the use of *mispāt* may imply judgement with undertones of mercy. This becomes apparent in verses 9 to 20 (Baker 1988: 114 – 120).

This is not the only place in which we find legal imagery in Zephaniah. They are to be found also in 2:3 and 3:5, 8. God is judge (3:5) and serves as witness against the nations (3: 8). He issues judgements and statutes (2:3) [Patterson: 1991: 382]. Legal metaphors are common in the Twelve and help to give the books a unity. Use of one has already been referred to in Hosea.

Such a metaphor obviously helps to accentuate the guilt of Israel, Judah and the nations. It emphasises the justice of God's nature and his desire to restore his creation to a state of covenant wholeness. I would suggest that the use of the metaphor is more an obvious literary device used by writers dealing with the same topic, rather than the result of deliberate editing.

A new emphasis is that offending against God's law is pride and that Judah and the nations need to humble themselves before God (chap.2). To be disobedient is obviously a form of hubris, elevating human will and sinful customs to be the equivalent of God's will and Law. God is jealous in the sense that his primacy is being usurped by humanity (Emmerson 1998: 68 – 73).

In mentioning that the coast of Philistia would become grazing for the survivors of Judah, Zephaniah is introducing the idea of a surviving remnant to which he returns in 3: 11 – 20. This remnant will receive God's blessings and protection. Zephaniah ends, as do the previous Minor Prophets, on a note of hope that God will save and help his people. Just as judgement will occur on the "Day of the Lord", so will salvation (3:11 et seq.) (Carson 1980: 775 – 780; Wahl 2004: 255 - 258).

4.3.2.2 NAHUM AND JUDGEMENT

Nahum from Elkosh probably prophesied about 612 BCE during the time of Josiah's religious reforms. This may account for the fact that there is no condemnation of Judah's sins. He concentrates on those of Assyria, so presumably that city had not yet fallen to the Babylonians.

Stylistically it includes an acrostic poem (1: 2-8), a funeral lament (3: 1-7) and a song of taunting (3: 8-19). Various negative images are applied to Nineveh: a pool (2:9), a den of lions (2:12-14), fig trees with ripe fruit about to fall (3:12), and a locust swarm (3:15-17). Subtle use of alliteration and assonance in the Hebrew is used to create onomatopoeia.

Hence the style of prophecy is subtler perhaps than might be expected from a mere hack of a cultic prophet, which is what some have suggested Nahum was, since his message is simple: God will take vengeance on Assyria to the joy of its enemies and he has not abandoned Judah (Nowell 2004: 258). Assyria is condemned for its brutal use of its military might and its ruthless use of trade, which led to corruption, to satisfy the desires especially of the inhabitants of Nineveh. Nahum's prophecy is an outcry against the cruelty and corruption caused by unbridled power (Fraser 1980: 762-763).

The prophecy opens with a statement that Yahweh is a jealous God of vengeance (1:2) and later Nineveh is accused of plotting vengeance against the Lord (1:9&11). God is jealous in the sense that any nation that sets itself up to be all-powerful is usurping God's power and denying the all-powerful nature of God. This is something that God cannot of his nature permit.

Verses 2 to 8 take the form of a theophany. God appears in a storm and the hills shake. This image often accompanies portrayal of God as a divine warrior come to wreak vengeance on his enemies. In 1: 8 God's power is described in terms of a flood (O'Brien 2004: 39). Nahum allows that God is long-suffering (1:3) but describes his might in terms of his power within nature (1:3-8), his determination to punish those guilty of evil and his protection of the innocent (1:3-8). God will make a final end of Nineveh as easily as a fire burns up a thicket of briars or dry stubble (1:10). The city's temples and idols will be destroyed and there will be no more children born to continue Nineveh's might (1:14). Both Judah and Israel's time of terror is past (1:12 – 15 & 2:2), although it is God who has used Assyria to punish Judah (1: 12) (O'Brien 2004: 43).

Nahum foretells the end of Nineveh, using as warfare as a metaphor, describing the destruction of the city in terms which recall the violence with which Assyria attacked and destroyed its enemies. It is being paid back in its own coin. Its people will suffer just as Assyria's victims did (2:1 & 3-7). This is "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" judgement taken to its ultimate conclusion. Brutality must be punished with like brutality [O'Brien: 2004: 55]. In other images Nineveh will become like a leaking pool and like a lion's den which is smoked out so that the young may be killed by the sword (2:8 & 2:11-13).

In chapter 3 Nineveh is compared to a harlot whose attractions seduced nations and who will be taunted by having her clothes torn from her so that she is naked, shamed and pelted with filth (3:4-7). The city too will be like a tree of over-ripe figs from which the figs will be shaken to feed others (3:12), like a locust swarm which at one stage seems to cover the earth and then suddenly is gone, no one knows where (3:15-17), and like a soldier suffering from a mortal wound whom none will mourn (3:19). There is no mention of the "Day of the Lord", but the destruction of Nineveh is portrayed as being a final judgement by an all-powerful God (Fraser 1980:763-766; Nowell 2004: 259-260).

Some readers are shocked at the way Nahum appears to gloat over the forthcoming sufferings of Nineveh, but in fact he is envisaging a kind of justice which was

proportionate to the wrongs suffered by Nineveh's victims. Brutal as that may seem, it at least prevented disproportionate revenge.

Some suggest that in the vast scale of Assyrian destruction we have a symbol of the cosmic power of evil. To counteract that evil, we need an all-powerful judge and a thoroughgoing judgement (Emmerson 1998: 18). In terms of the canon of the Twelve, Nahum's ruthless vision of judgement helps to illustrate the difference between human and divine anger and justice. Nineveh's fall will be Judah's salvation.

4.3.2.3 HABAKKUK AND JUDGEMENT

Habakkuk flourished somewhere between 626 and 587 BC, but no later than the fall of Jerusalem in the latter year. The clue to the period of his prophecies probably comes in chapter 1 verse 6 where the Chaldeans, who defeated Assyria, are mentioned. Some favour ca 612, others ca 600 (Stephens-Hodge 1980: 767; Ceresko 2004 261). He may have prophesied contemporaneously with and after Nahum, at the same period as Jeremiah and just before Ezekiel.

Some scholars regard him as a cult prophet, or a Levite, since the form of his prophecies is reminiscent of liturgy. In chapter 3 we find an example of a canticle. Others, like Childs and von Rad, regard Habakkuk as having used canticle form in order to emphasise the theological nature of his message, so that it is not limited to any historical period (Ceresko 2001: 261).

Habakkuk explores the nature of a breakdown of order and justice and the apparent silence of God in the face of it. At the same time he maintains God's absolute power over creation and history. God's people must trust patiently in his faithfulness and detest the human arrogance of oppression and injustice (Ceresko 2004: 261; O'Brien 2004: 58). In chapter 1, Habakkuk addresses God in the form of two psalms: verses 2 to 11 and 12 to 17. In the first "psalm" he cries out to God about the violence and injustice around him. Law has become ineffective, since justice has been perverted by the powerful (1: 2-4).

There is no direct indication as to whether the unjust are living in or outside Judah. So Childs maintains that the editor is giving the prophecy a general interpretation (Ceresko 2004: 262). However it may be possible to maintain that God's reply to Habakkuk in verses 5-11 indicates that the Chaldeans are being used to punish the nations, and he would especially have in mind Assyria, although there is nothing which states this directly. Humanity may question God about injustice, but must be prepared to wait for God's answer, which may not be one which humanity fully understands or likes (O'Brien 2004: 65).

Ironically, the violence of the Chaldeans is like that of the nations God is punishing: God uses the events of history to punish nations which have broken his divine law and which have failed to acknowledge him. The imagery which is used to reinforce the idea of forceful punishment is of an advancing, unstoppable military horde (1: 8-10). The second of the "psalms" is Habakkuk's mystified query as to how God can permit such violence to occur. Those who suffer violence are compared to fish caught cruelly by hooks or in nets. Just as fishermen might make gods of their nets, so, by inference, the violent make the means of violence their gods (1:14-16). In order to obtain an

answer to his question, the prophet imagines himself as a watchman keeping lookout in a watchtower (2:1).

God's answer comes in the form of a vision which the prophet must record. It will be a vision for "an appointed time" and "a destined hour" which will come soon, even if there seems to be delay (2:3). This is the closest Habakkuk comes to the idea of the "Day of the Lord". The vision is one of "an insatiable creature" with a throat "as wide as Sheol" which swallows the nations, until its prey turns upon it for its greed and injustice. It would seem that the "insatiable creature" is Chaldea and at the same time all nations that seek power through violence and the abrogation of God's laws. Since death may be regarded as insatiable, and the Chaldeans as well as all violent nations cause death on a massive scale, the image is apposite (Ceresko 2004: 262-3). However, 2:4 provides an assurance that God is in control, that "reckless" Chaldea's future is not assured. Indeed 2:1-20 implies that God's working out of justice is a mystery humanity cannot pinpoint (O'Brien: 2004: 79 – 80).

The Five Woes that follow are couched in the form of a lament, although, in fact, the prophet is rejoicing at the suffering that the unjust bring upon themselves. Some, like Stephens-Hodge in Guthrie, see these woes as applying to Assyria, others, like Ceresko in Brown, interpret it as applying to the Chaldeans (Stephens-Hodge 1980: 770; Ceresko: 2004: 263). However, the woes may also be seen as a judgement against all, from any nation, who act unjustly. God will ensure that those who take the riches of others will be plundered (2: 6-8), those who try to assert the power of their dynasty over others will fall (2: 9-11), those who base their rise to power on bloodshed will find their efforts brought to naught by God, whose glory will be manifest (2: 12-14), those who make others suffer violence as though they are being forced to drink God's wrath will find that they, like staggering drunks, will be shamed by their cruelty (2: 15-17), and those who make and worship idols will discover that there is only one God, and he is Lord of all the earth who lives in his holy temple (2:18-20).

Chapter 3 is in the form of a liturgical canticle, and is so constructed that it answers the prophet's questions in the first two chapters. It also expresses the prophet's trust and confidence in God's providence. As a result he is able to understand God's salvation (Ceresko 2004: 263-4).

Although Habakkuk prophesied at a certain time and in a specific context, his prophecies have been given a form of expression that deliberately seeks to rise above the specific and to apply to cruelty and injustice on international, national and individual level. God is a God of judgement and justice follows soon upon misdeeds. Misdeeds also carry within themselves the seeds of destruction. Although God's ways may not be clear to humanity, they are ways of justice for the oppressor and salvation for the just. In his attempt to rise above the specific and portray sin as having inevitable and self-destructive consequences, Habakkuk widens the perspective of God's judgement. God, in his own good time, will judge the Chaldeans with righteousness and save his people (Goldsmith 1982: 55).

4.3.3 THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

During the Babylonian exile the great prophets of the period were Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. With Ezekiel we can discern a change beginning in the nature of Israelite prophecy from divine justice taking place on a Day of the Lord within history to an apocalyptic vision of that day which becomes a day of judgement at the end of time. In the post-exilic period this tendency is further developed in the book of Daniel and in chapters 9 to 14 of Zechariah. Haggai together with Zechariah were the prophets of the return parties from Babylon along with leaders such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, a member of the House of David, who was appointed governor-general of a restored Judah and Joshua, the priest.

At first homes were rebuilt and under Nehemiah, the walls of the city, but the Temple was neglected. Ezra 5:1 tells us that the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah stirred the nation into undertaking the restoration of God's house (Anderson 1988: 517-519). Haggai and Zechariah prophesied at the beginning of the reign of Darius I (521 – 486BCE) who succeeded Cambyses II (529 -522) who in turn had succeeded Cyrus II (538 – 530) who had issued the edict permitting the return to Jerusalem. Probably relatively few people returned under Cyrus II and more under Darius.

4.3.3.1 HAGGAI AND JUDGEMENT

It is not known at what period Haggai returned, but for him rebuilding the temple was of paramount importance since it was the place of God's presence on earth. He seems more interested in this than in the form of the worship. Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David, is regarded by him as God's elect. In a sense Haggai is a nationalist for, with God in his holy Temple and with a scion of David at the head of Judah, the future of the nation is assured (Cody 2004: 349-350).

The book opens with Haggai prophesying before Zerubbabel and Joshua. He warns that the lack of good harvests and the failure of those who have returned to prosper are judgements owing to their neglecting to rebuild the Temple. God has nowhere to dwell, while many of the people are living in comfortable houses (1:2-6 & 9-11). An immediate start to rebuilding the Temple must be made (1:7-8). Nonetheless, Haggai assures them, God is with them (1:13 & 2:1-5). The people were sufficiently moved that they began reconstruction under their leaders (1:14-15). God then promises through Haggai that he will reward them with wealth from the nations and that the glory of the new Temple will surpass that of the previous one (2:6-9).

In two related test questions, after the fashion of scholars discussing Torah, Haggai illustrates how impure worship is affecting the nation (2:10-14). The sacrifices offered in a desecrated temple are impure sacrifices making the nation impure, hence the unsatisfactory harvests, blight and hailstorms. Once a purified, rededicated Temple is built as God's dwelling place, God's people will be blessed (2:15-19). Haggai's approach to blessings, if one does God's will, and disaster, if one counteracts it, raises a problem for theodicy: how God works in the world. His approach is simplistic and untenable. Plenty who ignore God prosper and often the faithful may suffer. The problem is to show how in the long term obedience reaps divine reward and evil, judgement (O'Brien 2004: 153).

Haggai's second prophecy involves a Day of the Lord which will be an apocalyptic day of judgement for the nations, shaking the heavens and earth. It will be a day on which heathen kings are overthrown and their followers die in battle. Zerubbabel will become God's king, his earthly "signet ring" (2:20-23). For Haggai this apocalypse will take place in historical time, rather than at its end, and will continue the rule of the line of David. This last prophecy never came true: Zerubbabel never became King of Judah, he faded mysteriously from history and with him the royal House of David disappeared. It was perhaps the failure of such prophetic hopes that helped to push the vision of an apocalyptic day of the Lord to an indeterminate end of time, when God's kingdom would be re-inaugurated in an other-worldly form (Emmerson 1998: 94; Cody 2004: 350-351).

It is noticeable in Haggai that the sin of Judah has taken on a different form from before the exile. No longer is the main sin idolatry, worshipping alien gods, but secularism: not having God, and his worship, at the centre of national life. It is the sin of religious neglect. No doubt, though, the priorities of comfortable homes and wealth may be regarded as a form of idolatry. Suddenly the perspective is a more modern one (Kennett no date: 572-574). On the other hand some of the problems remain similar to those before the exile eg cultic corruption and neglect of the poor (O'Brien 2004: 137-8).

The thrust of judgement has changed. The remnant which has returned is not threatened with another exile, but with incomplete blessing on its return to Judah. Although the people, or at least the better-off ones, are comfortably housed they do not enjoy the fruits of their labour in obtaining good harvests. Their salvation will not be complete until they have completed the Temple, begun to offer unblemished animals as sacrifices and started to fulfil their religious duties under the Covenant. The "Day of the Lord" has become again one on which God will judge the nation's enemies.

4.3.3.2 ZECHARIAH AND JUDGEMENT

Zechariah, Haggai's contemporary, was of priestly descent and so probably had one foot in establishment circles in the society of those returned from exile in Babylon. Like Haggai he was concerned about the rebuilding of the Temple, to provide a fitting house for God. No doubt, as a priest he was also concerned about the re-establishment of right worship under Joshua as high priest. He acknowledges the importance of Zerubbabel in the rebuilding of the Temple, but his political importance is underplayed, possibly because his influence was waning. Haggai promoted immediate action; Zechariah was more interested in the principles behind right action. He looked to a future age less imminent than that of Haggai (Cody 2004: 352).

The foregoing is found in chapters 1-8. The prophecies of 9-14 are of a different nature. The focus is cast more widely over surrounding nations, as in many of the pre-exilic prophets. Eschatologically they are far more apocalyptic than 1 to 8 and chapters 12 to 14 more so than 9 to 11. The outlook of 12 to 14 is more mythological. It has even been proposed that the book consists of three writers, not just Zechariah for chapters 1 to 8 and another author for 9 to 14, but separate prophets for both 9 to 11 and 12 to 14 (Cody 2004: 352-353).

The book of Zechariah opens with a call to repentance. The people's ancestors had failed to heed calls to repent and had suffered the judgement of God's anger. Zechariah's listeners repent and acknowledge God (1:2-6). A lesson has been learned [Cody: 2004: 354]. In a vision of angels on horseback, the prophet learns that God is angry with the nations who have caused unnecessary suffering on his people, far more than he had wished them to undergo (1:11-16). Now God has returned to Jerusalem and the Temple must be rebuilt (1:16). God is almighty and has used the nations as part of his plan to bring punishment for sin on his people, leading to repentance.

Now it is the turn for the same to be done to the nations (O'Brien 2007: 170). There follow a series of visions showing that judgement is past and that God's favour rests on his people for whom he will now be like a wall of fire about Jerusalem (2:5). Those who have not yet returned from exile should do so (2:6-7). Any nation that seeks to attack Judah will be plundered and enslaved (2:9) (O'Brien 2004: 184 – 7; 218 – 9).

Judah does not get off scot-free. In the vision of the flying scroll (5:1-4), Zechariah indicates the wrath of God's judgement will come upon thieves and perjurers. In the image of the barrel, a woman appears sitting in it. This is a symbol of the nation's harlotry in abandoning God for idols (5:5-11). God called Zechariah to ask priests and people whether their fasting during the exile had been done with God in mind or whether their feasting had only been for their own pleasure without remembering God's goodness. This was something about which past prophets had spoken a (7:4-7).

Again God's word came to him to warn the people to administer true justice and show kindness and compassion to one another and not to oppress the alien, the widow, the fatherless and the poor. Because they had not listened they had been driven into exile (7:8-14; 8: 16 - 17). Now, God's power and his blessings on his people will cause other nations to want to go up to Jerusalem to worship him along with the Jews (8:20-23) (O'Brien 2004: 228-9).

Chapters 9 to 11 contain a series of oracles of judgement against the surrounding nations. Damascus, Tyre and Sidon will be destroyed; they all belong to God, to deal with as he pleases (9:1-4). The pride of the Philistine cities will be destroyed, they will come to obey the Jewish Law and become another clan in Judah (9:5-8). If God's people have acknowledged their sin and accepted their punishment, God has to be seen as willing to turn the enmity of the nations away from his people and to judge them justly as well (O'Brien 2007: 171).

For Judah there will be blessedness. A king bringing peace will enter Jerusalem upon a donkey and war will be banished, exiles will return, God will protect them against their enemies and grant abundant rain (9:9 – 10:1). But into this description of blessedness comes a note of warning to the shepherds or leaders of the people that there are some still worshipping false household gods and going in for divination. This provokes God's anger (10:2-3).

There follows an allegory in which God tells Zechariah to become the shepherd of Judah since the nation appears to be threatened. The leaders, other shepherds, fail God and the people, and are dismissed by the prophet. Symbolically he breaks two staffs,

the first symbolising the breaking God's covenant with the nations; the second the union between Judah and Israel, possibly because the mixed and semi-alien population there had sided with Judah's enemies. The chapter ends with a dire warning to false shepherds (Cody 2004: 357-358; Kennett no date: 581).

Both chapters 9 and 12 begin with the heading, "An oracle". The form of the oracles is different. Firstly that of chapters 9 to 11 is largely in verse, while that of 12 to 14 is mainly in prose. Secondly, the content of the chapters is apocalyptic rather than merely employing the usual variety of prophetic imagery. "On that day", a frequent prophetic abbreviation for the "Day of the Lord" becomes an often repeated *Leitmotiv*, used 15 times in the three chapters, quite apart from "then" (12:10; 13:9 and 14:3) and "A day is coming"(14:1). Jerusalem will be saved and strengthened and all who seek to attack her punished.

Using the image of a burning brazier, Judah will consume its enemies. When the people see what God has done for them, they will mourn what they, over the ages, have done to hurt God (12:10). This verse is problematic and it has been suggested the "person" hurt could be the House of David or a member of it, or a figure equivalent to the suffering servant of Isaiah or the king entering Jerusalem on a donkey (9:9)(Cody 2004: 358; Kennett no date: 582).

For the Israelites it will be a time of cleansing and repentance. Those who have been prophets of alien gods will pretend to be ordinary people and find excuses for their ritual scars (13:1-6). Only a remnant of a third of the people will survive this period of refining (13:7-9) (Redditt 2007: 195). Obviously before Judah is victorious, as depicted in chapter twelve, will come the attack on the nations mentioned in chapter 14: 1-2. Either that or we must regard each of the last three chapters as being separate visions, complementary merely as to the idea of the establishment of a purified, respected city of God, where he will dwell in majesty.

The destruction announced in the first two verses of chapter 14 is as thorough as anything mentioned elsewhere in the prophets. The dramatic horror of the destruction introduces the apocalyptic image of God as a giant standing fighting the enemy on the Mount of Olives, while an earthquake-like event creates a large new valley (14:3-5). God will then appear surrounded by his holy ones.

A kind of river of God, flowing in two directions from Jerusalem will appear. There will be no seasons and no day or night (14:6-8). The Lord will become king of the nations, protecting Jerusalem and punishing the enemies of the city with a hideous plague (14:9-12). The wealth of the vanquished nations will accrue to Judah. Remaining humanity will worship by offering prescribed sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem and celebrate God's festivals. Those nations that do not will be punished (14:13-21). The dramatic Day of the Lord will introduce God's eternal reign over a world which acknowledges him (Cody 2004: 358-9).

Haggai saw the re-establishment of the Temple and of the exiles in Jerusalem in a narrow and almost nationalistic sense. The imagery, though rich, in no way approaches the dramatic imagery of the last three chapters of Zechariah. For Haggai it was enough that the returned exiles should worship freely, correctly and peacefully in a rebuilt Temple in a rebuilt city, protected by God from powerful enemies. For

Zechariah the final judgement was a dramatic event, inaugurating the final and eternal reign of God over a nation and world badly in need of purification.

Since the period of editing the pre-exilic prophets was underway by the time of Zechariah, some scholars regard the earlier prophets to have been broadly edited to bring them into line with Zechariah's outlook. So Hosea and Amos were edited to see the fall of Israel as God's judgement. For Micah, judgement brought about the fall of Israel and Judah. For Joel, judgement took the form of the locust plague. Some prophets were concerned with the well-deserved judgement of the nations for their treatment of God's people. For Nahum, it was judgement of Nineveh; for Habakkuk, it was judgement of Babylon; for Zephaniah of the nations and for Obadiah of Edom. Jonah shows that God will accept genuine repentance even from so cruel an alien nation as Assyria (O'Brien 2007: 172-9).

4.3.3.3 MALACHI AND JUDGEMENT

Malachi, according to the style and vocabulary used in his book, must have been close in time to Haggai and Zechariah. Zerubbabel is not mentioned, so presumably had faded from events by Malachi's time. The Temple has been rebuilt, but the expectations of Haggai and Zechariah have not been fulfilled. We are back again with the familiar criticisms of the prophets concerning worship, injustice and the poor. His outlook is that of Ezra and Nehemiah. The prophet's name may not even have been Malachi, which in Hebrew means "my messenger". He may have been an anonymous messenger of God. The date is probably after 516 BC. He is not concerned with world judgement and does not seem overly concerned with the future. God will come to his Temple as judge of Israel, when the pure metal in the people will be refined from the base. His expression and use of imagery is straightforward and to the point. Twice in each of the three chapters he employs a question and answer approach (Cody 2004: 359-360; Grieve no date: 585).

In the opening verses of his prophecy, Malachi assures the Israelites, called Jacob, of God's love by expressing his judgement on Edom, territory of the descendants of Esau. His anger with them is perpetual. He employs the technique of God answering a perhaps slightly petulant Israel, querying how he has shown love for them (1:2-5). The next section involves Malachi's condemnation of the priesthood for offering sickly and imperfect animals as sacrifices in the Temple. Through him God states that he is Israel's father and then introduces a query as to where the honour due to a father is. By offering such imperfect sacrifices, the priests are derogating from the honour which they and the nation should show to God and are profaning his name. Judgement on those offering such sacrifices is a curse.

The force of the curse is made vivid, by describing how the priests would be mutilated and have offal thrown at them (1:6 – 2:3). By offering imperfect sacrifices they have broken God's covenant with their ancestor Levi. They will be banished from God's presence (2:3). Instead of setting the example and teaching the people right knowledge, they have allowed them to stumble and sin. As a result he will make them despicable in the sight of the people (2:6-9) (Redditt 2007:195).

The next question and answer involves the Israelites being God's chosen children who have violated their special status by marrying foreign wives. Not even offerings in the

Temple will make up for this (2:10-12). Next it is as if the people ask why God does not accept their offerings. The answer is that, through divorce, husbands are putting away the wives of their youth who have stood by them over many years. By doing so they have again broken God's covenant, created insecurity for children and at the same time they are being cruel to the wives (2:13-17). The people have wearied God. When they ask how they can have wearied him, he tells them that by condoning evil practices they are effectively encouraging them and making it seem they are acceptable to God. When they ask where the God of justice is, he promises to come to them in the Temple in a day of judgement. The prophet himself is God's messenger. It will be a day unable to be endured (Cody 2004: 351).

Judgement is described in the images of refining precious metals and using fuller's soap. Only once the priests have been purified will right offerings be pleasing to God (2:17- 3:4). Both Zechariah and Malachi use the image of refining metal by fire to indicate that God's judgement is a purifying process (Redditt 2007: 192). Malachi then launches into a condemnation of sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers and then, a theme familiar in the prophets, of those who cheat labourers of their wages and who harm widows, orphans and aliens. To commit such acts is to show a lack of fear of God. Only if the people return to him will he return to them (3:5).

When God is asked how they can return to him, his answer is that they must bring the proper tithes to the Temple. Not only do they defraud others but they defraud God. If they bring proper tithes, God will ensure rain and good, pest-free harvests (3:6-12). When the people question God's statement that they have used harsh words about him, he tells them that by regarding serving him as futile and admiring the arrogant and evildoers, they have been effectively declaring evil to be good (3:13-15). Malachi ends with God announcing a day of judgement. God has recorded those who have been obedient. Judgement will be like fire consuming stubble, when the wicked will become like ash trodden underfoot. The people are warned to be obedient to the Law of Moses. Before the Day of the Lord comes, God will send Elijah to warn his people (3:16 – 4:5) (Cody 2004: 351).

Malachi's vision of the day of the Lord and of judgement is far more restrained than that of Zechariah and his imagery, although forceful, is not nearly so dramatic. Only in the latter part of the book, from chapter 3 does his tone sharpen. Up till then his condemnations leave room for repentance and his judgements are conditional upon it. At first, his coming, in chapter 3, is described merely as an appearance in the Temple and only in chapter 4 does it develop into a forceful Day of the Lord.

4.3.4 PRE-EXILIC IN THE CANON; POST-EXILIC IN COMPOSITION

Joel and Obadiah are difficult to date, since they do not give any close reference to historical events or persons and dating has to rely on internal evidence. Brown places Joel before Obadiah in the chronological arrangement of the Biblical commentary of which he is editor-in-chief. Yet in the introduction to Joel, the commentator, Elias D. Mallon, is of the opinion that Joel at three points refers to Obadiah's prophecy: Joel 3:5a to Obad.17a; Joel 4:2-3 to Obad. 11 and Joel 4:19 to Obad. 10. His opinion is that Joel's prophecies come after Obadiah's (Mallon 2004: 400). Judgement in Joel will here be considered subsequent to that in Obadiah.

4.3.4.1 OBADIAH AND JUDGEMENT

The main thrust of Obadiah's prophecy is against Edom. As has been mentioned earlier, Israel and the Edomites were kindred people descended from the brothers Jacob and Esau. Although, according to Deuteronomic law (Deut: 2: 2-8), which was only edited after the time when, canonically, Obadiah is supposed to have prophesied, Israel was not permitted to attack Edom, David had made it a part of his empire. Sometimes Edom was able to assert its independence, at others it returned to Israelite control. At the time of the Babylonian invasion it at first joined in a coalition against Babylon, but changed sides and played a part in the destruction of Jerusalem, and, according to I Esdras 4:45, was responsible for the burning of the Temple. Relationships were thus bitter and obviously remained so in the post-exilic period (Mallon: 2004: 399).

Obadiah must have thus been written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and before the conquest of Edom by the Nabateans in 312 BCE. During the 5th century Edomites had already been expelled from much of their territory and it is probably this (1) that inspired Obadiah's prophecy (Mallon 2004:404).

In the first nine verses Obadiah pronounces God's judgement of doom against Edom. Edom's pride has led it astray. It will become a contemptible nation of no importance. Its pride is compared to that of an eagle or of animals which live in rugged mountains and they will be abased (2-5). Their plight is worse than if they had been attacked by thieves or robbers, their wealth will be ransacked. They had allowed themselves misled by dangerous allies who have turned against them. Their wise men and warriors will be destroyed (6-9). The reasons for judgement are given in verses 10 to 14. When Jerusalem was ransacked, Edom stood aloof and when the spoils were divided Edom shared in them. Accusation is reinforced by a succeeding series of imperatives: Edom must not boast, gloat or cut down fugitives at the crossroads (Mallon 2004: 404-5). All of these things Edom obviously did when Jerusalem was overthrown (10-14).

Verse 15 widens the scope of judgement as the prophet announces that a Day of the Lord is at hand for all nations. The following statement concerning a poisonous draught drunk first by the Israelites and then by all nations is interesting because, like Habakkuk, Obadiah sees sinful actions as containing within themselves the seed of inevitable negative consequences (15) (Mallon 2004: 404-5).

Apart from verse 15, Obadiah refers twelve times to *on the/that day or then*. Other than the reference in verse 15 to all nations, all the other references apply to the judgement of Edom, the prophet provides no time frame, and one may presume that they will be events within a continuing history. Only God's people have so far been judged [Nogalski: 2003: 208]. That all nations will face judgement is stressed by an image in which it is described as the equivalent of drinking a poisoned draught (16) continually. From judgement on the nations, Obadiah turns to the salvation of a remnant of Israel who will be the flame setting alight the stubble of the house of Esau, a fire image, fairly commonly used in the prophets. Edom will become part of a re-established Israelite hegemony (17-21). The judgement of Edom and the nations will

be the start of Israel's salvation. There is no concept of the salvation of the nations (Biddle 2007: 163).

4.3.4.2 JOEL AND JUDGEMENT

The points in common referred to above between Obadiah and Joel involve, firstly, Edom's judgement for standing aloof during the sack of Jerusalem and later throwing in their lot with the Babylonians by sharing the spoil and, secondly, by the survival of a holy remnant of Israel. If Joel's prophecies were indeed written down later than Obadiah's, it would seem that the earliest date would be about 515 and the latest just before the destruction of Tyre and Sidon which took place in 332 and 343 BC respectively. There is a minority scholastic position which regards Joel as having been written in the reign of Joash (837-800BCE), but Joel nowhere mentions the monarchy as might be expected if he had lived in monarchical times (Mallon 2004: 399-400).

Chapters one and two have as theme a severe plague of locusts and a drought. The locust plague comes from the north (2: 20); it was more usual for them to come from the south. Whether this is an editorial interpolation or not, it ties up with Jeremiah 4: 6 and Ezekiel 38: 15 and 39: 2, so thematically linking "The Book of the Twelve" to the Major Prophets. Assyria was a northern power and attacks, other than from Egypt, were likely to come via the Fertile Crescent (Allen 1976: 88). So judgement on Israel and Judah could be predicted as coming from the north and the locusts linked to the attackers.

Although at first sight chapters three and four might seem unconnected to the first two chapters, the two parts are linked by certain phrases and catchwords and by an inner theological unity. Chapter 2 verse 18 is seen as a central point in the book. Israel's misery is complete. A merciful God lifts the locust plague. The nation returns to God. The image of the Day of the Lord is introduced. Israel has suffered punishment and now it is the turn of the nations. The imagery used is cosmic. The overall message for Israel is one of suffering leading to repentance, which culminates in hope as the people learn that God is still in their midst as their defender (Mallon 2004: 400).

The devastating nature of the locust plagues is illustrated in 1:4 where each stage in the life-cycle of the locust is described as adding to the destruction of the land. Priests have nothing to offer at the altar, farmers nothing to sell (1:9-12). The prophet calls on priests and Levites to dress in sackcloth, to proclaim a fast and for the nation's elders to gather in the Temple and cry out to God, for the Day of the Lord is near (113-16). Added to this the nation is suffering a severe drought so that animals suffer and die (1:17-20).

Chapter two opens with a clarion call announcing that the Day of the Lord is near (2:1-2) The first part of the chapter repeats in dramatic terms the horror of the extent of the locust plague (2:3-11) and the presence for Israel of the Day of the Lord (2:11). Even at this point of disaster, God tells his people that it is not too late to repent. The people's repentance must be genuine, not just ritualistic: they must rend their hearts and not just their clothing. God is compassionate and long-suffering and even in the midst of disaster he accepts genuine repentance and forgives (2:12-13). Once again a clarion call to summon all the people to appear before God is sounded (2:15-16). The priests, weeping, must pray to God before the altar in the Temple to spare his people,

so that they will not become a scorn amongst the nations because their God has failed to save them (2:17) (Hubbard 1989: 6)].

In the so-called pivotal verse in Joel, the Lord has compassion (2:18). The disasters of locust plague and drought are reversed. This is illustrated by the land bearing fruit abundantly and there being food enough to make the beasts fat. People will be able to eat until they are satisfied. The rains will fall in their due seasons (2:19-26). Israel's reproach amongst the nations will be removed and his people will know God's presence in a burst of spiritual renewal as God's spirit causes the different generations to prophesy and have visions that even the slaves will share in (2:19-29). God has responded to the prayers of the nation and the priests (Ogden 1987: 32). In verse 27, through Joel, God lets the people know that it is through his miraculous works of power – to save and bless, as well as to judge – that humanity is able to recognise his omnipotence (Ogden 1987: 36).

The prophet returns to the Day of the Lord in graphic cosmic imagery of eclipses and sunsets (2:30-31). Apart from the reversal for good of Israel's fortunes, the nations will be gathered together in the Valley of Jehosaphat for judgement for their ill-treatment of Israel (3:1-3). Tyre, Sidon and Philistia seem to be cited as an example of how the nations will be paid back in the manner they treated Israel. For taking the wealth of the land and Temple and for selling off the Israelites as slaves, they will be impoverished and sold into slavery (3:4-8). Here again we see evil actions having within themselves the seeds of an equivalent form of disaster.

The gathering of the nations in the Valley of Jehosaphat is depicted as a final battle of destruction before the nations appear before God for judgement (3:9-12). The cosmic nature of the event is repeated as a sign of God's presence, perhaps like his presence on Sinai at the giving of the Law (2:14-17). In a deliberate reversal of the imagery found in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3, Mattocks will now be turned into swords and pruning knives into spears (3:10), in order to strike the reader with the horror of judgement day.

A reversal of the intention of the imagery used elsewhere in the book, when Israel's repentance leads to agricultural plenty (2:18-26 and 3:18), is found in 3:13, where the fullness of harvest becomes the treading out of the harvest of the nations. The book ends with a contrast between the blessed state of a redeemed Israel and the desolation of the nation's enemies, here represented by Egypt and Edom. The God of Israel is a God of vengeance for his people and he will again dwell among them in Zion (3:19-21) [Mallon: 2004: 403]. The "reversal" technique helps to underline how the judgement of sin may be reversed by repentance into one of blessing (Mallon 2004: 399-400).

Joel is well known for his use of the image of the destructive horde of locusts as a symbol of God's judgement. It appeals, in an agricultural society, to the destructive reality of such an event, which would be part of folk and individual memory, and it allows easy reference to military imagery where the locusts may be compared to a destructive army ransacking a nation.

4.3.4.3 JONAH AND JUDGEMENT

In Jonah we have a very different prophetic book. It is difficult to date with accuracy. The writer, for historical purposes, has used an historical character Jonah ben Amittai, who is mentioned in II Kings 14:25. This would seem to set the book in the 8th century BC, at the time of the defeat of the Kingdom of Israel by Assyria. God's willingness to forgive Assyria would appear more striking and shocking than it would have been in a later generation.

Some have suggested the book of "Jonah" comes from the 6th century, others from the mid-fifth century and even from as late as the late 4th and early 3rd centuries, contemporaneous with the Hellenistic era. The "liberal" outlook, the suggestion that a hated enemy could repent and be forgiven, would be unthinkable to pre-exilic generations, who believed that God would judge the nations as his people's enemies (Ceresko2004: 580-1).

The use of Aramaisms also seems to favour a later rather than an earlier date. Since the book is fairly obviously not historical, another purpose must be sought. Anthony R. Ceresko suggests that it is a parable in which God is the chief character. Each relationship in the book centres on God: God and Jonah, God and the sailors, God and Nineveh. Jonah's only real interaction with human-beings is with the sailors. The book's purpose is therefore theological. God is a God of forgiveness whose power may not be thwarted by disobedient and reluctant human-beings.

The book's message is reinforced by literary sophistication. The two parts of the book are introduced by God's commands to Jonah in 1:1-3 and 3:1-4. Key words ("great", "evil", "appoint", "fear" and "descend") link the episodes closely. The book satirises prophets who would rather make comfortable, popular prophecies. Also satirised are God's people who, ipso facto, regard other nations as more sinful than themselves, despite their own history of disobedience to God (Ceresko 2004: 580-581).

Judgement, ironically, applies in the book to Jonah, not to Nineveh. He is called by God to go to Nineveh and to denounce it for its sins. He disobeys God and takes ship for Tarshish. A prophet's calling requires him to be faithful to God. In God's call to Ezekiel we read that if a prophet faithfully fulfils his calling and those to whom he has been called to preach repentance fail to turn to God, they will be judged. If, however, the prophet fails to obey God by not proclaiming his message, then judgement falls on him (Ezek.3: 16-21).

God's judgement on Jonah is the storm, a metaphor for divine anger. Jonah is obliged to confess his guilt, in disobeying God, to the ship's crew and passengers. Despite their reluctance, in the end they feel obliged to throw him into the sea to appease God's anger. God in his mercy provides the great fish to swallow him and which later spews him out on shore (1:17 & 2:10). In the fish's belly Jonah had offered prayer in the form of a canticle to God, which led to his salvation. (2:2-9) (Ceresko 2004: 582 – 3).

Jonah was now obedient to God's command and went to Nineveh where he warned it of the need to repent. This it did. King, citizen and beast repented in dust and ashes (3:1-9). God had mercy on Nineveh. Jonah was displeased at God showing mercy. In a childish, petulant tone, he tells God that all along he knew God would behave like

this and that he is thoroughly fed-up and would like to die. Jonah then builds himself a shelter for shade and sits down to wait to see what God will do to Nineveh. His petulant prayer suggests that God's intention to forgive Nineveh is a mistake (4:1-3). God asks Jonah what right he has to be angry, but Jonah, like a sulky child, refuses to answer (4:4).

In a parable-drama God causes a gourd vine to grow up and give Jonah shade. Jonah is relieved, but does not thank God. The next morning a cutworm eats through the main stem and when a dry desert wind arises, the vine withers and Jonah loses his shade. Jonah prays again to die. God tells Jonah that just as the prophet was concerned about the death of the vine, to an even greater degree God was concerned about Nineveh with its large numbers of people and animals. God has passed judgement on Jonah's selfish childishness in which he wants those whom he dislikes for historical and cultural reasons to die rather than be saved, even though he too has been disobedient to God and been saved by God's mercy (Ceresko 2004: 583-4).

Ironically, even the heathen on board the ship tried to be more merciful to Jonah who had brought near disaster upon them than Jonah was prepared to be to the Ninevites. God's unmerited mercy is greater than his desire to punish (Ceresko 2004: 581-4; Peake no date: 556-8).

It has been suggested that the book of Jonah was a reaction to the nationalistic and intolerant policies that developed in Judah after the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. The attitude behind these policies is illustrated by Jonah's reactions to his mission (Ceresko 2004: 580). The literary skill, the irony and humour of the book raise it above contemporary political and social outlook. Jonah's incomprehension of the ways of God is typical of humanity's reluctance, in any age, to accept that God's ways are different from, and wiser than ours. God loves his creation; we want to destroy in it what offends us. God's unmerited mercy desires repentance rather than the punishment required by justice. Those chosen and called by God often merit God's mercy as little as those outside the Covenant. Self-righteousness blinds humanity to its sin by emphasising the sin of those it hates.

God judges sin when there is no repentance. Without doing so he would not be a just God. Genuine repentance may lead to salvation, either by God deciding to forego punishment, or by his saving the sinner in the midst of punishment. Joel 2:14 expresses forgiveness as a reward for repentance as a possibility only. Jonah shows us that God desires to forgive rather than to punish. By canonically placing Jonah before Nahum, which recounts God's punishment of Nineveh, the editors probably intended to emphasise the necessity of genuine repentance and that backsliding would lead to judgement and punishment (House 2003: 327).

Jonah illustrates an important point about prophecy by revising its definition. It is not so much that prophecy must be seen as something which is only valid if it comes true, but that it illustrates how God works. In other words deliberate sin will bring judgement, but repentance will bring salvation (Biddle 2007: 165).

Ironically, Jonah, the reluctant and disobedient prophet, unconsciously opens to the reader an even wider perspective on God's mercy and judgement than do most of his far more illustrious predecessors. It is a pity that we do not know even the name of the

wise and spiritually astute person who was the author of the book (Payne 1970: 652-654; Ceresko 2004: 580-1; Peake no date: 556).

4.4 CONCLUSION

In the above analysis of judgement in the prophets in “The Book of the Twelve” we have seen how God spoke to his messengers through visions and, more commonly, through inspired words in which the emotions of the prophet mirror those of God. Through the insight granted them, the prophets are made aware of how Israel, Judah and the nations are breaking God’s Covenant and Law.

If God’s Covenant was made with his people, the Israelites, the question is to what extent it applies to the nations. Some of the nations condemned, which were at one stage included within the empire established by David and Solomon, may have undergone some Judaising and have learnt something of the Law and Covenant and that the Israelites were God’s chosen people. By attacking their former Israelite rulers, they are being traitors and attacking God’s chosen people.

The conquerors of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, Assyria and Babylonia respectively, by the thoroughness and cruelty of their conquest, which went as far as depriving the inhabitants of these kingdoms of their God-given land, had abrogated the whole covenant system on which Semitic civilisation stood, and so had put themselves in a position to suffer God’s wrath.

As for the Israelite people, they were guilty of covenant-breaking, firstly by being forgetful of God’s mercy in leading them out of Egypt through the wilderness into the Promised Land. Secondly, in this forgetfulness, they had broken the Covenant Law given to Moses, their God-chosen leader at Mount Sinai. Thirdly, by making alliances with oppressive and ungodly nations, they had denied God’s power to do for them what he had done in the past when he had enabled them to defeat their enemies.

In their forgetfulness of the greatness of their God, and of the covenant he had made with them, the Israelites became law breakers. They broke Apodictic Law by worshipping other gods. This was not so much failing to worship him, but adopting a syncretist faith. Outside Jerusalem the people worshipped at the shrines of other, Canaanite, gods as well as at the shrines of Yahweh. In Jerusalem the worship of other gods was introduced into the Temple, so that images of the Baals were set up as well as Asherah poles. Gods, such as Milcom, who required infant sacrifice, were also worshipped, despite the lesson God gave to Abraham. Pagan, as well as Israelite, feasts were kept and pagan priests performed sacrifices to their gods, not only at hilltop shrines, but in the Temple as well. Sacrifice of infants broke the prohibition to kill other human beings.

Injustices such as withholding wages of labourers, taking the inheritance of widows and orphans, using false weights and measures, cheating aliens (ie immigrants or refugees) was the equivalent of theft. To have intercourse with temple prostitutes was to commit adultery. Such intercourse also broke the laws involving sexual purity, since fathers and sons might be sleeping with the same prostitute, or wives and daughters with the same male prostitute. Intercourse might take place at a time of the menstrual cycle when it was forbidden by Israelite law. Worship of other gods would

have weakened the dietary laws and those involving clothing which forbade a mixture of fibres.

As a jealous God, he required the pure worship of a people set apart to worship him in God-given ritual. Even though sacrifices to Yahweh may have been carried out with ritual conformity, those sacrifices and their ritual correctness became null and void because of the worship of other gods and because, by wrong treatment of their neighbours, the poor and the alien, the spirit behind the law had been broken and God required worship in spirit even more than in ritual.

Syncretist and immoral worship was very much a concern of the pre-exilic prophets. After the exile the concerns of the prophets changed somewhat. The exile seems to have created a sense of identity and nationalism, hence, in part, the condemnation of foreign marriages by Ezra and Nehemiah. Doubtless those leaders also saw the danger of syncretism creeping in again. Such marriages were also a form of impurity in a nation which God meant to be set apart from others. There is concern about imperfect animals being offered in sacrifice. And there was still concern over wrong treatment of widows, orphans, the poor and aliens, but at least, for the time being, the people seemed to have learned to be faithful to God, who, for a second time, had led them out of exile and restored them to the Promised Land.

Edom, in particular, among foreign nations, comes in for condemnation in post-exilic times for its treacherous behaviour at the time of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. Post-exilic prophets place somewhat less emphasis on the judgement on foreign nations than the pre-exilic ones. Indeed, the writer of Jonah goes so far as to imply that if as ruthless an enemy as Nineveh repents in dust and ashes when the prophet Jonah pronounces its doom, God will spare it.

Not all the prophets envision a “Day of the Lord,” yet it is a prediction of a majority. For some judgement is a process within history. For others it is on a Day of the Lord within history when Israel, Judah and the nations will be judged, inaugurating, perhaps, dreams of a re-established House of David. As eschatological belief developed, and it began to take on an apocalyptic nature, pushing God’s judgement to a day of triumphant judgement at the end of time, in a specific place, the Valley of Jehosaphat. This “Day” would inaugurate God’s eternal kingdom.

What form would this judgement take? There is no doubt that earlier prophets influenced later ones in the imagery used. Also the imagery had to be such as would strike the listener and appeal to his own observations, fears and experiences. In a sense the images used are similar to Cursing Law, as it called down upon sinful humanity dire judgements which would take place in the future, near or distant, according to predictions of the Day of the Lord. The most frequently used metaphor is of warfare, death and destruction. Not all of Judah’ people will be killed. A remnant will remain, to rebuild Jerusalem and its defences and to repopulate the land.

Fire, drought, blight and pests are other frequent images, the most striking being Joel’s extended metaphor of a locust plague. Hosea’s extended parable of his marriage to the prostitute, Gomer, depicts Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. It would be apposite in a society where the temple prostitution of fertility cults was common. God’s accusations against his people are often couched in the form that would be used in a

court case. The words in Hebrew for judgement, as has been seen, are *spt* and *din*. While *din* approximates more to the idea of an impartial judgement, *spt* has a nuance of justice combined with mercy.

God despite his anger remains a loving God of compassion, longing for the re-establishment of the Covenant relationship with Israel and obedience to its laws. God's anger is not like human anger. God is by nature just. Sin, evil and cruelty are an affront to the justice of his nature and so cannot be tolerated. The punishment of his justice must ensue. The only way in which just punishment can be escaped is through wholehearted repentance, though even that may not completely deflect atonement. Though his people will be punished, there is a remnant which will be saved to re-establish the nation and humbly to acknowledge Law and Covenant.

God, Israel began to perceive, was not only their God, but also the God of the nations, who were a part of his creation. Their cruelty, especially to Israel often exceeded that allowed by covenant treaties. In this they too became covenant breakers and deserving of God's judgement, especially as many of Israel and Judah's neighbours had been allied to them during and since the Davidic kingdom.

Gradually, a realization began to occur amongst some of the Twelve that God would forgive the nations too, provided they turned to him with genuine repentance. This realization was most clearly expressed in the book of Jonah. The prophets began to perceive that judgement, in the sense of punishment, was not an end in itself; it must have some purpose. If people did not repent on their own, then judgement was a way of bringing them to a realisation of their sins and to repentance. Once there had been judgement and repentance, there could be restoration and salvation. In other words, judgement was a prelude to salvation.

God's salvation of his people will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: SALVATION IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

5.1 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION IN THE “BOOK OF THE TWELVE” .

“Salvation” means the act of being saved or of having been saved. The saving is done by an individual, group or being who has the power to save. From a Biblical point of view the one who saves is God. The “saved” may be an individual, a group or a nation caught up in a situation in which salvation by own initiative and effort is impossible. Indeed, in Biblical terms, only God has the power to initiate salvation by whatever means he chooses. Salvation is the theme of both Testaments of the Bible (Light 2000: 1153-4).

An example of an individual being saved by God from the curse of barrenness is Hannah (I Sam. 1:1 – 2:11). Noah and his extended family provides an example of a group or remnant being saved by God from his destruction of sinful humanity, so that human life could continue in a true relationship with God (Gen. 6:5 – 9:19). God saved the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt through the leadership of Moses and made the Israelites his chosen people with whom he entered into a covenant at Sinai, when he revealed his Law to them through Moses (Ex. 12:27 – 20:21). He continued to save his people as he led them into the Promised Land and helped them to defeat their enemies. When, seemingly, he failed to save them, the religious leaders saw this as punishment of the nation for disobedience. Some prophets like Isaiah saw salvation in terms of a holy remnant, as had happened with Noah (Is. 7:3-4 and 10:20-23). Others like Hosea see God as wishing to renew his relationship with the people as a whole (Hos. 2:14 – 23).

Some of the prophets saw salvation as primarily intended for Israel and God’s judgement for foreign nations who had betrayed treaty and covenant obligations with Israel, and whose corrupting religious practices had led Israel astray, so making the nation as guilty before God as its enemies, with the result that Amos included Judah and Israel amongst the nations on whom God’s wrath was to be poured out (Amos: 1 – 2). Instead of being an example to the nations, both Israel and Judah had become as guilty as their enemies.

Sin has moral consequences for all nations, even for those that do not believe in Yahweh. There is thus a basic morality that the God of Israel expects from all nations. This is the message of Jonah, who called on Nineveh to repent of its sins; he did not call on them to worship the God of Israel. Nineveh repented at the reluctant preaching of Jonah and was spared destruction. Although they may not yet worship him, God is the God of the nations as well as of Israel. Hence divine salvation is ultimately for all nations. This is a message of all three sections of Isaiah (Is. 2: 1 – 4; 49:6, 22 – 23; 60: 1 – 14) (O’Collins 1992: 908).

In his dealings with humanity and especially his people, God makes use of agents of his salvation. So he used Moses and Joshua and many of the judges. Amongst the Kings, he used pre-eminently David and those of his descendants who stood for Yahwism and obedience to the Law. Such agents proved successful when they worked as agents of God, in his power. In Isaiah, we have the image of the mysterious

Suffering Servant who will restore justice to Israel and the nations (O'Collins 1992: 908).

In earthly and personal terms, salvation involves the fruits of victory over the nation's enemies, freedom from slavery, the gifts of long life, descendants, enjoyment of one's inheritance. In national terms it involved living secure from enemies in a fertile land in peace under rulers, later kings, who, through obedience to the Law and Covenant, were blessed with the divine gift of wisdom. The nation would enjoy spiritual freedom to worship God in obedience to the requirements of the Law amidst the majesty of Solomon's Temple. Such worship would ensure God's blessing and a close relationship with him.

After the Babylonian Exile, a remnant would be saved to enjoy material blessings as a restored nation in the Promised Land, free to worship in a reconstructed Temple under a ruler who was a descendant of David. Repentant Israel would be loved by God as a spouse (Hos. 2: 14 – 23). As time went by and the nation's high hopes were not fulfilled, salvation took on an ever more future or eschatological dimension. From salvation occurring within history, it then became foreseen at the end of time in dramatic, apocalyptic terms. The dead will be raised to life to live with God in a world that has been purified and transformed, in which evil has been vanquished, and creation judged (Isa 65: 17 – 25; Dan 12: 1 – 3) (O'Collins 1992: 909; Light 2000: 1154).

How do people become aware of their salvation? God uses various means to mediate it. For the wandering Children of Israel in the desert, it was the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (Ex. 13: 17 – 22). For besieged Jerusalem, it was the providential plague which destroyed the forces of Sennacherib (Isa. 37: 33 -37). For Abraham it was the three strangers who appeared at the sacred oaks at Mamre (Gen. 18) and for Gideon the angel who appeared to him (Jud. 6: 11). The Wisdom Literature suggests that by conducting one's life according to the precepts of divine wisdom as well as by obedience to the Law and Covenant a person may be saved (Prov. 1:20 – 2:22, esp. 1:33; Wis. 8:2 9:18, esp. 8:13).

Jeremiah and Ezekiel understood salvation as coming through a new covenant written in the human heart, a burning spiritual reality rather than an outer conformity (Jer. 31: 31 – 34; Ezek. 11: 19 -20). The Temple itself was a place where people became aware of God's presence and blessing as they came at times of festival to pray and offer sacrifice. God was believed to have his dwelling place above the cherubim in the Holy of Holies in the midst of his people. After the exile Haggai interpreted the failure of the returned exiles to prosper as owing to their failure to have rebuilt the Temple (1:1 – 2:9).

There were conditions which determined salvation. Israel was to be obedient to the laws of the Sinai Covenant. Only he, Yahweh, was to be worshiped. A follower of God was to have a trusting (Ps. 22:4) faith in his steadfast love (Ps.33: 18 – 19). The centre of worship was to be the Tabernacle and later the Temple. True worship meant not only obedience to ritual requirements, but also active concern and compassion for the poor, widows, orphans and refugees or aliens, who are people about whom a compassionate God is concerned, since they have neither the money to go to law, nor the standing to influence the rich and powerful in their favour.

Time and again God reminds his people in Scripture that they were persecuted, poor aliens in Egypt. In Deuteronomy Israel is presented with a choice between the divine blessing which follows on obedience or the judgement which will follow disobedience (Deut. 11: 26 – 28) which Micah sums up as: *What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:8) [(Freedman): 1992: 909 – 910]*. This posits an active faith, as is illustrated by the selection of the infinitives “to do”, “to love” and “to walk”, which requires more than an obedience to ritual laws.

God’s salvation is the predominant theme of the Bible. For the Israelites God is the deliverer from the enemies of the nation who would destroy its God-given peace which shows his steadfast love. Such destruction was in large part due to disobedience which required repentance to restore the relationship with God. At first, sin was seen in terms of the community becoming impure, lacking wholeness before God, as was the case with the sin of Achan, whose greed, in defying a ban on booty after the capture of Jericho, caused unexpected national defeat by weaker opponents. Only after Achan, his family and possessions had been disposed of, was it possible for Israel to defeat the citizens of Ai (Jos. 7). In the psalms we begin to read of forgiveness, both on a national (Pss.78; 85) as well as on an individual level (Pss. 119:75; 51:3).

This shows a shift in emphasis from collective to individual salvation. Jeremiah and Ezekiel teach the individual nature of sin leading to judgement and of salvation granted by God after repentance (Jer. 31:29 - 30; Ezek. 18:2 – 4). This of course does not deny the possibility of national and social sin which may be shared by an individual, nor of individual sin influencing society in some way for the worse (Light 2000: 1154).

Amos promised pity for a repentant remnant of Israel if they would *hate evil, and love good (5:15)*. As a holy people, Israel was meant to be an example to the gentiles. Frequently, in an image of an universal pilgrimage to God’s holy mountain of Zion, the prophets saw all nations coming to worship and hear God’s word. This would inaugurate a period of world-wide peace and harmony. Repentance: national, individual, international must be genuine not *like the morning mist, / like dew that vanishes early (Hos. 6:4)*. Prayers for forgiveness must be ones which change the heart of the one praying, not ones which seek to twist God’s arm (Skiba 1990: 133).

5.2 PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION FROM HEBREW VOCABULARY .

The concept of salvation is supported by various etymological sources in Hebrew. The word *plt* has the basic meaning of “escape” and the greatest use of it and its derivatives is to be found in the major and minor prophets as well as the psalms. Similar in meaning and construction is the verb *mlt* which in one of its usages also has the underlying meaning of “escape” or more precisely “to slip out of a strait” as well as “to allow to escape”. The latter word appears more frequently in the Old Testament than the former, but its use in prophetic writing is less common (Ruprecht 1997: 986 – 8; Botterweck and Hamp 2001: 552-556).

The verb *ys* means “to receive help, to be victorious” also “to help, deliver, save, come to one’s aid, bring victory.” In one noun form, *yesua*, it means “help, salvation, deliverance” and in another noun form, *yesa*, “deliverance, salvation, safety, welfare”. A further derivative, *mosia*, has the meaning “a deliverer”, who may physically save a person from danger or even rape and also from legal injustice. In general terms the root form has the implication of succouring or bringing help to people in the midst of trouble rather than rescuing them from it and usually has Yahweh as its subject and his people as its object (Hubbard, R 1997: 556 – 557).

Plt/mlt and their derivatives may be used, as in 2 Chron. 12:7, in a straightforward sense in an historical situation, for example Jerusalem will be protected from a threat of being destroyed by the Egyptians. Use of the words and their derivatives is common in the prophets, especially Isaiah, see for example Amos 2: 14-15, Is. 37: 31-32, Joel 3:5 and Zech.2: 10-11, whether they have to do with failure to save oneself or salvation by God (Hasel 2001: 563-564).

Frequently, in prophecies of salvation, it has an eschatological connotation, a salvation which will be brought about at a future unspecified date as in Isaiah 43:1 – 7 and 49: 24 -26 when Judah will be freed from Babylonian captivity. Particularly in the extract from chapter 43 the reader discovers how yearning and how great a love God has for his chosen but recalcitrant people. His desire to save them is greater than his desire to punish. The two words are also linked to post-exilic prophecies of the salvation of a remnant after universal judgement and so become linked to apocalyptic expectations of salvation (Ruprecht 1997: 990).

In the prophets *ys* and its derivatives are so used to emphasise that it is God who saves. He has a record of saving his people in the past, from Egyptian slavery and from their enemies. No other gods have done so (Is. 45: 20 – 21); neither have astrologers (Is. 47: 13), nor kings (Hos.13: 10 - 11) and certainly not unreliable allies (Hos. 14:3). Confidence in God’s power and desire to save is the prophet’s remedy for fear and encouragement for hope in the future (Is. 35:4; Zeph. 3: 17): *To the nations, you house of Judah and house of Israel, have become proverbial as a curse; now I shall save you, and you will become proverbial as a blessing. Courage! Do not lose heart* (Zech. 8:13).

Salvation, eschatologically, may involve restoration under a new David, who, for a time after the return from exile, was thought to be Zerubbabel, until he mysteriously faded from the pages of history (Jer. 23:6; Zech. 9:9). God often revealed himself to the prophets as *mosia* or “saviour”. This reassured his people of their restoration (Is.43:3) and showed other nations that he was indeed God (Hos.13:4). Israel has to learn to call God its Saviour (Jer. 14:8). A derivative, *yesua*, is used in Habakkuk 3:8 in the sense of God’s victory which leads to salvation. The same derivative is linked with the idea of justice. Isaiah calls in the nation to maintain justice for salvation is coming (Is. 56:1). The noun, *yesa*, occurs in the title “God my Saviour” (or “God of my Salvation”) in an affirmation of trust in Micah 7:7 and in a hymn of praise in Habakkuk 3:18. For the people of Israel the concept of God was bound up with the idea of salvation (Hubbard R 1997: 556 – 559).

To sum up, Hebrew vocabulary for “to escape”, “to be free”, “to save” or “to be saved” helped to create a concept of salvation in which God was regarded as saviour

from the nation's enemies, from exile, injustice, immorality, and the consequences of sin. Salvation might be mediated directly by God or by leaders appointed by him, especially a descendant of King David. It would bring earthly and spiritual freedom, which, at first, was seen as occurring within the foreseeable future and when this did not occur at a more future period and ultimately on a day of judgement which would occur at the end of time. God would reign not only as the ruler of his people, but as the ruler of all nations, indeed of the whole of creation (McKenzie 2004: 1309).

5.3 PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION IN THE 'TWELVE'

5.3.1 8TH CENTURY PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION

5.3.1.1 AMOS'S PERSPECTIVE ON SALVATION .

As one studies "The Book of the Twelve" a paradox becomes apparent. Although the main thrust of the oracles of most of the twelve is salvation, there is more detail concerning God's anger and the punishment of his people. Secondly, oracles of salvation often appear in the midst of passages of condemnation. In the case of Amos the concluding passage, concerning a saved and restored remnant, was probably an editorial addition designed to bring the book into line with the general message of salvation in the Minor Prophets.

Since the conclusion involves the idea of a saved remnant, it was probably written after the return from exile, long after the people of the Northern Kingdom had been exiled by Assyria (Barre 2004: 215). It was the first Isaiah who first prophesied the survival of a remnant at the time of the Assyrians, and his prophecies were subsequent to those of Amos (Skiba 1990: 136). Despite the fact that Amos's prophecies against Israel are ones of unrelieved punishment and suffering, there are glimmers of a God who cares, whose punishment is not only the outcome of sin but a means of redemption. So in chapter 3, verse two God speaks through Amos saying:

*You alone have I cared for
Among all the nations of the world;
that is why I shall punish you
for all your wrongdoing.*

In chapter 5, verse 1, God says: *Listen, Israel, to these words, the dirge I raise over you.* The word "dirge" suggests a God who mourns the action he is taking and the suffering it will cause.

Even though the conclusion to Amos (9: 8b – 15) is probably an editorial addition, it should be studied as representing the outlook of most of the prophets, including most of the "Book of the Twelve". The image of a sieve being shaken to sift out usable sand from pebbles which are no use for rebuilding is used symbolising that it is only those who have been obedient to God amongst the people of Israel who will be saved and will return as a remnant to their land. The image is extended in the idea of restoration being the rebuilding of David's house.

This in its turn suggests the restoration of the Kingdom (probably dating the conclusion to the years immediately after Judah's return from Babylon) and its

authority over areas like Edom (9:12), which made up David's empire. Verses 11 and 12 form a unit. "That day" has changed from one of being judgement to being one of judgement and salvation. The events are interconnected in that judgement had to precede salvation in the history of God's saving activity with his people. Reconstruction and salvation are stressed by "This is the word of the Lord who will do this" (Amos 9:12) (Westermann 1987: 116-7).

The book concludes with typical images of blessing. Harvests will be good (9:13), houses, vineyards and gardens will be re-established, wine will be plentiful. In imagery suggesting permanence we read that the people will flourish like their gardens and vineyards and will never be uprooted, be defeated and exiled again (9:14 – 15) (Westermann 1987: 117).

This outlook is eschatological, but in the sense of occurring within history and carries no apocalyptic overtones. This might be an argument for the passage being indeed a part of Amos or of being pre-exilic, but the balance of critical opinion is that the conclusion of Amos is post exilic. It would then probably have been written soon after the return. It could be argued that the editor, knowing the date of Amos's lifetime, deliberately composed the ending in tune with the outlook of the earlier pre-exilic prophets Barre 215 – 216; Canney no date: 554).

5.3.1.2 HOSEA'S PERSPECTIVE ON SALVATION

Hosea's prophecies are far more hopeful than those of his partly contemporaneous predecessor, Amos. The parable of the prophet's marriage to Gomer gives his oracles a more personal note, symbolising God's anger being a part of his love for his people, Israel and his desire for their redemption. In the midst of the story of the unfaithful Gomer we have sudden changes of mood, from the gloomy names which God instructs Hosea to give the children to salvation of Judah and Israel and their future reunification.

So, in chapter 1, verse 6, God tells the prophet that Gomer's second child, a daughter, is to be called Lo-ruhamah, meaning "I shall never again show love to Israel", and then the next verse suddenly shifts perspective to his love for Judah, which he will save with his own might and not through warfare, presumably so that the nation would be obliged to acknowledge God alone as their saviour. In verse 8 we learn a second son is born to Gomer, whom Hosea is told to call Lo-ammi, signifying "not my people and I shall not be your God".

Perspective and emotion again abruptly shifts to the restoration of an Israel whose numbers will have increased and who will be renamed "Children of the living God". Next will come the reunification of the inhabitants of the two Israelite kingdoms. It will be as though the valley of Jezreel, where slaughter occurred, becomes a symbol of life as the men of the two nations acknowledge their brotherhood and their love for the women of their own people. The nation will be whole and inclusive again and so will reflect the nature of God (Hindley 1980: 706; Westermann 1987: 113).

Chapters 1 to 3 show a parallel format in their use of the extended parable of Hosea's marriage to Gomer.

Chapter 2 from verse two to fourteen uses the image of Hosea telling his children to call their mother to account for her promiscuity and then describing how he will punish her just as God will punish his faithless people. At verse 14 the tone suddenly changes from punishing Gomer/Israel to trying to bring her round through words and actions of love. Just as Gomer will call Hosea her husband and abandon her life as a temple prostitute, so will Israel abandon its worship of the fertility gods, the Baalim. Israel will be rewarded with prosperity, expressed in terms of good harvest and of peace. God will acknowledge the nation as his people, restoring their covenant relationship (vv14 – 15), like Hosea acknowledging Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi as his children, so restoring his marital relationship with Gomer by acknowledging the children (Westermann 1987: 114-5).

In chapter 3 we have the same scenario, expressed more briefly. God instructs Hosea to take an adulteress as wife and to love her as God has loved the Israelites – despite their sins. He is to lecture her (as God has repeatedly done to his people through his prophets) to live a moral life as a faithful wife, fulfilling her duties within the home, not wandering about promiscuously and worshipping false Baalim. If the Israelites will follow God’s commands and seek to please him, as a wife should obey her husband’s instructions and try to satisfy him, then they will be blessed (McCarthy and Murphy: 2004: 221).

Hosea reports God as making a new covenant with creation, one that will end war so that his creation and people may henceforward live peacefully. This covenant will take the form of a betrothal between God and creation, a relationship *bestowing righteousness and justice, loyalty and love* (2:19). “Justice is the working out in practice of what is right according to God’s Law; “loyalty and love” are the *hesed* God shows to those who are obedient to his covenant and commands. This covenant will be made “on that day” (2:16 & 18). The phrase may be taken eschatologically in that it lies somewhere in the future, but it contrasts strongly with Amos’s day of darkness, since it here appears to be a day of blessing rather than one of disaster. God will rather bless than condemn (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 221).

In chapters four to ten inclusive Hosea sets out God’s case against Israel. But even as accusation is piled upon accusation God still has a burning desire to redeem his people. In the midst of this long indictment, at the end of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7 we hear:

*When I am minded to restore the fortunes of my people,
When I am minded to heal Israel,
The guilt of Ephraim stands revealed,
The wickedness of Samaria (6: 11b – 7: 1a).*

God’s desire to show *hesed* tragically can only remind him of Israel’s sin. Hosea, though, understands God’s love for his people and his desire to forgive them as being stronger than his anger and desire to punish. In chapters 11 to 13 we have a deeply moving and anguished expression of God’s love for Israel (see especially 11: 3 - 4; 8 – 9). In verse 9 God tells Israel that he does not react as human-beings do. Humanity’s strongest form of punishment is to destroy. The harshness of God’s judgement is primarily designed to bring sinners to repentance (Macintosh 1997:465).

He reminds his people of all that he has done for them, leading them out of Egypt and protecting them. He reproaches them for their worship of the Baalim (11: 2; 13: 1 - 3); he appeals to them to uphold loyalty and justice and avoid cheating by obtaining wealth by forbidden means (12: 6 – 8) and he warns them that punishment will be the inevitable consequence of the sins they have committed (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 218).

Chapter 11 in verses 10 to 11 has already provided a paradigm of how God will work with his people. God, roaring like a lion, will summon his trembling people from the west, from Egypt and Assyria and he will return them to their homes. God shows his anger, the people respond humbly, they are saved (Westermann 1987: 105). In chapter 14 he begs them to repent, to confess, to give up useless hope in worldly alliances with nations as a means of salvation (14: 1 – 3). If they turn to him, God will bring about a springtime for them in which there will be the beauty of new growth and full harvests (14: 4 – 7).

God's love in the latter part of Hosea develops the imagery of the marriage parable between the prophet and Gomer in the first three chapters. It develops the idea of a relationship which should be founded on reciprocal love, not just the love and desire for forgiveness of one partner. Marriage is a covenant, just as God's relationship with his people is based on a covenant. Breaking of a covenant implies sanctions against the partner who is guilty. God does not wish to have to apply sanctions, because his love is so great. All that is required to open the floodgates of his blessing is repentance.

Just as Hosea was prepared time and again to overlook Gomer's offences provided she ultimately repents, so will God overlook the sins of Israel (and Judah). Amos is conscious almost entirely of the extent and nature of the nation's sin and its consequences; Hosea is indeed aware of Israel's sinfulness, but he is as much or more aware of God's burning love and desire to forgive, if only his people would repent, and of how "that day" can be one of light rather than darkness.

5.3.1.3 MICAH'S PERSPECTIVE ON SALVATION .

Micah was a contemporary of the first Isaiah and was active just after Hosea, but his sphere of prophecy was Judah. In Micah we find that oracles of condemnation alternate with ones of redemption. Chapters 1 to 3 involve condemnation to which the world is called to listen and in which God will be the prime witness against Judah. But even within these chapters there are perspectives of salvation. In chapter 2, verses 12 to 13 we read how God will gather Israel as would a shepherd his flock in a fold. When he leads them out he will go before them together with their king. God's relationship with his people will not end with judgement, but continue with salvation (Westermann 1987: 106).

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with salvation; chapter 6 continues the image of a lawsuit against Judah and chapter 7 with how Judah's sadness will be turned to hope and joy. Parts of chapters 4 and 5 as well as 7 may be later additions (Laberge 2004: 249).

Micah foresees a day of judgement and grief (2:4) which will also be a day of salvation (4:1; 7:11 – 12). Micah's first oracle of salvation concerning that day and

ever after is a vision of Mount Zion with the Temple being exalted above every other mountain and of the people of all nations agreeing on going up to God's Temple that they may learn his ways (4: 1 – 2).

This acknowledgement of God and unity before him will lead to a world of peace expressed in the famous image of weapons being reforged into agricultural implements, which will bring not only peace but fruitfulness so that, in another famous biblical image of peace, each man will be able to sit under his own vine or fig tree (4: 3 – 4). God will be the judge of all nations in the sense of being an "arbiter" (4:3), a mediator, to ensure peace. This also suggests he will be the leader of the nations, like the former judges of Israel.

In these terms the judicial – punitive aspect of being a judge is downplayed in favour of a mediatory aspect. This vision of what will happen "on that day" (4:6) is followed by another in which God will gather all of his people who have been punished by him and dispersed amongst the nations. They will become a restored remnant who will become a great nation again under king and under God (4:6 – 8). Verse 8, suggesting the restoration of David's line may be an editorial addition (Westermann 1987: 109).

The prophet goes on to warn that difficult times are coming, that the nation will suffer before it is born again (4: 9 -10). It will go into exile in Babylon. Many enemies are ranged against it, but God's purpose is that his people will triumph, crushing their opponents. Here metaphors of a threshing floor and of cattle with iron horns and bronze hoofs are used (4:13). In God's plan judgement of his own people and the nations are part of his plan of justice and redemption in which defeat and exile are followed by a new beginning (Westermann 1987: 106-7). It is interesting that the prophet mentions exile in Babylon when he lived at the time of the Assyrian threat to Judah. This may possibly be a scribal inclusion or alteration.

From the midst of this turmoil will arise a ruler of a messianic nature, born in Bethlehem who will lead them in God's strength and majesty to victory, security and peace (5: 1 – 5a). Even if Assyria should attack, Judah will ultimately be victorious. Exiled Judah will gather to overcome the aggressor and will be like copious, fruitful rain and like a lion, feared by the beasts of the forest and the terror of a flock of sheep. In another image God will destroy all in the land that makes the people rely on themselves and ignore him: their chariots, horses, fortresses and cities (5:10 - 11). He will destroy the sorcerers and soothsayers who lead his people astray, as well as the sacred poles, pillars and altars belonging to Baal worship. All nations which disobey will be punished (5: 12 – 15). The images in chapter 5 are of a disparate nature, indicative of editing, and seeming to imply punishment as well as salvation (Laberge 2004: 252-253).

Chapter 7, the final chapter, starts with a lament by Micah. It is as though the fullness and richness of harvest have passed (7:1). Only dishonest people are left in the land. They lie in wait to commit violence on their own people. The leaders are perverse. No one, not even one's closest neighbour, is to be trusted. There is rebellion and betrayal within the family. All these images add up to portray the prophet's sense of hopelessness and depression (7:1-6). However, the prophet is determined to remain faithful and to trust in God as his saviour, confident that God will hear him and

forgive him his sins. God is his light who will lead him out of darkness and depression. God's justice will prevail and confound his enemies and he will triumph.

His lament has become a confession of faith which will find fulfilment on a day of rebuilding when the exiles of the nation, a remnant, will return to acknowledge God (7:7-13). Especially verses 11 and 12 extend the idea of salvation to not only a return, but to rebuilding and extension of territory (Westermann 1987: 108). Some translators regard verses 11 to 13 as part of the prophet's confession of faith (eg The Revised English Bible; 1989). Leo Laberge, the commentator on Micah in Brown's commentary, regards the verses as God's reply to the prophet.

The prophet's response is a prayer in which he asks God to be a shepherd to his people that they may enjoy, like a flock of sheep, the fertile nature of the Promised Land while their enemies are confounded as they were when God led his people through the desert and into that Land and turn to God, grovelling with self-abasement (7:14 – 17). The chapter ends with a hymn of praise to a God who is prepared to forgive the remnant of his people, whose anger is less than his delight in showing mercy and who will remain faithful to his covenants to Jacob and to Abraham even when his people have been faithless (7:18 – 20).

Despite his horror at the nation's sin, Micah retains a clear vision of the glory of God and of a re-established city of God which will become the glory not only of a purified and redeemed Israel, but also of all people. Like Hosea he understands that God's righteous anger cannot overwhelm the compassion of his divine nature and that he wishes to forgive rather than to punish. Although, especially in chapters 5 and 7 editorial additions may have created interspersed passages of anger and forgiveness, this combination, in the end, helps to express the prophet's wrestling with the problem of sin and forgiveness and his own frustration. It provides also an impression of emotional anguish. In places, Micah's expressions of God's grief equal the intensity of those of Hosea:

*My people, what have I done to you?
How have I wearied you? (6:3)*

When faced with God's accusations and the potential of his wrath, God's people have no choice but to repent and return to him. Briefly, Micah introduces a messianic figure from Bethlehem, the city of David, who will lead the people in God's strength and whose greatness, known to the ends of the earth, will, by implication, be even greater than David's and introduce eternal peace (5: 2-5a). For Micah "that day" will be one of redemption rather than one of punishment.

5.3.2 7TH AND 6TH CENTURY PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVES

5.3.2.1 ZEPHANIAH'S PERSPECTIVE ON SALVATION

In Zephaniah, "that day" has become a day of judgement not only for Judah, but for all nations (3:8). At the moment of declaring his wrath against all nations, God is preparing for salvation (Szeles 1987: 100). He wants to ensure "pure lips to all peoples" (3:9). This suggests he wishes to save a remnant amongst all the nations who will call upon him and serve him (3:9). Those who are dispersed and worship him will

bring offerings to him in Jerusalem (3:1). When he turns his attention to the city of his dwelling, he declares that on “that day” he will rid the inhabitants of those who are too proud and arrogant to acknowledge him (3:11). This will initiate a total cleansing and a complete break with the old sinful way of life – a new start (Szeles 1987: 108 - 109).

A remnant of his people will be saved. They will be the lowly and the poor, the very people the arrogant have mistreated (3:12). A suggestion of the salvation of a remnant has already occurred in 2: 6 – 7 where the pasturelands of enemies will belong to the survivors of Judah. The prophet is indicating that God has a purpose for his people beyond judgement (Patterson 1991: 370). This purpose is a gracious act of salvation, for judgement will remove the consequences of sin and rebellion amongst this remnant of Israel (Baker 1988: 115). An important feature is that this remnant “will find their refuge in the Lord’s name” (3:12). This suggests not only the power which the Lord’s name has of itself, but also that the humble know that their only true safety on earth is in the Lord, the very thing that the proud and arrogant forget or wilfully refuse to realise.

God’s concern for all the nations is for those who realise that they “have no power of themselves to help themselves” in the words of the collect for the Second Sunday in Lent (BCP: no date: 80). God is their security (3:13). The prophet calls upon Zion to rejoice because God has averted the punishment the people deserve and defeated their foes (3: 14-15). God is their king, present in their midst, a warrior who will protect them, against oppressors, gather in the lost, restore their fortunes and re-establish their fame (3:16 – 20).

It is not just the people who will be overjoyed, but God himself (3:17). God loves his people (3:17). Perhaps here we may infer a suggestion of his betrothal to his people, as is suggested in Hosea. “A festal day” (3:18a) has the implication of the joy of a marriage feast (Carson 1980: 78). God’s rejoicing that his covenant is re-established will be like the rejoicing of his people on a “festal day” (3: 18). This suggests that the importance of “that day” will be that it is far more a festival than a day of punishment and judgement. It is a turning point in the destiny of his people, a moment when having acknowledged God, they rejoice in a new self-respect and in respect from the nations because Israel’s God has punished them (Westermann 1987:109-110).

This point of view is similar to that of Micah, when Judah faced a similar danger, but from a different enemy some hundred or more years earlier. Implied in this rejoicing is the fact that salvation from enemies is found in God alone, not in shaky worldly alliances, as Hosea warned (Hos. 5:13). God’s people will be gathered like sheep by the shepherd. “Shepherd” was a common metaphor at the time to describe the role of a king. God is Israel’s king. He has saved them from their predators and will ensure their safety (Zeph. 3: 19) (Roberts: 1991: 223). To stress the glory and rejoicing of this festal day, it is not the prophet speaking on God’s behalf, but God himself speaking, and the book ends not with “This is the word of the Lord”, but with “It is the Lord who speaks” (3:20) (Wahl 2004: 257 – 258).

5.3.2.2 THE PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION OF NAHUM AND HABAKKUK

Nahum's prophecy looks backward in the sense that he is rejoicing at the downfall of Nineveh in 614 BC rather than forwards to the possible threat to Judah of the Babylonians. To him God's punishment of Assyria is a source of joy and salvation for Judah. He describes Assyria/Nineveh's oppression as a yoke which has been lifted from Judah's neck or like cords which have been binding the nation and have now been broken (1:13). In a lyrical passage he describes the coming over the mountains of the messenger, who heralds the good news of Nineveh's defeat, which will ensure Judah freedom to worship God by keeping his pilgrim feasts. The nation's pride will be restored and he prophesies future peace and unity for Israel and Judah (1:13 and 2:2).

Westermann finds in chapter 1 verses 12 to chapter 2 verse 2 sentences of an earlier oracle of salvation. Defeat, judgement and exile are turned into liberation, defeat of enemies and restoration (Westermann 1987: 119-120). Although Nahum mentions no actual "Day of the Lord", the day of Nineveh's defeat is its equivalent and a day of salvation for God's people. Although God may have used Assyria to punish Israel and Judah, he has not abandoned them and has now redeemed them by punishing their oppressor (Nowell 2004: 260). Westermann also sees here intentional links with the message of salvation of Second Isaiah (Westermann 1987: 120). The evil of oppression of Israel has brought brought God's wrath upon Assyria. Salvation for Israel has only been implied. However, when we read Nahum within the context of "The Book of the Twelve", it is apparent that Israel's salvation is not an implication only, but a part of God's plan (Emmerson 1998: 32).

In Habakkuk historical context gives way to the prophet, Job-like, querying the seemingly unfair and out of control chaos of the world in which he lives (1:2-4; 1:12 – 2:1). God is a bit freer with his answers than he was to Job (1:5-11; 2:2-5). In his first answer he tells the prophet he is using the Chaldeans for his own purposes; in the second he promises that he will reveal his purpose at the appointed hour. What God is showing is that those who live by violence will be destroyed by it. This applies to the Assyrians who will be overthrown by the Chaldeans and implies that they in their turn will be overthrown (2:5-8).

Evil of all kinds contains within itself the seeds of its destruction. This is the message of the five woes (2:9-18). In other words God is in control of history. These may seem like oracles of punishment, but a little after the fashion of Nahum, such punishment is at the same time salvation for those who are faithful to and trust in God. Habakkuk's reaction to these revelations is a hymn of praise for God's almighty power (Ch.3). We may regard the hymn as a prayer of thanksgiving at the same time. The hymn ends with a highly lyrical declaration, suitable to a predominantly agricultural society, in which the prophet declares that no matter how many disasters may occur he will still rejoice in and praise God (3:17-19) (Goldsmith 1982:67; Ceresko 2004:261 – 264).

Although there is no mention of a "Day of the Lord" on which punishment and salvation may be balanced against each other, we are given to understand that God's power weights the scales in favour of salvation for the faithful, at a moment he chooses. They must show trust and patience.

5.3.3 PERSPECTIVES OF THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

5.3.3.1 HAGGAI

Haggai is perhaps the simplest of the three in his outlook. To restore God's blessing on Judah, it will be necessary to rebuild the Temple. Neglect to do so has been the cause of an unfulfilling return from exile (Hag.1:10-11). At God's command, Haggai addresses Zerubbabel, as leader of the nation and a descendant of David, and Joshua, the high priest, encouraging them and the people to take heart and build the Temple, so that God in his glory will once more dwell amongst them. The glory of the new Temple will surpass that of the old one (2:4 – 9). The rebuilding of the Temple symbolises the reconstitution of the nation (O'Brien 2004: 144).

Although Haggai does not explicitly mention a Day of the Lord, the concept is implied in the phrase: *In a little while from now I shall shake the heavens and the earth...*(Hag. 2:6). This will involve a shaking of the nations and a tribute of wealth to the Temple (Hag. 2:7). The promise to shake heavens and earth is repeated in chapter 2, verse 21, where this will involve a time when heathen kings will be overthrown and nations will turn on their former allies (verse 22). Zerubbabel will become God's signet ring, a symbol of divine authority, and the rule of the House of David will be re-established (Hag. 2:23). Zerubbabel being God's signet ring may be a reference to Jeremiah 22:24.

The book of Haggai is also precise in giving the times of the prophet's utterances: see 1:1; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20. This may be regarded as emphasising the idea of God's judgement of the nations and salvation of his people taking place soon at an as yet unspecified time. There is no suggestion of salvation for all nations. The imagery is simple. In 2:6 and 2:7 the shaking heaven, earth and the nations is a theophany declaring God's power and glory. It is also a command to rebuild the Temple as his dwelling. Once that has occurred, the people will be able to live in peace and prosperity. All wealth belongs to God and is therefore his gift (2:8). (O'Brien 2004: 149).

The moment of completion of the Temple is similar to completion of the "Day of the Lord" with salvation. The apocalyptic imagery of Haggai's contemporary, Zechariah, will be in sharp contrast (Cody 2004: 349 – 351). For Haggai, ignoring the true worship of God, by failing to provide a divine dwelling where the chosen people may worship, is Judah's sin. This is the sin of a secular outlook, rather than the pre-exilic ritual sins and injustices towards the poor. Such sin prevents God's saving presence from being in the midst of a worshipping people (Kennett no date: 572 – 573).

5.3.3.2 ZECHARIAH

As has before been mentioned, the book of Zechariah may be the result of the editing of at least two, possibly three authors. The first was responsible for chapters 1 to 8; the second of chapters 9 to 14 and, if there was a third author, he was responsible for 12 to 14. Zechariah shows similarity in outlook to Zephaniah, in that he sees Jerusalem as the centre of the world with other nations as well as the Israelite diaspora turning to Jerusalem as their spiritual home (2:11-12) (Cody 2004: 352). A marked difference between pre-exilic and post-exilic prophecy is the latter's more visionary and apocalyptic nature. Many of his images are references to earlier prophets or to

Scripture (Higginson 1980: 786). Zechariah also believes in a day of the Lord's coming ("that day") (2:11). He is also very precise about the timing of the Lord's messages to him (eg 1:7).

His visions are mixed ones of punishment for those who fail to repent and of salvation for those who do. In Zechariah's first vision God tells him of his anger against the nations who have been his people's enemies, but that he will, in compassion, return to Jerusalem, make it prosperous and his city again. Those nations, symbolised by horned beasts, which had caused his people to suffer would be overthrown (1:16-21). God's anger with his people is past. They had served their sentence by being in exile (Westermann 1987: 119). In the second vision of a man with a measuring line, he sees that God will henceforward be a wall about Jerusalem, his dwelling-place, protecting the city and people (2:1-12). Then he sees Satan standing next to Joshua the High Priest to accuse him. Satan is rebuked by an angel and Joshua is given new priestly robes. On God's behalf, the angel tells Joshua that he is to ensure right worship in the Temple and that God will restore a ruler of the branch of David (3:1-10).

In the fifth vision, Zerubbabel is made king and is tasked with completing the Temple (4:4-10). In the Revised English Bible (1989: p820) verses 1 to 4 and 5 to 10 have been transposed and so what is normally the fourth vision of the lamp-stand and the olive trees follows, showing that restored priesthood and the king will be the two future sources of strength in the land (4:1-4). The fifth image of a flying scroll symbolises that those who commit or have committed perjury will be cast out of their homes (5:1-4). The following vision of the woman in the barrel signifies evil being banished from the land (5:1-11). The eighth vision of a chariot, the horse of which represents the winds show God's spirit going in blessing to a country to the north, presumably Persia, as it had overthrown the Babylonians and released Israelites from captivity (6:1-8). Thereafter there is reiteration of the messages in the visions. Under Joshua and Zerubbabel those who practice justice will be allowed to live in the land and foreigners will flock to help rebuild the Temple (6:9-15; 7:1-14). Feasts and fasts will be genuinely celebrated (7:1-7).

In another message God tells the prophet again that Jerusalem will be his dwelling and that it will be a place of joy and blessing where the old may watch their grandchildren playing. He will rescue those still left in exile and will restore his covenant with Israel (see also 9:11 – 12). There will be harvests and good rains. That the temple will be rebuilt is again emphasised (8:1-13). Covenant restoration is solely owing to God's mercy (10:6 – 7) (Westermann 1987:110 – 111). Further divine messages again stress that the nation must live justly; that God's blessing is upon his people and that other nations will come to worship in Jerusalem (8:14-23). Salvation here takes the form of restoration of those in exile, re-establishment of the line of David, and of the priesthood and cult in a restored Temple. Israel and Judah will have the respect of the nations for what God has done for them and the nations will wish to worship in Jerusalem. There will be punishment for the nation's enemies. However, the nation will have some homework to do. They are warned that they must live justly according to the Law and that those who have failed to do so, and, presumably, those who fail to do so will be banished. Salvation is only for a purified nation. There will not be blanket punishment. Condemnation will be reserved only for the guilty (Cody 2004: 356).

So far Zechariah has not been very dramatic. Like other prophets, Zechariah has had revelations of what to say and has received visions. The visions themselves are perhaps a little more esoteric and highly coloured than those of earlier prophets. From chapter 9, the revelations become more dramatic as does the picture of the “Day of the Lord”. God is first portrayed as a warrior conquering and destroying enemy nations (9:1-8), then he is transformed into a prince of peace riding on a donkey who will bring peace and release from captivity to his people (9:9-13) before once again being seen as a warrior protector (9:13-17). In chapter 10 we have an expression of anger by God against the shepherds who allowed his flock to wander and to get into danger. These presumably are the leaders of the past. God promises to restore the exiles amongst his people by leading them back to the Promised Land, just as he led his people into out of slavery in Egypt. In exile they had continued to believe in God and worship him despite their punishment. Henceforward they will continue to trust in him (10:1-12) (Westermann 1987: 111 – 112).

Chapter 11 seems rather contradictory, unless regarded as a warning to a re-established people. God appoints the prophet as his shepherd. Since the nations and their shepherds do not accept him, he breaks the staff representing God’s covenant with the nations and is paid as wages the amount paid to a person if a neighbour’s ox has gored him. God tells the prophet to place the compensation in the Temple treasury. He then breaks the staff symbolising the union of Israel and Judah. God warns him to re-equip himself as a worthless shepherd. Perhaps this is an illustration that Judah’s rulers are not fulfilling their jobs (11:1-17).

In the next chapter, possibly by another writer, “on that day” we have images of God destroying Judah’s enemies and of Judah becoming a flaming fire which will consume them. All his people, those who live in Jerusalem and those outside, will be equal in importance, the weakest as powerful as David, so that any nation attacking Jerusalem will be overwhelmed. It is difficult to interpret who it is that will be pierced: God himself, or a figure like the suffering servant in Isaiah, but whoever it is all the people of Israel, men and women of all families and classes will mourn personally (12:1-14) (Cody 2004: 358).

The line of David will be established, the people will cleanse themselves, idols will be abolished, false prophets will hide through shame and God will purify his people so that only a third survive (13:1-9). The climax of God’s judgement comes in the final chapter, chapter 14. There will be a final battle over Jerusalem. Half its population will be exiled and suffer the horrors of a sack. God will fight and defeat the nations as a heroic, divine warrior. A huge valley will open up and streams will flow. Those still in Jerusalem will be saved and never again suffer warfare. God will kill the remaining enemies with plague and any who survive will worship God otherwise they will suffer the penalty of drought. Everything in the Temple will be holy to God (14:1-20).

Where do we find salvation in the midst of this? The imagery is dramatic and often difficult to understand. The same ideas are repeated in slightly differing images. There appears to be salvation for a remnant which becomes smaller and smaller. Perhaps it would be better to see the different descriptions of the salvation of this remnant as running in parallel rather than in sequence. There is no longer a specific enemy: Assyria or Babylon. The nations come to represent the forces of evil which reject God. God is establishing his holy city, his kingdom on earth, by purging it of all that

is against his Law and by destroying in Israel and in all the nations those who refuse to accept and worship him. War and punishment are his means of purification, leading to salvation after a final apocalyptic battle (Cody 2004:358-9). In imagery we have entered a world of the ideal, using a form of expression which is allusive rather than descriptive. It is an attempt to equate the earthly with the spiritual, the factual with the imaginative (Higginson 1980: 802-803).

5.3.3.3 MALACHI

In Malachi we have a return to cultic matters. Perhaps the secularity condemned by Haggai continued to affect people's attitude towards God. Malachi accuses the people of offering up impure sacrifices, of bringing inadequate tithes, of taking divorce lightly to the detriment of wives and children. In chapter 3, God promises to send a messenger who will prepare the way for God's coming. He will purify and judge the people including the priesthood. The prophet talks about the *day of his coming* (3:2), which will be a day of purification (3:2-3), before the Lord's coming. This idea is repeated at the end of the book (4:5-6), where the prophet of warning is equated with Elijah. Those who turn to God will have their names recorded and will belong to God on the day that he will appoint (3:16-17). That day will be one of cleansing and destruction by blazing fire (4:1). For those who have remained faithful it will be a day of triumph over the wicked (4:2-3). So with Malachi we have the idea of a faithful remnant being saved. God himself is directly both saviour and destroyer. The name, *Malachi*, itself, means "my messenger". This helps emphasise Malachi's introduction of the concept of the coming of a messenger, an Elijah, who will recall the people to obedience to God's Law (4:4), before God's coming on the Day of the Lord. Despite the sternness of his judgement, God wishes people to turn to him and be saved ([Cody 2004: 359 – 361).

5.3.4 PRE-EXILIC IN CANON; POST-EXILIC IN COMPOSITION

5.3.4.1 JOEL

Joel, probably written after 515 and before 343 BC (Mallon 2004: 399-400), has an apocalyptic ending of judgement in the Valley of Jehosaphat on a day decided by God. It will be a day of judgement against the nations which have maltreated Israel (3:1-3). The fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem will be reversed. God will take up his dwelling again on Mount Zion and foreigners will never again invade the city (3:17). For Judah it will introduce eternal blessings portrayed in terms of abundant water supply and agricultural blessings (3:18). But before all this can happen the people must have responded to God's call to repentance (2:12-17), not in an outward ceremonial form, but one of such deep sorrow that the heart is rent with it (2:12-13). God declares that he is always *gracious and compassionate, / long-suffering and ever constant* (2:13). God's zealous compassion for his people is ultimately the cause of the reversal of judgement, but repentance is a prerequisite (Wolff 1977: 61).

There must be a day of fasting when the people gather together to repent publicly and nationally (2:16-17). Verse 18 is often seen as a turning point in Joel. The book turns from judgement for past sin to the future, to the "Day of the Lord" and of salvation for Israel as well as judgement for the nation's enemies on that day (Ogden 1987: 32; Hubbard 1989: 61). Then God promises to show the force of his love by granting

plentiful harvests, freedom from pests like the locusts, removing threats of invasion from the north (2:18-27). It is not just that God will bless them materially, but also that they will receive spiritual blessings:

*After this I shall pour out my spirit on all mankind;
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams
And your young men see visions;
I shall pour out my spirit in those days
even on slaves and slave-girls (2:28-29).*

Portents will announce the day of the Lord and those who call on God's name will be saved. Such portents not only show God's might and majesty, but are a sign of hope, of peace to come and of a God who is able to defeat the nation's enemies [Ogden: 1987: 39 – 39]. Such portents not only show God's might and majesty, but are a sign of hope, of peace to come and of a God who is able to defeat the nation's enemies (Ogden 1987: 39 – 39). God will be faithful to his promise that a remnant of his people will be saved (2:30-32). Although there is a clear implication that all who acknowledge God will be saved and will share in the gift of the Spirit, Joel's emphasis is on salvation for God's chosen people (Wolff 1977: 67; Ogden 1987: 37). From now on God's spirit will not just be for leaders, secular or religious, but for all people, no matter their age or social status (Hubbard 1989: 69).

Who the remnant will be is not entirely clear. It may be those who have survived invasion and warfare. It may be those who have responded to the call to repentance. It may be a mixture of both. Perhaps what is most important is that God will save his people, despite the calamities their misbehaviour has brought upon them. The "Day of the Lord has changed from one of judgement alone into one of salvation as well (Wolff 1977: 68. Judgement moves through grace to salvation (Goldsmith 1982: 142). God is faithful to his covenant.

It is interesting to note that the chapter and verse divisions in Roman Catholic versions of the Bible end chapter 2 at verse 27. Chapter 3 comprises five verses equivalent to chapter 2 verses 28 to 32 and chapter 4 consists of chapter 3. This has the advantage of emphasising the outpouring of God's Spirit as part of his plan of salvation (Jerusalem Bible 1990: 1096 – 1100; Mallon 2004: 399-403). The Temple and Jerusalem will again be God's dwelling and the site of his power and glory (1:13-16; 2:1, 7-9, 15-16, 17) (Hubbard 1989:72). Salvation and the "Day of the Lord" remain earthly events.

5.3.4.2 OBADIAH

Although in Biblical order Obadiah comes after Amos, in terms of internal evidence it is more likely a product of the 5th century BC with perhaps a slightly later addition of verses 15a and 16 to 21 (Mallon 2004: 404; Wheeler Robinson no date: 555).

Obadiah inveighs against the treachery of Edom at the time of the Babylonian invasion, when, it seems, it changed sides from the coalition against Babylon to co-operation with the enemy. The prophet announces a "Day of the Lord" which will be one of punishment not only against Edom, but against all nations (15). Judah has

already swallowed the drink of God's wrath (16) so for the remnant of the nation the "Day of the Lord" will be one of salvation when, as a holy nation, it will bring judgement on the nations which have harmed it. Judah will receive the territory of its surrounding enemies (19-21). Effectively this will mean that Judah and Israel will be re-united (19), with their religious and political base on Mount Zion, in other words in Jerusalem and the Temple (17). Salvation and the "Day of the Lord" remain earthly occurrences.

In the time of the monarchy the "Day of the Lord" was frequently a threatening day for Israel and Judah; after the exile the threat is to the nations who have betrayed or acted cruelly towards the kingdoms. For God's people, the day of the Lord has become a day of vindication, restoration and salvation. The vindication of Israel is, at the same time, a proof of God's sovereignty over all nations (Mallon 2004: 405). The descendants of Jacob have passed through the punishment of suffering, before being vindicated. Since Esau has been proud and rebellious, it will have to endure suffering to make it turn to God. On the Day of the Lord it will learn the consequences of its behaviour (Robinson 1980: 743).

5.3.4.3 JONAH

In Jonah, dated about the fifth century, ie about the time of Joel and Obadiah, we find the least exclusivist outlook in Israelite theology. Some would maintain that there is, however, no real reason why Jonah should not date from the 8th century BC, since universalist concepts can be found at this time in the prophecies of Isaiah (22:2-5) and Micah (4:1-5) (Allen 1997: 799).

The book is filled with ironies. Nineveh, the cruel destroyer of the Kingdom of Israel, repents immediately at the prophecy of Jonah. Even the animals are clothed in sackcloth and participate in fasting! Neither Israel nor Judah responded so immediately and thoroughly to a whole line of prophets calling them to repentance. In fact, there was no real repentance and they had to undergo destruction of the kingdoms and suffering.

Jonah, called by God, ran away from his prophetic responsibility, despite being a member of God's chosen people. Not even the attempts of his shipmates to spare him, nor yet God's rescue by means of the whale really turned his heart, despite his psalm of thanksgiving on his return to terra firma. He performed his divinely appointed task with cynicism and reluctance, not believing in the likelihood of Nineveh's repentance. When Nineveh repented, he was annoyed, and the Lord's living parable of the sheltering vine, the worm and blistering east wind could not pierce the stubbornness of his heart. He could not understand that, despite God's mercies towards him, God is free to bestow mercy wherever he wills, no matter how much that mercy is incomprehensible to humanity.

Mercy is a part of God's nature; it is certainly not a part of humanity's, no matter how much humanity thinks it deserves divine mercy. The story of Jonah helps further to define the nature of God (Allen 1997: 800). Humanity always has a problem in equating mercy with justice, especially when it applies to enemies. Frequently, too, humanity has difficulty in understanding how its actions call down upon itself God's

justice. If God has to struggle to convert one called by him to be a prophet, how much more difficult must it be to convert a recalcitrant nation (Ceresko 2004: 580 – 584)?

In Jonah we have summed up for us the whole question of prophecy and repentance, neatly inverted in order to underline the topic. God is ruler not only of the descendants of Jacob, but of humanity. The covenant with Abraham is prior to the one with Jacob. Some scholars regard the fact that even the animals seem to repent as a reference to the covenant with Noah (Allen 1997: 801). If his covenant laws are broken by humanity, God, according to the covenant code, is entitled to punish the disobedient. However, his desire to show mercy is greater than his wish to punish. Humanity is, though, required to repent, before God's mercy will be released. When released it is a generous, loving mercy.

5.4 CONCLUSION

God sent prophets to remind his people of their covenant relationship with God, to show them their sins against God and against their fellows, to warn them of the consequences of their sins, to show that unrepented sin led inevitably to judgement, a judgement that, it was increasingly understood, would herald a day of the Lord's coming. At first this would be a day on which things were set right with his people. A remnant, who had remained faithful, or who acknowledged their sin, would escape punishment, and receive blessing. Their enemies would be punished. Jerusalem and the Temple, Judah and Israel would be restored and there would be a time of agricultural plenty.

Some prophets, like Zephaniah and the writer of Jonah saw salvation as available to all nations. Some, like Micah and Malachi, foresaw the coming of a messianic ruler. Particularly, immediately after the exile, there was a belief that the governor, Zerubbabel, would become king and restore the reign of the House of David. All of these are images from the Israelite's experience of their history.

Throughout the wandering in the Wilderness, they believed God had been present with them, that presence being the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night which had gone before them and settled over the Tabernacle by night. The Promised Land had been described to them as a land of agricultural plenty. When they entered it, while they were obedient, God gave them victory over their enemies. When they were disobedient to his commands through the prophets or their leaders they suffered defeat and slavery again – at the hands of the Philistines and later, in exile, of the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The Temple, the house of God's presence, was destroyed by the Babylonians. If they repented, then surely a God, who through the prophets had continually reminded them of his love for his people and his desire to show mercy, would restore them to their land and allow them to restore Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, so that he could again dwell in their midst. His presence would ensure a time of blessing and enjoyment of the fruits of the land. Enemies would be punished or come to acknowledge the only true God. Wars would cease. A descendant of David would be their king under God, their overall ruler, who would be with them for ever. God would fulfil this on a day of his choosing, manifesting his power and glory, which would be one both of punishment and salvation.

Salvation is described in terms of restoration and future blessings: relationship with God through covenant is restored; so are restoration of the unity of the peoples of Israel and Judah, restoration of the kingdom, restoration of honour as God defeats his people's enemies and restoration of peace. The nations will desire to worship the God of Israel (Westermann 1987: 133 – 136).

For the Minor Prophets the “Day of the Lord” and judgement leading to salvation become collectively an earthly dramatic event. It changes from applying to the People of Israel alone, with Israel and Judah united under their own king, ruling from Jerusalem under God to applying to an international remnant where either God's representative or God reigns from Zion. Although earthly, God's rule will be eternal (McKenzie 2004: 1312 - 1313). Only in Zechariah does the imagery become such that it is suggestive of the earthly being a reflection of the ideal, God's universal rule.

CHAPTER 6: THE “DAY OF THE LORD” AND SALVATION OF A REMNANT FROM THE POINTS OF VIEW OF CANONICAL AND REDACTION CRITICISMS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a more extended overview will be given of the concept “The Day of the Lord”, including points of view of some of the latest canonical criticism. Next, it will be necessary to look at the concept of “a remnant” and what that means in terms of judgement and salvation.

6.2 THE “DAY OF THE LORD” INCLUDING VIEWPOINTS FROM THE LATEST CANONICAL CRITICISM

Until the time of Amos, commentators agree that the “Day of the Lord” or the “Day of Yahweh” was regarded as a time when God would vindicate Israel by defeating its enemies, ensuring the nation’s independence and prosperity. It is Israel’s enemies that will be judged for their crimes against God’s people. The notion of Israel and Judah being punished for their sins on the “Day of the Lord” was first proclaimed by Amos (2:4-8). This day however is not always presented as one, final judgement and it is not systematically presented. The phrase, the “Day of the Lord”, or words of similar meaning, such as “that day”, or the “day of ..”, the “day when ..”, the “day of God’s anger” are used some 224 times in the major and minor prophets. They are also to be found in “Lamentations” (Ishai-Rosenboim 2006: 398).

Daniella Ishai-Rosenboim points out that the “Day of the Lord” cannot be regarded as a term which has a fixed meaning. It may be past, present or future. It may be one of judgement or salvation. In the phrase there is nothing that specifies in what way it is a “Day of the Lord”. Hence its significance is open-ended and may be interpreted by the prophets in differing ways according to the circumstances they are addressing (Ishai-Rosenboim 2006: 395-401). So different prophets view the day individually and the “Day” may be made up of more than one event. Joel posits a “Day of the Lord” as a day of God’s judgement against his people (Jl 2:1-2) and later as a day of reversal of fortune for Israel and of judgement of the surrounding nations (Jl 3:1-2).

James Nogalski, in his article, *Recurring themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating points of Contact for a Theological Reading*, sees three issues which require evaluation when dealing with the “Day of the Lord” in the “Book of the Twelve”. These are *target*, *time frame* and *means*. The target may be God’s people or their enemies. The time frame refers to the eschatology of the event: immediate, near or distant future or at the end of time. In the two examples of the “Day of the Lord” from Joel above, the “Day” in chapter 2 would seem to be earlier than that in chapter 3. The means may be military defeat, plague or other natural calamity (Nogalski April 2007: 125-126).

Although God may use the medium of other nations or of natural disasters, it is he who is their ultimate cause (cf Hos 1: 4-5; Mic 2: 2-4; Jer 17: 16-18; Jl 2: 1-2 etc (Hiers 1992: 82 II). It was Amos, too, who declares that the “Day of the Lord” will be one that Israel will not expect (5:18-20) (Hiers 1992: 82 II; McKenzie 2004: 1307). He describes it as a day which will be “darkness, not light”. It will be one of no

escape as when a man runs from a lion only to find himself confronted by a bear, or when, having reached the safety of home, he finds himself bitten by snake as he puts a hand on the wall (Am 5:18-19).

Prediction of the coming of the “Day of the Lord” is known as eschatology. The word is derived from the Greek meaning “the word (*logos*) of last (*eschatos*) things”. In the Old Testament a fairly wide definition is needed: future expectations for Israel, or a remnant of the nation, which are so different from the situation of the prophet’s lifetime that the future cannot emerge through human effort, but only through God’s power. The question here is not so much how Israel would be punished, but how God could save it. Some regard eschatology as having only begun to develop during the Babylonian Exile, but it would seem likely that the seeds had already been planted during the period of Assyrian dominance (Redditt 1990: 260).

If God had continually to act within history in order to restore creation, then it might suggest that his power was limited with regard to dealing with human capacity to sin. To combat such a suggestion, quite apart from God’s power to act within history, there would have to come a moment when he would act decisively to deal with sin and evil. This moment would have to be outside history and would be the end of time in earthly terms and the beginning of God’s eternal time when he ruled over those who acknowledged his authority. Since the Israelites had no other conception of life other than in terms of the life of this world, eternal life would take the form of a perfection of this life, of the ideal life of the Promised Land. This form of eschatology developed especially after the disappearance of Zerubbabel when, according to Mowinckel, Israel no longer had any historical hope in terms of its former belief in the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom (McKenzie 2004:1312-1313).

Probably under the influence of Babylonian and Chaldean civilization and religion, Israelite eschatology became more apocalyptic in nature. Apocalyptic (noun: apocalypse) is derived from the Greek word for “revelation” (Bauckham 1988: 34). Apocalyptic prophecy relied more on very dramatic visions and imagery than did ordinary prophecy. It also indicated a “Day of the Lord” at the end of time, which involved a final battle between God and evil, set in the Valley of Jehosaphat, or in the valley which would open up next to Jerusalem, in which the nations would be destroyed and a remnant of Israel would be saved to live in eternal blessing under God (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech.14:5). Salvation would be possible for any who had been faithful, but non-Israelites would, perhaps, not quite be considered first-class citizens of the New Jerusalem (Zech.14) (Ladd 1972: 43 – 44). The forms of apocalyptic imagery are drawn from the historical experiences of defeat and destruction of Israel and Judah. During the apocalypse the world returns to a state of chaos similar to that before creation and to that of the world before the deluge. God, in a new creative act, remakes heaven and earth in which there will be no more rebellion against his will (McKenzie 2004: 1313).

What exactly is meant by “a day”? For the answer we have to turn to Hebrew etymology. Although Amos (5:18-20) is the first to use the phrase the “Day of the Lord” (*yom YHWH*), this does not imply that he necessarily invented it. It was a phrase used in religious thought, which he employed and re-interpreted. Hebrew history designated important events as “days”, so for example the “day of Midian’s defeat” (Isa. 9:4, referring to the event described in Jud. 7:25) (Jenni 1962: 784). The

“Day of the Lord” theologically suggests, then, a day when the Lord will intervene in history. No doubt in Hebrew thought such a day would have been when God’s power engulfed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, having allowed the Israelites to pass through in safety.

Since God had created day, it was in his power to use it as he would. So, if he wished to suspend the eternal round of day and night by creating a single and eternal day, that was within his creative right. This was what Zechariah prophesied in chapter 14, verse 7. The significance of the word “day” is defined in cases such as “the Day of the Lord” and “the Day of Midian” by the noun which follows and qualifies it. In historical terms it could refer to a past event, but in prophetic terms it tends to a future occurrence of victory by God over his enemies. It was Amos and succeeding prophets who reshaped understanding of the phrase (Jenni 1997: 537-539).

If the prophets were so conscious of such a day, when did they expect it to occur? The answer to this question may be answered by Nogalski’s *time frame*. The earliest of the prophets: Amos, Hosea, Proto-Isaiah, and Micah foresaw it as coming within the fairly immediate future. The prophets were inspired to pronounce God’s word to the people in the present as concerning the immediate future. For Amos and Hosea, concerned primarily with the state of affairs in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, the day of the Lord’s judgement on Israel would have been the moment of defeat by Assyria and the deportation of most of the population.

As far as the prophecies of Proto-Isaiah and Micah were concerned, the “Day of the Lord” for Judah nearly came with the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, who was forced to withdraw because of plague. Judah had to wait another 136 years until Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586/7 BC. Even perhaps for Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk this disaster was not exactly in the immediate future. The delay in the coming of the “Day of the Lord” began to become an occurrence which was part of an indeterminate future.

When the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon occurred and some of the population of Judah was deported, it must have seemed to the prophets of the Exile, Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel that the day of the Lord’s judgement had indeed occurred for Judah. Now that both Israelite Kingdoms had been punished, a new future opened up. Since perpetual exile was unthinkable, it must be a future of redemption based on repentance and obedience to Law and Covenant and a return to the Promised Land.

For the prophets of the return from exile, Haggai and Zechariah, the prime time concern was rebuilding the Temple and the re-establishment of a God-fearing and worshipping nation. With the post-exilic prophets the focus of time has changed. Although there is still threat of judgement on a “Day of the Lord” against Judah’s enemies (Hag. 2:20-23; Zech. 9 and 14), Israel has been saved by her return from exile in Babylon, but she has failed truly to worship God, firstly by failing to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the cult, secondly, according to Malachi, by becoming slack about tithes and the offering of inferior animals in sacrifice and, thirdly, by neglecting the marginalised in society. Israel must return to God and God will return to Israel by punishing enemies and by fighting on Israel’s side in the future, in other words by completing blessings withheld after the return from exile.

In Zechariah 12 to 14 the oracles concerning the “Day of the Lord” are set very much in the future and Judah will itself undergo a cleansing process. Malachi, too sees the “Day of the Lord” as one of purification for Israel and the just and the unjust will be revealed (Mal 3: 19-21). Even amongst the nations God will be concerned for those who worship him (1:11). Theologically a shift has occurred. There will no longer be blanket punishment of Israel or the nations for their sins, but the just will be saved (Nogalski: April 2007: 127). The change in the nature of prophecy after the exile made prediction of the time of the “Day of the Lord” even more difficult, so that it began to seem an ever more future event (Jenni: 1962: 785; McKenzie 2004: 1307-8).

Who were God’s enemies (or the *target*) against whom he would intervene? Amos was the first to dare to suggest that it was not only the enemies of Israel who were God’s enemies, but even his people in the kingdoms of Judah and especially Israel. If the “Day of the Lord” is to be one of judgement on all nations, in the sense understood by the Israelites, who then was to be saved if God’s people had by their attitude and actions excluded themselves from God’s mercy? The only logical answer could be those who repented. What, though, did repentance involve? Sacrifices could only be offered for unwitting sins. Deliberate sins could not be atoned for. God’s wrath and punishment had to be accepted.

Conversion, in the sense of a complete change of heart, would enable the sinner to accept God’s punishment and to return to him, in the sense of acknowledging his power and authority. God might punish via the penalties of the Law, by misfortune, by losing home and property, loss of loved ones, loss of respect in society. Job suffered most of these, seemingly unjustly. David suffered the loss of the child born to Bathsheba after his seduction of her and the arranged murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. It is argued that David’s punishment, despite increased kingly power, continued in the disasters which affected the life of his family. David’s return to God did not mean the end of punishment, but acceptance of God’s authority.

To punish a nation, God could bring on it defeat at the hand of its enemies. These enemies might be even more sinful than Israel and Judah, but it was God’s prerogative to punish them in due course. So the 8th century prophets saw the actions of Assyria as bringing divine punishment on Israel and nearly doing so on Judah. In the 6th century it was Babylon which was seen by the prophets of the time as bringing punishment on Judah. The prophets of these periods would have seen the occasions of the fall of these two kingdoms as being “Days of the Lord” (McKenzie 2004: 1306-7). Amos prophesied the punishment of Israel’s enemies as well as that of Israel and Judah. Obadiah inveighed against Edom and Nahum against Nineveh.

So we come to the *means* God will use to punish the disobedient. Throughout the prophets, the imagery to describe the horror of that day is such as would frighten especially a settled agricultural community. There are violent images of battle (eg Hos. 10:13-14; Zeph.1:14; 2:4-7). There are images of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (eg Nah.1:3-10; Am 8:8-9 etc). Imagery of drought, fire and plague would also affect listeners (eg drought: Jl 1:17-20; Am 1:2 etc; fire: Am chaps 1 and 2; Zech 12:6; Mal 3:1 etc; plague: locusts – Jl 1 and 2:1-11; Am 7:1; Nah 3:8; disease – Hos 5:13; Zech 14:12&15). Especially fertility of the land becomes a repeated topic in the “Book of the Twelve”. Lack of fertility through natural calamity is a sign of judgement. Restoration of fertility and abundant harvests are a sign of salvation. For

example the imagery of locust plague is found as mentioned above in Joel and in Nahum 3:15 to 17; Habakkuk 1:9 and the removal of the “devourer” (REB: “pests”) in Malachi 3: 10 to 11 (Nogalski 2007:128-9). It is difficult to know whether the frequency of certain of these images is a result of the natural experience of generations of agriculturalists or is, in part, highlighting or even editing by later redactors in an attempt to give the “Book of the Twelve” a more unified appearance.

With the passage of time, ideas of the “Day of the Lord” only being one of judgement and disaster began to change. After Amos, the prophets began more and more to see it as possibly also one of salvation. In the Prophets as a whole there are some 60 references to the day as one on which God would re-establish the fortunes of Israel (eg Is.22-4; 19:18-25; Mic.4:1-3. A few of the texts mention a future messiah or king of David (eg Jer.23:5-6, Hag.2:23; Zech.3:8-10 etc), but, in general, God will act himself and show his glory, ruling over a restored Israel (eg Mal 3:17; Is.2:11, 17, 19; Mic.4:6-7, Zech.2:11). Imagery changes from disaster to blessing: agricultural blessings (Jl 3:18; Am 9:13-15 etc); land and a home (eg Mic.4:4; Zech.3:10); peace throughout creation (eg Hos 2:18; Isa.11:1-10); Israel and the nations’ acknowledgement of God (eg Isa 10:20; Ezek 39:22; Isa 19:19-25). Israelites will return from exile and experience God’s favour (eg Isa 11:11-12; 12:1-4; Zeph 3:11-20) (Hiers 1992: 83 II; Nogalski 2007: 130-132). It is by righteousness and justice that Israel and the nations will be judged.

The “Book of the Twelve” challenges God’s people to look at themselves and their relationships with God and their fellow Israelites. It shows them the need for a change in attitude which can only be brought about by humility and repentance [Nogalski: April 2007: 135-136]. As we shall, I hope, see, it is repentance and God’s grace and mercy which, according to the Minor Prophets, will convert judgement into salvation on the “Day of the Lord”.

Current study on the “Book of the Twelve” is seeking to determine how redaction has led to a unifying of themes, structure and a common phraseology within the books of the twelve prophets. This does not deny their originally having been twelve compositions, but editors saw within them a unity of subject matter and presentation so that in the post-exilic period they sought to give the books a greater unity of purpose in showing how God had dealt with his people over some two hundred and fifty years of their history and how they were called upon to be humble and obedient to him, dependent on his grace and forgiveness and mindful that he was not only their king, but the king of all nations.

The priestly reforms under Ezra and Nehemiah took place probably after the post-exilic prophecies of Haggai, Obadiah, Zechariah, Malachi and Joel. The priestly versions of the Pentateuch stressed the covenants, especially the Mosaic Covenant and Law, as the basis for Israelite life. There was emphasis on the Temple and on ritual. Priestly emphases were grafted onto previous traditions, Jahwist, Elohist and Deuteronomic. This applied to the books of the Twelve, some of which (Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk) were written about the time of the deuteronomistic reform under Josiah. They were edited to provide as nearly as possible a unified vision of prophecy encompassing both God’s punishment of his people and his plan of salvation by restoration and maintenance of the Mosaic Covenant and tradition (Anderson 1988: 449-452; 521-539; Vawter 2004:199).

Various editorial devices to provide unity were used. A system of superscriptions, announcing the word of the Lord to a particular prophet, was used to introduce the books. Where dates, kings or historical references were available, these were included in the superscriptions. In the case of the shortest prophets, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk the superscription refers either to an oracle or a vision or both. Oracles and visions were believed to be divinely inspired. Some scholars believe that Hosea and Amos may have existed in written form on one scroll since the two have similar theological convictions, topics and some verbal agreements. The redactor may further have felt that together the two prophets from the Kingdom of Israel had a combined message, the ignoring of which had led to the judgement by God of that kingdom.

If the prophecies of Hosea and Amos reinforced each other in stressing the need to be obedient to God, how much the more then would not the prophecies of all twelve prophets reinforce and illustrate in similar, but varying ways the same topic. A unified theology could be developed from them based on the Law and on the role of the prophets as revealers of God's word. The books all end on a vision of hope and of harmony within creation (Schart 2007: 138-139; 146-152). As has already been mentioned the final verses of Amos were probably appended by an editor, not merely to give the book a more hopeful end, but to bring its conclusion into line with the theology of the Twelve.

Julia M O'Brien, in her article *Nahum-Habakkuk-Zephaniah: Reading the "Former Prophets" in the Persian Period*, maintains that all the former prophets, not just the three of her title may be read through the prism of Zechariah, a post-exilic prophet of Persian times. In other words, they were re-interpreted when Zechariah was written down and, since much of the editing of these prophets took place in the post exilic period of priestly influence, the emphases of Zechariah, himself probably a priest, were likely to be included in the editing process. In essence this means that Zechariah saw God as having used the nations for his purpose in punishing disobedient Israel and Judah when they failed to listen to the prophets. Now, in Zechariah's time, Judah can enjoy God's salvation from exile and the good he promises to those who return.

Earlier prophets seen from the perspective of Zechariah include those which come canonically before it, such as Obadiah and Jonah, but which in their original form may have been later productions. All except Obadiah, Jonah and Nahum stress the judgement of Israel or Judah; Obadiah that of Edom; Nahum of Nineveh while Jonah indicates that Nineveh's fall was not due to God's lack of concern for other nations. Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah collectively deal with how God will judge the nations which have conquered God's people. This raises the question of *theodicy*, dealt with more fully below (O'Brien April 2007: 168-177). Such a hypothesis would seem to imply that salvation is a concept of the post-exilic and Persian period and that the previous prophets must have had ideas of salvation edited into them

One of the problems addressed in the "Book of the Twelve" is the problem of *theodicy*. *Theodicy* may be briefly explained as how to justify God's goodness in the face of evil. For the Israelites and for the editors of the "Book of the Twelve", this was a problem to be faced. Even if God was entitled to punish his people for their sins, how could he allow this to happen by peoples who were far more brutal and sinful than Israel. Part of the answer was that God was using these people for his own

ends, and, in due course, would punish them for their sins. To do this he had to be God of the nations as well as the God of Israel. In punishing the enemies of Israel, God would restore his people. After God had punished Assyria when she was defeated by Babylon, the Northern Kingdom was not restored. Indeed Babylon conquered Judah which, to a lesser extent, suffered the same plight as Israel. The overthrow of Babylon by the Persians allowed the return of a remnant of the ex-citizens of Judah, but that nation never fully regained independence and local power, except perhaps for a brief period under the descendants of the Maccabees (166-163 BC).

The failures of some prophecies to come true caused questioning of the nature of prophecy. A prophet whose warnings against sin caused a change in the nation's behaviour, so that it avoided judgement, was obviously a true prophet. Micah's prophecies could be regarded as true since, although they did not prove so in his lifetime as far as the Assyrians were concerned, they were fulfilled by the Babylon's capture of Jerusalem some 136 years later. Perhaps the best definition would be, according to Jeremiah 18 and Jonah, words from God which provide warning of what may happen if a current situation of national sin is allowed to continue. It shows God's attitude towards particular circumstances. The editors of the "Book of the Twelve" selected material from a wide variety of prophetic points of view that covered most contingencies regarding prophecy, judgement and salvation and edited and moulded these into what they regarded as a more coherent whole taking into account their understanding of prophecy and how it had been shown to be true in Israelite history, particularly that since the fall of The Northern Kingdom to Assyria (Biddle 2007: 154-5; 164-5).

The problem posed by theodicy could then be answered in that God had judged and punished his people for their sins and had done the same to the nations for their brutality. He had saved his people represented by those who were permitted to return from exile and would protect them provided they remained faithful to his Law.

James Crenshaw, quoted by Paul Redditt in his article *Themes in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi*, regards evil as serving the important function of sorting out those who fear God from the rest of humanity. No one prophet gives a comprehensive answer, but within the "Book of the Twelve" there are multiple answers, all of which lead to returning to an unchanging God who will return to his people (Mal 3:6) (Reddit 2007; 197).

The emphasis on the unity of the "Book of the Twelve" seems cogent and certainly gives force and unity to what at first reading seem a series of fairly random prophecies. However, as with any thesis, there can always come a point when, in an attempt to prove it categorically, interpretations, which they can hardly bear, are forced onto imagery, and phraseology. Amongst prophets from the same historical period there are bound to be words, phrases, images and ideas common to the time, while, infusing all, there is the archetypal jargon of prophecy. This is much the view of scholars such as Ehud ben Zvi and John Barton as indicated by James Nogalski in his article, "The Day(s) of Yahweh in The Book of the Twelve", and Paul House in his one, "Endings as New Beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, and Renewal in the Book of the Twelve". Both Nogalski and House favour a redactional unity within the Twelve (Nogalski 2003: 233-4; House 2003: 315-6).

Thus far, this thesis has studied the books in historical rather than canonical order, since the original intention of each prophet was to preach to the people in the context of his and their time. While on the one hand careful study of the text may reveal the process of editing, on the other it also illustrates the use of vocabulary and phraseology typical of the time of original writing, and it is this that linguistic scholars have used to help date the texts.

6.3 THE SALVATION OF A REMNANT

Today we are appalled at the notion of a blanket punishment on a whole nation for sin. Surely there must have been some who lived righteous lives or were trying their best to do so? Prior to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there was little expressed understanding of individual responsibility for sin (cf Jer.31:29-30 and Ezek. 18:1-4). Israelite thought understood how deliberate sin corrupted and weakened not so much an individual, but the whole nation, separating it from God (McKenzie 2004: 1306).

In our modern concentration on individualism, this is an aspect we find difficult to understand. Jeremiah and Ezekiel expressed an understanding of the individual's responsibility for his sins (Jer 31: 29; Ezek 18: 22) and such an understanding brought balance to the concept of sin. A growing conception of individual responsibility for sin would have fed into the idea of God's salvation of a remnant of his people, those who, despite the nation's fall into sin, had continued to struggle to lead lives according to Law and Covenant. God was understood, too, as rewarding Israel through grace and mercy, despite individual and national backsliding.

The idea of the salvation of a remnant is found frequently in the prophets as a whole. A glance through Cruden's Concordance illustrates the frequency of the use of "remnant": Isaiah x8; Jeremiah x17; Ezekiel x6; Amos x2; Micah x6; Zephaniah x4; Habakkuk x1; Haggai x2; Zechariah x2; Joel x1 (Cruden 1975: 538). If we take the root (*s'r*) of the Hebrew equivalent for "remnant", we find the frequency of use much greater than in Cruden, as well as more widely spread amongst the prophets, 108 times overall. This would include similes for "remnant" and use of the verb form where Israel, or a noun of similar implication, was the subject (Park 1997: 11; 4). These figures are important as they indicate the importance of the concept in prophetic thought.

As background to this thought, there was the salvation of the righteous Noah and his family (Gen. 6 – 10), God's use of Joseph to save (Gen 45:7) Jacob's family from the ravages of drought (Gen. 42 – 47), God's deliverance of his people who had accepted Moses as leader at the Red Sea (Ex.14: 21 – 31), and the 7000 whom God assured Elijah he was protecting as faithful to the Covenant at the time of the miracle on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18 – 19). These "salvations" were all as a result of God's grace and not as reward for faithfulness.

Amos's proclaiming of a doom for Israel in which only a small remnant (5:3) would remain had the purpose of trying to destroy the people's false notions of salvation, to bring them to repentance so that they could return to God. No longer could they regard salvation as theirs by right, merely because they were God's chosen people. Amos employed the idea of a remnant in three ways: a historical remnant who would

remain after disaster (3:12); those who had maintained a spiritual and faith relationship with God (5:15), to which the writer of the last part of chapter 9 added an eschatological remnant who would share in an everlasting kingdom after the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Here we find expressed the concepts of “remnant”, especially the second and third ones, which would be accepted and developed by the prophets.

Isaiah developed Amos’s ideas. He depicted the remnant as the olives left at the tops of the trees after the harvest (17:6), and despite the fact that the people’s sins deserve complete national destruction he will preserve this remnant through his zeal (37:32). He will purge and purify the remnant to make them holy (4:2-3), so that they may be redeemed (11:11), when he will again become their crown (28:5). The remnant will become the starting-point of a new community of faith from which new life will develop (37: 31-32) and which he will in future protect (46:3 et seq.). Hope for the future is united to faith in God.

For Micah, a tiny historical remnant will be one scattered amongst the nations (5:7-8), who will eventually triumph and be made by God into a powerful nation (4:7), and, for Zephaniah, the remnant will live in justice and peace and be humble and obedient to God (3:12-13). Ezekiel saw his mission as one of creating in the exiled remnant hearts turned to God and which would remain faithful to him. For the post-exilic prophets, Zechariah and Haggai, the returned exiles were the remnant (Hag. 1:12; Zech. 8:6-8). Although at first slack about rebuilding the Temple and re-establishing the cult, prophets, priests and leaders shamed them into re-establishing religious life, worship and faithfulness to Law and Covenant so that, even when the hope of re-establishment of the Davidic Kingdom under Zerubbabel disappeared, they could remain the carriers of God’s Covenant and promised blessings (Zech. 8:11-15) (Park 1997: 13-17, vol.4).

As a conclusion, the role of the remnant seems well summed up by J Goldingay in his article on “Israel in the “New Dictionary of Theology””: *With the exile she (Israel) becomes an afflicted remnant, her waywardness proving that God’s ultimate purpose cannot be fulfilled even through her, yet her affliction also becoming the context of the insight that God can turn the affliction that comes from confronting the world into the means of bridging the gulf between the world and God. After the relative disappointment of the return from exile, she has to be the people that lives in the present dedicated to the praise of God for what he has done in the past, yet also to hope in him for what he is yet to do in the future* (Goldingay 1988: 344-345).

CHAPTER 7: RECONCILIATION OF JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION ON THE “DAY OF THE LORD”

7.1 INTRODUCTION

We shall now try to indicate how, in the “Book of the Twelve”, the concept of the “Day of the Lord” helps to reconcile the ideas of “judgement” and “salvation” for Israel, or a remnant of the nation and for humanity.

Sin, whether individual or corporate, causes the guilt of the nation before God with whom the nation is in a covenant relationship. It shows contempt for God, it profanes his holiness and denies his divinity. God’s anger is not rage, but judgement to restore the relationship to what it should be: “O Lord, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10:24) (Bible, AV: 1954: 601).

The Law made no provision for sacrifice for deliberate sin, since such sacrifice would have been the equivalent of trying to bribe God. It would derogate from God’s holiness which is so great that nothing humanity can do has any influence on God’s purposes (McKenzie 2004: 1306). How can sin be overcome, judgement turned into salvation and the covenant relationship with God restored? These were the major questions with which the twelve prophets struggled.

7.2 THE PROPHETS VIEWED IN CANONICAL ORDER

7.2.1 HOSEA

As has been mentioned earlier, Hosea, in contrast with his near contemporary, Amos, had a far more hopeful outlook. God may have needed to invoke judgement on sinful Israel, but primarily he was a God who loved his people with a burning love and wished them to turn to him so that he could again pour out upon them the signs of his love. The first four chapters provide a human parable in the form of the prophet’s despairing love for his unfaithful wife, Gomer. Gomer represents sinful Israel and the hurt yet loving prophet, who hopes that Gomer, having suffered for her sin will return to him, represents God.

Indeed, God’s punishment is not so much bringing violent disaster upon the nation, but letting it suffer the consequences of immorality, moral corruption and placing faith in other nations rather than in God (7:13-16). God will leave the nation to its own devices (4:6). It seems that Israel may be unable to respond to God. Schart sees the conclusion of the book as open-ended since we have no information as to whether Israel does respond ultimately to the dramatic, final appeal to return to God in chapter 14 verses 2 to 4. For an answer we have to look at the “Twelve” as a whole (Schart 2007: 141).

Hosea neither explicitly mentions a “Day of the Lord”, nor a remnant. God is concerned for all of Israel in the here and now. What will replace judgement with salvation is wholehearted repentance: abandoning false gods (14:3), confession (14:2), true sacrifice (14:2) and complete reliance on God, not on shifting worldly alliances (14:3). The day, or the moment, of this happening is the moment, or day, of

repentance. This will usher in a new and everlasting covenant with God (McCarthy and Murphy 2004: 219). God is a God whose love for his people has never been extinguished by the need for judgement.

7.2.2. JOEL

When we study Joel in conjunction with Hosea, we find correspondences. In the horror of the locust invasion, Joel, calling for a return to God in 2:12-14, picks up the Hebrew phraseology from Hosea 14:2-4. Apart from further correspondences in imagery, Joel is a suitable sequel to Hosea, in that Hosea concentrates on Israel's apostasy while Joel pays little attention to apostasy, but concentrates on repentance and return to God as a way of averting God's judgement. Although Joel's prophecy is directed at Judah, and Hosea's at Israel at an earlier time, Hosea has warned Judah not to become infected by Israel's sin (Hos. 4:15). In the context of the "Book of the Twelve" as a whole, we may see the prophecies of both as warnings to the people of God in any age (Schart 2007: 142-143).

Joel sees the "Day of the Lord" as one of dramatic judgement against the nations which have harmed God's people (3:1-3). This theme will be continued in Amos chapters 1 and 2 where the surrounding enemy nations are named and where even Judah and Israel are God's enemies. Only those who seek shelter on Mount Zion will be saved (Joel 2:32). This stresses a deuteronomist point of view that God could only be properly worshiped on Mount Zion, not at other shrines, such as at Bethel and Gilgal in the Northern Kingdom. The prophecy of Amos supports this as it opens with *The Lord roars from Zion* (Amos 1:2) (Schart 2007: 144-5).

Portents will announce the "Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:30). The place of Judgement will be the Valley of Jehosaphat (3:2). For Judah it will be a day of deep inner repentance and fasting (2:12-17) which will unlock God's eternal blessings, the blessings of a gracious, compassionate, long-suffering and constant God (2:13). Those who repent, even at the last moment, will be amongst the saved remnant (2:30-32). God will dwell on Mount Zion and the city will never again be invaded (3:17). The people will enjoy the blessing of abundant harvests free from scourges, such as a locust plague which was used as a symbol of judgement at the beginning of Joel (2:25). Salvation for God's people will be a prelude to salvation for humanity (2:28).

Some commentators do not accept any universalism in Joel, maintaining that what seem to be universalistic references refer only to Israel in its widest sense (Goldsmith 1982: 129). For other commentators, the key to escape from judgement to salvation is sincere repentance and a merciful God whose nature is such that although he cannot endure evil, he dislikes suffering and would rather show compassion not only upon his chosen people, who are his first concern, but also on the rest of humanity who acknowledge him (Goldsmith 1982:128-9; Mallon 2004: 399-403).

7.2.3 AMOS

Amos foresaw only the possibility of an insignificant remnant surviving (3:12; 5:3; 5:5) after God had judged Israel. He was less interested in the remnant than in the

thoroughness of God's judgement. There is no apparent suggestion of salvation; the remnant, although exhorted to turn to God (5:5) are offered no definite reward. Five times in chapter 4 we have God accusing his people that they have failed to return to him (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Here Scharf sees Amos as picking up on the failures to repent despite the calls of Hosea and Joel (Scharf April 2007: 144). But in the nature and scope of God's judgement, not only upon Israel, but upon all the nations, there is, perhaps, the implication that, having been judged and cleansed, there is a new start for God's people and all the nations. This may be like the judgement and cleansing of the world in the time of Noah, in which the remnants are Noah, his family and cargo.

Through judgement comes salvation. That day of judgement and salvation will occur on the "Day of the Lord" which will be *darkness, not light* (5:18) in the sense that it will be a day on which Israel is forced to face its sins and God's judgement on them, not a day of divine blessing on the chosen nation. That does not necessarily preclude that, even for a very few, light may eventually emerge from that darkness. The "Day of the Lord", in Amos, will be the moment in history on which judgement may later become salvation.

The above conclusion ignores the present ending of Amos, 9:11 – 15, which was probably added editorially during the exile. This ending brings the book's outlook into line with the more usual outlook of the prophets when the "Day of the Lord" is seen as both a day of judgement and one of restoration (Barre 2004: 215). It also means that verses 8b to 10 are not left as a conclusion to the book where some of Jacob's descendants are survivors in a hostile world after the nation has suffered the judgement of destruction. This remnant becomes a remnant of hope, once the sinners have been removed (9:9), rather than of despair, as it is promised agricultural prosperity (9:13-15), restoration of territory (9:12) and of the rule of the line of David (9:11).

This vision of restoration is one that will take place within history (9:11 and 13). The "Day of the Lord" will be one which combines judgement and salvation. It will allow a new beginning within history of the social, religious and political set-up developed during the history of Israel of a nation now purged of sin and of sinners. Emphasis is shifted from judgement to salvation (unlike in the original version of Amos) and judgement becomes a prelude to salvation. Salvation is a decision made by God alone without reference to any action by the remnant. It is a reward at most for those who have not sinned. There is no mention of divine mercy or compassion.

7.2.4 OBADIAH

In Obadiah, the "Day of the Lord" is a day of judgement on the nations which have acted ruthlessly against the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (15). In particular Obadiah inveighs against Edom which had changed sides from a coalition with Judah to the Babylonian side at the time of the conquest of Judah. Judah has already drunk of God's wrath in defeat and exile (16). For the remnant which has survived defeat and exile the day of the Lord's judgement on the nations is a day of salvation and vindication for God's people. Judah will receive the territory of her enemies, effectively reuniting the nation with that of Israel (19-21). Mount Zion and Jerusalem will become the centre of the nation and its worship (17).

God has punished his people for their sin. If he cannot endure the sin of his people, how much the less can he endure that of gentile nations, especially when it has affected the people bound to him by Law and Covenant. The suffering of his people has atoned for their sins and the time has come to show mercy through releasing them from the threats of their enemies. Obadiah probably assumes that suffering would naturally bring repentance.

Allusions to Joel's eschatology (Joel 3) help to tie Obadiah into the overall scheme of judgement, salvation and the "Day of the Lord", as does the reference to Mount Zion as the starting place for a victorious battle of salvation (Biddle April 2007:162). There is no apparent suggestion of universal forgiveness and of the nations coming to worship God in Jerusalem. However, God's punishment of the nations implies his power over them and may hint that after they have suffered, in due course, they may turn to him (Mallon 2004: 405).

7.2.5 JONAH

The book of Jonah is, in two ways, an encouragement to the people of Israel to repent and receive God's forgiveness. First of all God forgives even Assyria, the destroyer of the Kingdom of Israel. It is also a warning that Jerusalem can be overthrown unless it repents (Biddle April 2007: 160). In historical terms, "Assyria" would apply to the Persian Empire, in canonical terms and in terms of the setting of the book, it would apply to Assyria. In overall terms of the "Book of the Twelve" it would be a more generalised warning, based on the experience of history.

That God would forgive a foreign country, let alone Assyria was a shocking thought, especially in terms of the time in which the book is set. Secondly Assyria repented thoroughly in sackcloth and ashes (even the animals were obliged to do so) at the preaching of a very reluctant prophet, who represented the attitude of Israelites towards Gentiles. The people of Israel and Judah had failed thoroughly to repent despite the preaching of a long line of prophets. Because they had not repented, they had had to undergo defeat and exile. One moral of the story is that God is prepared to save those who truly repent. Another is that God is a God of abounding mercy, who is prepared to pour it out on all who listen to him. It is to be noted that the Assyrians were not worshippers of the God of Israel, but they were prepared to listen to what his messenger had to say in his name.

Because Jonah refused to be obedient to God's calling, he was punished by being thrown overboard, but in God's mercy was saved by the whale. Having reluctantly performed his task of calling Nineveh to repent, he disbelieved its likelihood, was annoyed when the city repented fully and was more concerned about the wilting of the vine which had given him shelter from the extreme heat than about the fate of the Ninevites. Despite the mercies shown to him by God, he was unable to understand the infinite quality of God's mercy and that God is free to show it to whom he will.

Jonah is not addressing a particular situation in Judah at a certain moment, but is in the nature of an extended parable or allegory. It provides comment on the necessity of repentance. It illustrates the extent of God's mercy which he does not limit to a

chauvinistic and frequently disobedient people (Allen 1997: 799-800; Ceresko 2004: 580-584).

7.2.6 MICAH

With Micah we return to the idea of the salvation of a remnant (4:7; 7:18) and of a “Day of the Lord”, expressed here as “in days to come” (4:1) or “on that day” (4:6). Cross-references to a remnant (Mic. 3:3 and Amos 5:15) help to link the books. Such references may be a result of post-exilic redaction and a deliberate reference to Isaiah’s theme of a remnant, helping to unite themes in major and minor prophecy (Is.37).

Judgement, expressed as nations gathering to attack Jerusalem, is found in four places in Micah (4: 1-4; 4:11-13; 5:1, 14). These verses echo others in the Minor Prophets (Joel 4:2, 9-17; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 12; 14). In some the “Day of the Lord” will surprise them (Mic. 4:11-13; Zeph. 3:8; and portions of Zech.12). The passages are balanced by others of a redemptive nature when the nations travel to Jerusalem to worship God (Mic 4:1-4; Zech 14:16-19). Biddle sees these as possibly conflicting ideologies (Biddle 2007: 156-157). It seems preferable to regard them as part of a carefully worked out balance in the book between the concepts of judgement and salvation.

The two sections of the book, chapters 1 to 4 and 5 to 7 parallel each other in that accusations of sin and judgement are balanced in each section with promises of salvation. In this structure we have a suggestion that there is a purpose behind judgement beyond punishment. Punishment on its own is of little value unless it becomes part of a salvation of God’s people and of a restoration of their relationship with him.

Micah, like Hosea, is conscious of the depths of God’s love for his people. Especially this comes out in chapter 6 verses 3 to 5 where the prophet, speaking on God’s behalf, reminds the people of what he has done for them. This reminder begins with the poignant plaint *My people, what have I done to you? / How have I wearied you?* (6:3). God is a God who wishes to do good things for his people (7:18).

Micah prophesied at a time of grave Assyrian threat to Judah. So threatening was Assyrian power that it seemed likely that Judah would fall as earlier Israel and a great number of other small kingdoms had done. The people of Judah, as had happened to the populations of Israel and the other nations, would have been deported and replaced. Then only a remnant would be left to return after Assyria had been punished (5:5b – 9). In the midst of judgement, how is God’s mercy and salvation to be unlocked? Sacrifices will not help, not even the kind of sacrifice Abraham was willing to make of his child (6:6-7). The prophet reminds the people of God’s primary requirement from them:

*The lord has told you mortals what is good,
And what the lord requires of you:
Only to act justly, to love loyalty,
To walk humbly with your God (6:8).*

Once such a way of life has been re-established, it is up to his people to wait patiently for God to act in his own good time:

*Because I have sinned against the Lord,
I must bear his anger, until he champions my cause
And gives judgement for me,
Until he brings me into the light,
And with gladness I see his justice (7:9).*

Acknowledgement of sin by returning to live a Godly life will release the benefits of God's justice and judgement his abounding mercy and desire to save and restore his people. Enemies will be put to flight (7:10-13). God will become their shepherd and perform miracles for his people as he did when he led them out of Egypt. These miracles will cause awe among the nations (7:14-17). It will be a new exodus and new entry into the Promised Land, cleansed by passing through the waters (7:19). The result will be faithfulness and mercy for his people as he had promised to their forefathers (7:20).

When this will occur is uncertain in the sense that God's people will have to wait until God decides in his wisdom to act. But Micah foresaw it as happening within the normal course of history, as the references at the beginning of this paragraph would suggest. The very suggestion that God requires right living from his people as a start to the process of redemption would suggest that Micah had no concept of a day of judgement and salvation at the end of time or of any change in the status of life (Laberge 2004: 250-254).

Joel and Jonah stress the need for repentance to unleash God's mercy. Micah adds to this the need for right living according to God's Law. Relationship with God requires humility. It also means waiting patiently for God to show his merciful salvation. They also indicate that God's mercy is not necessarily limited to his own people. God is free to show mercy to all nations and his freedom cannot be limited by human considerations, not even by his covenant relationship with the people of Israel.

This realisation shows a development in the Israelite concept of God by the 5th century BC. Firstly he is a God whose attributes are illimitable. Secondly he is a God of mercy rather than one of wrath and vengeance. Although he judges with justice, he is always open to repentance. There is always a tension between judgement and salvation. Both are divine prerogatives and there is no way humanity can unleash forgiveness, for nothing that he does can affect God's power or decision, not even repentance. Everything depends upon his generosity (Biddle 2007:158-9).

7.2.7 NAHUM

Nahum often arouses shock amongst readers, because it seems to glorify the violence and suffering caused to Nineveh. Women theologians sometimes object to an implied acceptance of rape as a part of Assyria's punishment [O'Brien: 2004: 29]. The book begins with a statement of God's jealousy, in other words his lack of acceptance of anything which derogates from his holiness and that of his creation. He is long-suffering, but ultimately unable to accept and endure evil (1:1-3). His power is

displayed in the thoroughness and violence of Nineveh's destruction; overweening and cruel use of power has to be met with a similar show of power. To us this seems shocking, a denial of God's love. In Nahum's time, it was a sign of God's justice. Nineveh was being paid out for cruelty to the extent that it had perpetrated cruelty (O'Brien 2004: 40).

For Nahum it was not Babylonia which defeated Assyria, but God showing his power over the nations and their gods. He was the punisher, the divine warrior. This image is implied in Nahum, but occurs in the "Book of the Twelve" in Habakkuk 3 and Zechariah 13, so helping to provide a link between pre- and post-exilic prophecy (O'Brien April 2007: 175-6). God's love for Judah is being shown in his treatment of Nineveh and his justice in punishment is a sign of his concern for humanity. Nahum mentions no "Day of the Lord", but the day of Nineveh's destruction may be regarded as a day of salvation for Judah and for those nations which had suffered Assyria's tyranny. Human suffering concerns God and those who cause it are accountable to him (Emmerson 1992: 15).

The Jewish theologian, Abraham Heschel has argued that God's anger is a sign of his goodness. The prophets, he maintained, saw God's anger not as part of his nature, but as a passing response to humanity's sin. Humanity always has the choice to sin or to refrain from it. God will never completely destroy, since he is a master of his anger. To react negatively to Nahum's prophecies is to dismiss the belief that God cares about injustice (O'Brien 2004: 56).

A God who does not care about injustice cannot be a loving God. It would be a denial of the sense of the Hebrew root word *spt*. The prophet's oracles are ones of hope for an oppressed Judah for the prophet's name, Nahum, means "comfort". In 1:15 we have the image of a messenger of good news running over the mountains to tell Judah of Nineveh's defeat and to assure the nation that it can continue its worship as God's people. Judah's salvation from its threatening enemy is near.

The positioning of Nahum within the "Book of the Twelve" is important in that it precedes Habakkuk and Zephaniah, both of which end with a positive view of God's concern for Judah, and in Zephaniah's case for the nations as well (Emmerson 1992: 14 and 34). There is no direct mention of the salvation of a remnant, but it could be inferred that all in Judah who had survived Assyrian incursion and capture would be the ones to be saved by Assyria's fall.

7.2.8 HABAKKUK

Habakkuk sees the Chaldeans, the victors over Assyria, as instruments of God's judgement on Judah's enemy. At the same time he is concerned as to why God permits injustice, violence and cruelty to occur. God tells him that he is using the Chaldeans for his own purposes (1:6) and that he will reveal his purpose at an appointed time (2:3). God reveals too that the Chaldeans in their turn will be overthrown (2:4-8). Nahum began with a warrior hymn; Habakkuk ends with one. The warrior imagery used by the two prophets creates a unity of message in that both stress the power God uses to fulfil his plans (O'Brien 2007: 176-7). The five woes

reveal that God does not tolerate injustice, immorality and idolatry and that they contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction (2:12-20).

As with Nahum, God's hatred of injustice is a token of his salvation. He cannot bear that his creation be corrupted since it reflects on his integrity. Justice against powerful nations may be salvation for Israel, although there is, at the same time, an implicit warning for Judah of God's hatred of injustice after Habakkuk's expressed horror at the social situation he observes about him within his nation (1:2-4) (Emmerson :1992:34). God will bring about justice, and thus salvation, in his own good time (2:3). Meanwhile it is up to the righteous to continue to live faithfully and to question God as to when justice and salvation will prevail (O'Brien 2004: 64-65).

The prophet's vision in chapter 2 indicates how the sins of oppression of Assyria have within themselves the seeds of self-destruction. It is not always possible to see clearly how God is working in the world, but it is always justly and for the salvation of the faithful. The faithful must live in trust that God will act [O'Brien: 2004: 80 and 84]. The closest the prophet gets to the concept of the "Day of the Lord" is "the appointed time" (2:3). God will work within history at a time known to him, but not to humanity. To emphasise that people must live in faith in God, the prophet ends his oracles with a statement of faith. He will continue to believe in God despite failing crops and empty sheepfolds, in the certainty that God will save him (3:17-18).

7.2.9 ZEPHANIAH

Julia O'Brien regards Zephaniah as something of a summary of the prophets in canonical order from Hosea to Nahum and feels that this was consciously done by post-exilic redactors as an introduction to the prophet Zechariah. Zephaniah 2:4-15 echoes Nahum's and Habakkuk's views on God's sovereignty over the nations. Chapter 3 connects punishment for Judah with punishment for the nations. The promise of salvation for Zion, "daughter of Jerusalem" (3: 14-15), links with the imagery in Micah 4:8-13 and Zechariah 2:14 and 9:9. Zechariah's list of Philistine cities in his oracles against various nations follows the list of these cities in Zephaniah 2. Such cross-referencing, deliberately editorial or not, helps to unify the themes of judgement and salvation in the "Book of the Twelve" (O'Brien 2007: 177-180).

Despite the fact that Zephaniah consists only of three chapters, he proportionately mentions the "Day of the Lord" more frequently than any other prophet, eleven times with two more indirect references. For him it is a day of destruction for the arrogant and of salvation for a purified remnant (Wahl 2004: 255). As we have seen, he describes the "Day of the Lord" in even bleaker terms than Amos:

*That day is a day of wrath
A day of anguish and torment,
A day of destruction and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of cloud and dense fog,
a day of trumpet-blasts and battle cries
against the fortified cities and lofty bastions (1:15-16).*

Judgement is against all nations, including Judah. At the same time as he declares his anger, God is preparing salvation for a remnant among the nations. His exiled people will turn to him and bring sacrificial offerings (3:9), and the people of the nations who have survived his wrath (3:8) will call on his name with purified lips (3:9). Zephaniah continues to stress that it is only a remnant which will remain (3:12): the lowly and poor who know their dependence on God. The proud and arrogant will be destroyed (3:11).

The “Day of the Lord” will be a “festal day”, a day of rejoicing (3:18) when God, having averted the destruction of Zion, will be in the midst of his people and, like a warrior, will protect them (3:17). The fortunes of his people will be restored before their eyes (3:20).

What is the key to God’s apparent change of heart? In Chapter 2 verse 1 the people are called upon by the prophet to humble themselves before the day on which the Lord’s anger will come upon them and to seek righteousness and humility (2:2; 3:11). Once again we learn that what is required of God’s people is inner change of attitude towards God and neighbour. Righteousness can only come by the practice of justice, the prophets have taught, not by ritual or sacrificial correctness.

Although God may have used Assyria to punish his people and now may be about to use the power of Babylon, such nations will be punished for their pride, cruelty and greed (2:12-15). No nation is beyond God’s judgement (O’Brien 2004:130). Punishment for Judah and the nations is a preparation for salvation. It turns the hearts of survivors to acknowledge God and to live according to his Laws. The glory and rejoicing of having God in their midst will replace the agony of punishment. For Zephaniah, Jerusalem will not be rebuilt, but saved at the last moment from destruction (3:15). God loves his people, his holy city and creation too much to wish to destroy them utterly. Judgement is a path to salvation and rebuilding the nation.

In chapter 3, verses 8 to 9 there may be an oblique reference to the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Then God separated the people, confusing their language, lest, in their pride, they should become too powerful. Here, having punished the nations, he brings them together again so that, united, they may worship him with “pure lips” and “serve him with one accord”. Ultimately God is a God of restoration, transformation and reversals rather than of punishment (Emmerson 1992: 76-78). The love of God, however, is not sentimental, it requires divine action, even severe action, against evil and wrongdoing (O’Brien 2004: 130).

7.2.10 HAGGAI

With the return of the exiles from Babylon, the prophets are preaching to a remnant, those who had been able to return to Judah. They were not prospering. Harvests were poor. Haggai points out that they are living comfortably, even luxuriously in well-built houses, but no attempt has been made to rebuild God’s Temple. As a result God is not dwelling with them (1:1-6). They have effectively brought judgement on themselves and what they must have regarded as their salvation has proved unsatisfactory to them. Their sins are not those of injustice, but of apathy. They have

failed to acknowledge the role of God within the nation. If they rebuild the Temple God will come to dwell in it and its glory will be greater even than that of Solomon's Temple. (2:9).

God is planning a shake-up of all the nations "in a little while" and the treasure of the nations will flow in to Jerusalem (2:6-9). This "in a little while" is the closest that Haggai gets to the "Day of the Lord". Whenever it is will be a moment within historical time. This will be an omen of good things to come: judgement for the nations and riches and plenty for Israel. Zerubbabel will become God's "signet ring" (2:23), as a descendant of the Davidic line. Kings will be overthrown and heathen nations defeated (2:22). A restored Judah will become again a nation of power. It seems as though the full salvation of the people of Israel is imminent.

However, Zerubbabel faded from the scene and Judah never regained her power, remaining a small province of a mighty empire for about another two hundred years. Haggai contains, nonetheless, the essentials of the prophetic message of judgement and salvation. The remnant has not been faithful and is suffering judgement for this in the present. If they become faithful, and rebuild the Temple, the judgement will be lifted and they will enjoy the fullness of God's salvation which is always uncomfortable since it is allied to judgement (Emmerson 1992: 90).

7.2.11 ZECHARIAH

In chapter 8 of Zechariah, the probable ending of the prophecies of the original Zechariah, the restoration of Judah takes on an instant form. Rather than referring to a future "day of the Lord", the prophet in 8:3 gives God's words as *Now, says the Lord, I shall come back to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem*. His return will be the result of the rebuilding of the Temple (8:9-11). The immediacy of God's return is stressed by two further uses of the word "now" (8: 9 and 13) and by the phrase "in these days" (8:15). The promise of immediate return is accompanied by a warning that the people must live in honesty and with justice (8:16-17). Fasts will be turned into festivals (8: 19). Israel's greatest glory will be the recognition of the nations that God is with it and their desire to worship in Jerusalem (8:22). *In those days, ten people from nations of every language will take hold of the robe of one Jew and say, "Let us accompany you, for we have heard that God is with you"* (8:23).

In a sense this is the end of a double judgement. Because of the nation's sins they had been exiled to the Babylonian Empire. In his mercy God had allowed them to return to Jerusalem and Judah, but they had not experienced his presence with them, because they had neglected God in looking first to their own interests, building comfortable houses and seeking to re-establish their farms. They had neglected rebuilding the Temple and re-introducing its worship. Only after the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah had they realised the necessity of doing so. Now that they have recalled the vital importance of acknowledging God in deed as well as word, he returns to them and they become the glory of all humanity and fulfil the potential promised by God to their founding forefather, Abraham.

God is a God of harmony. Firstly acknowledgement of him brings about harmony within the nation itself (8:10-11). Secondly it restores harmony of the people with

nature so that they may enjoy the blessing of good harvests (8:11-12) and thirdly, as we have seen, God's people become bringers of harmony amongst nations. The change from judgement to salvation is described as a change from being *proverbial as a curse* to becoming *proverbial as a blessing* (8:13). This provides an interesting reference to cursing law, referred to in chapter 2, where the breaking of God's law could result in the perpetrators being placed under a curse. In bringing about the full earthly and spiritual salvation of his people, God has lifted the curse which he had placed upon them and replaced it with blessing (Emmerson 1992: 126-131; Cody 2004: 356; O'Brien 2004: 217-230).

The vision of the blessedness of God's salvation is given in the beautiful imagery of Jerusalem as a city of peace where old men and women sit and watch the children at play in the streets. In traditional Jewish thought about life after death at that time, life beyond the grave was seen as the continuance of life in one's descendants, in the continuance of Israel and in the heritage one had left (McKenzie 2004: 1314).

In chapters 9 to 14 of Zechariah we have two collections of oracles referring to God's salvation of his people. The first collection is contained in chapters 9 to 11. Judah will triumph over her enemies, not in the nation's own strength, but because "the word of the Lord" is on the surrounding nations and will cause them to live in fear of God and in obedience to his commandments (9:1-8). The people of Jerusalem will rejoice at the coming of a humble prince of peace riding upon a donkey and everything to do with war will be banished from his territory (9:9-11). God will recall to Jerusalem and protect on their travels those who were captives in foreign lands. They will rejoice at being jewels in God's crown and have plenty (9:11-17).

Chapter 10 is one of rejoicing at God's salvation of his people, of his punishment of corrupt political and religious leaders (10:1-3), of his overthrow of powerful foreign despots (10:11) and of Israel's recognition that its strength is in God (10:12). After such a positive start the First Collection ends negatively in chapter 11. The prophet is called to be the prophet to a flock about to be slaughtered. The flock seems to be Judah. Zechariah dismisses three shepherds not fulfilling their tasks and then in a dramatic, illustrative parable breaks two staffs he had been given, the first action symbolising that God's covenant with his people had been annulled, the second symbolising separation between Israel and Judah. He is now to become a worthless shepherd using the flock for his own advantage. Chapters 9 and 10 echo in many ways the prophecy found in chapter 8 at the ending of Proto-Zechariah. Exile has been punishment, but God's judgement always has an element of mercy, and, in his mercy he restores his exiled people. Chapter 11 may be an indication that his mercy may be overturned if people and rulers again become disobedient. They will then have prophets and leaders who will batten upon them.

From chapter 12 to chapter 14 of Zechariah we return to ideas and imagery which are common in "The Book of the Twelve". We have frequent repetition of the phrase "on that day" (12:3; 13:1; 14:6 et al) or phrases of similar meaning (eg 14:1). We also encounter the idea of a remnant only that will be saved and purified (13:8-9). Also half the city is referred to as going into exile (14:2). The nations which attack Jerusalem will be defeated and it will be God who wins the victory. Jerusalem will acknowledge that its strength is in the name of the Lord (12:1-3). God will set free the exiled families of Judah and in him they will have the strength and courage of the

legendary hero, King David (12:8). God will pour out a spirit of pity and compassion on his people so that they will feel sorry for the way they have treated him and will be cast into mourning (12:10-14). In other words they will have a complete change of heart as part of the process of their salvation.

In chapter 13 this process of change of heart continues. They will wash themselves in a fountain of repentance and will be ashamed of their past attitudes and actions and it is in the process of cleansing that only a remnant will be left who acknowledge God as Lord. It would seem at this point that God's previous judgement has been balanced by his mercy as in Chapters 9 and 10, but as in the First Collection, this, the Second Collection, is ended by a chapter, the beginning of which in subject matter and tone is different from the two preceding ones.

Chapter 14 starts with God's judgement on Judah as the nations gather to make war on it and exile half the population (14:1-2). In a powerful eschatological, if not apocalyptic, image, God is pictured as a giant warrior dispensing justice on the nations, standing on the Mount of Olives while a chasm opens up through the mountain on which Jerusalem stands (14:3-5). It will be perpetual daylight (14:6-7). A new river will arise (14:8). God will become king and the safety of those left in Jerusalem will be assured (14:9-11). After a period of internecine warfare Judah will inherit the wealth of the nations (14:13-14). Thereafter the survivors of the nations, a remnant, will worship in Jerusalem. Failure to worship will result in drought and famine (14:17-19). Everyday objects like bridles and pots will be as holy as sacred, Temple objects and everyone will be able to participate in the rituals of the Temple which will be cleansed of all trading activities (14:20-21).

Whereas the previous days of salvation described in Zechariah have been ones of quiet change, the "Day of the Lord" in chapter 14 is apocalyptic in nature, a reminder of God's power and that his judgement can be one of severity for those who continue to refuse to accept his Godly dispensation for humanity. His desire is to bring blessing rather than the severity of judgement and punishment, but the latter is inevitable for those who do not respond to his mercy. Zechariah stresses a vision of a world in which all respond to God, Hebrew and Gentile and worship him, and in which all things, however mundane, are holy. All of creation is ultimately subsumed in God's holiness.

God, in order to bring such a world about, may have to punish those who violate his laws and nature. He will save only a remnant both of his own people and of the nations. There is an implication that the nations not only should acknowledge God, but also, even if they do not worship him, should accept basic laws of fair play and mercy such as were common in covenantal agreements of the time (Cody 2004: 357-359).

7.2.12 MALACHI

By the time Malachi prophesied, the initial hopes of a reconstructed Temple ushering in a new golden age of freedom under God from foreign domination in which all humanity would feel called to worship in Jerusalem had faded, as had the hope of a restoration of the Davidic line under Zerubbabel (Cody 2004: 360). Judah had fallen

into a period of casual worship in which people were offering imperfect animals and were not fully paying tithes. In fact, the Gentiles were being more faithful in the offerings they make (1:11-14 and 3:8-10). Divorce has become frequent (2:14-16). People are accepting evil as good (2:17).

Malachi's call is one to renewal, not only in the ritual matter of sacrifices and tithes, but also to moral behaviour affecting marriage and, a familiar topic with the prophets, mistreating of the labourer over wages, and not caring for widows, orphans and aliens (3:5). God's reaction is that he is sending a prophetic messenger before him prior to the sudden coming of the Lord which will be in his Temple (3:1). No one will be able to endure the day of his coming, Malachi's version of the "Day of the Lord", as it will be a terrifying day of purification and refining (3:2-3). The arrogant who refuse to acknowledge God and those who wilfully do evil will be burned as stubble (4:1).

However for those who are righteous, who offer right sacrifices, pay tithes, act honestly, fairly and generously to labourers, the poor, widows, orphans and aliens, there will be blessings of plentiful harvests (3:10-12). God has made a record of the just who belong to him and will be spared. In Malachi we find a return to the concepts of a "Day of the Lord", of a remnant which accepts, acknowledges and obeys God. There will be suffering and judgement for those who deny him and salvation and blessing for those who accept him and are obedient to his Law. Salvation is for those who have come through judgement because they have been obedient or have repented. A new concept is that of the names of the faithful being recorded so that God would know whom to condemn and to save (3:16) (Cody 2004: 360-361).

The exile brought about a change in perspective for the prophets. They saw the exile as God's judgement for the sins of the nation. In allowing the return he has saved them as a nation. Their salvation is dependent on his mercy which outweighs his desire for judgement. The fact that the return seems to be a time of difficulty is ascribed to their failure to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the cult. By rebuilding houses and restoring farms, they have put their interests before God's. Because the Temple is still derelict, God cannot come to live in the people's presence in the Holy of Holies. When the Temple has been rebuilt and God can return to Jerusalem, then his full blessing will fall upon them and the line of David will be renewed under Zerubbabel. This, essentially, is the message of Haggai and Zechariah.

By the time of Malachi, God's promised blessings have not come as expected. The line of David has not been re-established, since Zerubbabel disappeared into the mists of history. Malachi interprets Judah's misfortunes as owing to imperfect ritual worship, a casual attitude to divorce, failure to pay tithes and dishonest weights as well as a lack of concern for the marginalised in society.

For Haggai and Zechariah the "Day of the Lord" was the day of return to Jerusalem. For Malachi it is a day to come on which a remnant of those who have repented or who have remained faithful will be saved. In Deutero-Zechariah, in the two collections we have parallels in which God's mercy in restoring his people balances his judgement. But these chapters of salvation are followed by ones of graphic prediction of God's wrath upon the faithless and disobedient. Especially chapter 14 is apocalyptic in nature in which the "Day of the Lord" becomes a day out of time, without heat or cold (14:6) the coming of which is known to God alone. Yet at the

same time the day will have an earthly setting in which the geography surrounding Jerusalem will be reconstructed and on which all things will be sanctified and all humanity will come to worship God.

Paul Redditt in his article in *Interpretations, Themes in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi* finds these three post-exilic prophets very tightly unified through the use of common introductory phrases at the beginnings of the first two books as well as redactional phrases such as *these are the words of the Lord* (eg Hag 1:7; Zech 1:4). In Deutero-Zechariah 9-14 chapters 9 and 12 begin with *An oracle* and so does chapter 1 of Malachi. There are also frequent variations on the “Day of the Lord” / “that day”. Then there are allusions to other biblical texts, for example the signet ring in Haggai 2:23 and to Jeremiah 22:24. Zechariah 9:1-2 refers to the boundary line in Ezekiel 47:15-17 and Malachi 2:4-6, on a covenant with the Levites refers to Jeremiah 33:21 and to Deuteronomy 33:8-11.

The overarching theme of these books is the restoration of Judah and its salvation. God used the Chaldean or Persian Empire’s defeat of Babylon to bring this about so that exiles would be allowed to return home. The rebuilding of the Temple, the establishment of a priestly line under Joshua and a kingly one under Zerubbabel, descendant of David, were to be part of salvation in Haggai and Zechariah. In Malachi the priesthood had fallen down on its duties where sacrifices and tithes were concerned. Malachi recalls the people to covenant obedience; Haggai and Zechariah to obedience in rebuilding the temple and re-establishing the cult. Other themes involve those of poverty for not fulfilling religious duties of rebuilding and tithing.

In both Zechariah and Malachi God is seen as a refiner (Zech 13:9 and Mal 3:2-3) and as a king (Zech 14:9; Mal 1:14). Punishment through drought and poor harvests is the judgement of failure to fulfil religious duties. On the other hand good harvests are the assurance of full salvation in a land of plenty with God as King (Redditt 2007: 188-195). Despite the attempts to link closely these last three books, it should be pointed out that there are some contrary points in this overall depiction of God’s turning judgement into salvation, but all three prophets are in agreement that God has saved his people through restoring a remnant to Judah.

The fullness of the blessing of salvation has not come in Haggai and Zechariah because of failure to rebuild the temple and unfulfilling concentration on their own interests. The rebuilding of the Temple seems to augur well, but the failure of the arrival of any independence under Zerubbabel as Davidic king makes the prophecies incomplete.

Malachi’s criticism of God’s people for their failure to offer proper sacrifices and tithes at first sight looks like a kind of parallel failure to fulfil religious duties, but it is more, in the sense that it can be a prelude to the kind of spiritual slackness that allowed the pre-exilic Israel and Judah to slide into casual and syncretistic practice. Although there is no mention of false gods in Malachi, in the post-exilic period a kind of slack secularism may have been the danger.

The fact that Malachi had to recall the people to proper worship and to care for the poor, widows, orphans and strangers is also a reminder of past prophecies. Malachi,

unlike Haggai and Zechariah, takes us back to the moral and religious concerns of the pre-exilic prophets. In a sense the “Book of the Twelve” has come full circle.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUDING SUMMARY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 stated the hypothesis of this thesis that in the “Book of the Twelve” the concept of the “Day of the Lord” reconciles the prophets’ ideas of judgement and salvation.

The chapter then set out to define briefly concepts required for such a study: the “Day of the Lord”, judgement, salvation, the Law or *Torah*, covenant, prophecy, the “Book of the Twelve”. The reader is referred to chapter one for the outlines of these concepts

A brief outline of the methodology adopted was then given. The remainder of this conclusion is a summary of how this methodology was put into practice. In the process various other concepts were introduced as summarised below.

Finally this chapter will end with various suggestions as to what the writer considers further possible areas of study in developing the themes of the “Day of the Lord”, judgement and salvation.

8.2 BRIEF SURVEY OF 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the above topic, concentrating particularly on Form and Canonical Criticism. Form criticism seeks to determine the form of the original sources, free from later accretions. To do this knowledge of history, vocabulary, and literary and oral forms may be used. The documents are set in their period and by means of Redaction Criticism later accretions are studied and, by means of Canonical Criticism we may determine why a document became part of the canon of Scripture and why it was placed in its particular position in scripture. It is difficult to look at various types of criticism in isolation as one type develops from another and ultimately each informs the others. More modern varieties of criticism, Social, Psychological, Liberation and Feminist express the social and political interests of recent times. It is important to be able to balance these by listening to what the writers and prophets of the time were saying, before applying the Bible to modern conditions: exegesis should parallel hermeneutics.

As we shall see later in this summary, Form criticism has been used to determine the message of the twelve Minor Prophets within their historical context. Redaction and Canonical Criticism have been used to indicate why redactors edited the Twelve to place each prophet in a particular position within the canon, ie accepted list of books of the Old Testament. We should therefore be able to see how the ideas of the individual prophets, who would to some extent have influenced each other, were combined to present a more unified message by deuteronomic and priestly editors in terms of their vision of God’s relationship with his people ultimately from a post-exilic perspective.

8.3 8.3 HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAELITE MONOTHEISM

Chapter 3 gives an outline of the development of Israelite monotheism from earlier

monolatry and Yahwistic-polytheism. In God's covenant with Abraham, God promises that, if Abraham is faithful, his descendant will be innumerable and will inherit Canaan, the Promised Land. Abraham's descendants while recognising God, usually under the name of El, or an expansion thereof, did not worship him alone, but would have regarded him as their particular God. Not even after the revelation of his name to Moses as "Yahweh", did the Israelites confine themselves to the worship of one God. Each nation through whose territory they passed during the Exodus event had a differing god and so did the tribes amongst whom they settled in Canaan. In terms of the outlook of the times it was wise to practise a form of divine re-insurance. Yahweh was worshipped as the primary God, but so were the local gods.

From about the time of Elijah, a "Yahweh-alone" party or group developed in Israel and Judah. Yahweh alone was the God of Israel who was to be worshipped wherever the Israelites were. Other nations had their gods, but they were not to be worshipped by the Israelites. The prophets were members of this group. Only after the Babylonian exile did Israelite thinkers come to see Yahweh in terms of a God of all nations and other gods as altogether false. Had not Yahweh used powerful, disbelieving nations to punish Israel and Judah? Had he not used other powerful nations to overthrow first the brutal Assyrians and the perhaps marginally less brutal Babylonians? Had he not used unbelieving Persian rulers to allow Israelites to return to Judah and Jerusalem after he had allowed many of his people to prosper in exile?

Yahweh was not just the God of Israel, but also the God of the nations, while Israel remained his chosen people. Repentance would come, not merely as in Jonah, through the repentance of sin, but, ultimately, through acknowledgement of Yahweh as Lord.

Such background helps to understand the development of God's command through the prophets to worship him alone. It helps, too, to understand how a repentant remnant of foreigners on the "Day of the Lord" could come to be one with a faithful, repentant remnant of Israel in receiving God's salvation, having accepted his judgement. All nations who acknowledged Yahweh were heirs of the covenant with Abraham. It helps also to make us understand how easy it was for the Israelites not to put Yahweh first in their worship and how they learnt that to worship other gods in tandem with worshipping Yahweh was to take away from his greatness.

8.4.4 SALVATION OF A REMNANT

With the growth of the idea of individual responsibility came the idea that a remnant might be saved. Earlier Israelite religious thought did not always clearly differentiate between the guilt of the individual and the nation in the religious sphere. The sin of the individual contaminated the community. The sins of the fathers affected following generations (Ex 20: 5). In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we note that the idea of individual responsibility and guilt had begun to enter Israelite religious thought (Jer 21: 39; Ezek 18: 22).

Amongst the "Twelve" Amos, in his book's canonical form, foresaw three remnants: the survivors of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel (3: 12), those survivors who had remained true to God (5: 15) and those who would survive to enjoy a re-established and everlasting kingdom (9: 8b – 12). For Micah a remnant scattered amongst other nations (5: 7 – 8) would be formed by God again into a powerful nation

(4: 7). Zephaniah's remnant would be humble and obedient and live in justice and peace (3: 12 – 13). Haggai and Zechariah regarded those who returned to Judea as the saved remnant (Hag 1:12; Zech 8: 6 – 8). God would save those who remained faithful or acknowledged their sins and returned to him. This came to apply to gentiles who turn to God as well as to Israelites.

8.5 8.5 THE INFLUENCE OF VOCABULARY IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF JUDGEMENT, SALVATION AND THE “DAY OF THE LORD”

The words we use and their nuances affect our understanding of concepts. In studying the above concepts, at the beginning of the chapters in which these terms are more fully discussed than in the introduction, a section has been devoted to discussion of the meanings of the Hebrew words for these terms and how this influences our understanding of them.

The Hebrew for “judgement”, *spt* (and its derivatives) may also mean *threat* or *warning*, but there is also the understanding of restoration of peace between complainants or between the defendant and the community.

Another word for “judgement”, *dyn*, was originally a legal term for a binding court judgement. Use of *dyn* and *spt* together caused *dyn* to take on a nuance of compassion so that both words came to be synonyms. Hence God's judgement is more than retribution, it is an act of compassion seeking to restore the sinner to himself and the community.

The Hebrew for “Salvation”, *plt* or *mlt* means *to escape from disaster*. The word, *ys*, means *to receive help*. Derivatives are *yesua* meaning *help* or *salvation* and *mosia:a* *deliverer*. So we come to understand God as a saviour who brings help to his people to give them salvation.

Yom-Yahweh or the “Day of the Lord” does not necessarily imply only a day's length, but also the moment when God intervenes to bring judgement and salvation for a repentant remnant. It is the day of God's appearing.

8.6 ESCHATOLOGY AND APOCALYPTIC

These terms are closely associated with the “Day of the Lord”. Eschatology deals with the date at which the “Day” will occur. As we shall see, at first this was regarded as being reasonably close. It later began to be seen as taking place in the future when determined by God, ie in his own good time. When the nature of the “Day” was considered the visions of judgement conjured up a battle in which the enemies of God and Israel would be defeated and Israel would be re-established as a nation and kingdom under God. Gradually, the battle developed overtones of a final battle between good and evil at the end of time and the inauguration of God's eternal reign. Such a “Day of the Lord” at the end of time is referred to as Apocalypticism.

8.7 HISTORICAL AND FORM CRITICAL APPROACH

By using an historical and form critical approach, there are eight differing ways in which the “Day of the Lord” presents the concepts of judgement and salvation. There is considerable overlapping of viewpoints.

1. For Amos the “Day of the Lord” was to be one of judgement for the nations including Judah and particularly Israel. A remnant would survive, but there was no specific idea of salvation until the editorial addition at the end of the book. The addition implies that salvation follows judgement on the “Day of the Lord” as a part of the way God deals with his people.

2. Hosea understood God’s love for his people as being greater than his desire for judgement. To unleash God’s loving mercy and salvation towards his people, repentance, obedience and right living were necessary. Hosea posited neither a “Day of the Lord” nor the salvation of a remnant.

3. Punishment as a means of preparation for salvation was a part of Micah’s vision. When the people began to live justly, God’s merciful salvation would be unleashed, within history, at the time God chose, for with him mercy outweighs justice.

4. Nahum saw the punishment of Judah’s enemies as bringing about salvation for Israel. Obadiah, writing probably in post exilic times, understood God to have punished his people through defeat and exile in Babylon, but as unable to endure the cruelty of the nations towards his people. The day of judgement on the nations would bring salvation to Israel.

5. For Habakkuk sin, cruelty and oppression held within themselves the seeds of judgement and destruction. Punishment turns the hearts of the sufferers to seek God. Those who are faithful or who repent must wait patiently for God’s salvation which he will grant in his own good time, which is his equivalent of the “Day of the Lord”.

6. Haggai and Zechariah saw exile as God’s punishment and return from exile as a sign of God’s salvation which would be fulfilled when the Temple was rebuilt and God could live in their midst. In Zerubbabel the line of David would be re-established. So far the prophets saw salvation as occurring within history, either within a reasonably short period of time or, with Haggai and Zechariah, as having already taken place. This eschatology in Deutero-Zechariah and Malachi becomes apocalyptic in the sense of a final battle between God and the nations which will usher in salvation for the surviving faithful remnant and begin God’s eternal reign. The “Day of the Lord” becomes at once the end of time and the beginning of eternity.

7. Joel and Malachi emphasise repentance as unlocking salvation from a merciful God after judgement. For Joel, fasting while repenting will prove the genuineness of the repentance. For Malachi, the “Day of the Lord” would come when God was dwelling in his holy Temple. It would be a day of refining and purification. A Prophetic messenger will precede God’s coming. All will be judged, but God has a record of those who have been faithful.

8. For Jonah, obedience to God’s call for repentance through his prophets would bring about salvation on a day of wholehearted acknowledgement of sin. Nineveh’s repentance at the call of God through the reluctant Jonah was an example to the

people of Israel, who so often had ignored the God's call through a long line of prophets. Salvation could be open to all who obeyed God, an understanding also reached by Joel.

We have seen how God's punishment of his people has been expressed throughout the Minor Prophets in metaphorical terms of drought, locust plague, fire, earthquakes and warfare. The commonest metaphor has been warfare. The 8th and 7th century prophets, when they used war as a metaphor, used it in terms of God using the powerful nations of the time, Assyria and later Babylonia, to punish the wayward Israelites and how these nations, in turn, would similarly be punished by God for their excessive cruelty to his people and other nations. As the eschatology of "Day of the Lord" became an ever more distant event and began to take on apocalyptic overtones, God came to be seen as the ultimate power, waging war upon his enemies, who became not only nations who defied him and harmed his people, but as the forces of evil (Zech 12 – 14; Joel 3). This development finds its climax in Daniel chapter 11 to 12.

For most of the prophets the "Day of the Lord" is a day of judgement and salvation. What turns judgement into salvation is, on God's part, his love for his people, Israel, and his mercy which would rather save than judge. Yet judgement is a part of salvation in that it provides the incentive to repent. Repentance is required from God's people, indeed from humanity, to unleash God's mercy. Judgement acts as a cleansing of the nation, preparing it for salvation in God's own time. Since judgement in the form of defeat and exile means that the nation will be diminished in numbers, most of the prophets see salvation as being only for a surviving remnant of Israel, and of humanity. Alternatively it will be reserved for a remnant who have been faithful and for those gentiles who unreservedly place their trust in God. Upon salvation God will be present with his people in a restored nation, dwelling again in his Temple, or apocalyptically at the end of time as he inaugurates his eternal reign as king. "The final achievement of Yahweh's forgiveness must be a reconciliation that renders further forgiveness unnecessary" (McKenzie 2004:1307).

Salvation does not mean an escape from judgement. The consequence of committing evil cannot be other than judgement. Once the Israelites and humanity accept judgement, at that moment God grants salvation. That moment which brings judgement and salvation together is the "Day of the Lord."

8.8 CANONICAL CRITICAL AND REDACTIONAL APPROACH

Canonical Criticism shows that, by redaction, editors have sought to stress an underlying harmony found in the prophecies of the Minor Prophets so that it may be regarded as the "Book of the Twelve".

Those scholars who concentrate on canonical criticism seek to point out what they consider to be the evidence of a redactive process to present a unified theology from a deuteronomistic and also from priestly point of view. The core purpose of this editing revolves around the "Day of the Lord", judgement and salvation. In the process they placed books out of chronological order of composition, according either to the time with which they purported to deal or according to recognisable themes.

By placing Hosea first in the “Book of the Twelve” the redactors emphasised the loving nature of God who would respond to repentance no matter how great apostasy had been. Joel, although post-exilic, picks up on repentance unleashing God’s pent-up love. The fact that the events of Joel are set in ostensibly Assyrian times provides an apparent historical link as does the metaphor of the locusts (Schart 2007: 114 -1143). Amos largely portrays God as a God of judgement and justice on a “Day of the Lord”. This links with Joel’s vivid portrayal of the battle between God and evil on that day. The remnant, who survive judgement, in the addition to the end of Amos, will be saved on a day of both judgement and salvation. Judgement will be the prelude to salvation. A righteous earthly kingdom will be re-established under the house of David (Barre 2004: 215; Schart 2007: 144).

Although both Obadiah and Jonah are post-exilic writing, the editors found it useful to resituate them to fit their interpretation of God and the prophet’s role in Israelite life. Obadiah’s prophecy is largely aimed at Edom, but it fits in comfortably at this point in that it continues both Amos’s words about judgement on the nations who are enemies of God’s people, as well as presenting a similar view to Joel on the “Day of the Lord” (Mallon 2004: 405; Biddle 2007:162). Jonah appears to fit in at this point, partly because it is set in Assyrian times. It emphasises the need for God’s people to repent, especially if their enemies, the Assyrians were prepared to repent when a prophet was sent them by Yahweh (Ceresko 2004: 580 – 584; Biddle 2007: 160).

With Micah, we come to the end of the 8th century prophets, or those whose works appear to be set in that time. Micah picks up on the ideas of the salvation of a remnant on the “Day of the Lord”. Judgement is expressed as the nations mustering for an attack on Jerusalem. God will save his people and the nations will gather in Jerusalem to worship God, thus picking up on the universalism first adumbrated in Joel and emphasised in Jonah. In Micah, a carefully worked out pattern is twice presented as judgement leading to salvation on the “Day of the Lord” (Biddle 2007: 156 – 157).

So far, we have seen in outline how the redactors edited together works from, or purporting to come from, the 8th century BC. Their concern was to emphasise Yahweh’s ongoing love for his people, despite the enormity of their sins, that there would be a “Day of the Lord” on which recalcitrant Israel and her enemies would be judged and those who repented would be saved. Judgement, or the threat thereof, was a necessary spur to repentance, without which God could not save his people or those from the nations who repented and turned to him as God.

The seventh century prophets continue the themes the redactors emphasised in their 8th century colleagues. Nahum prophesies God showing his power in destroying Assyria at the hands of the Chaldeans; a fitting punishment for their brutality not only to Israel, but to all nations. The nation which had once repented, in response to Jonah’s message, had returned to its brutal ways; its repentance had not been genuine. God remained a God of justice as in Amos’s prophecies. Without justice, there cannot be the response of genuine repentance. Without repentance, God’s love will not be released (Emmerson 1992; 14 – 15 & 34; O’Brien 2007: 175 – 176).

The same applies in Habakkuk, who understands how injustice, immorality and idolatry contain within themselves the seeds of destruction. God will act in his own

appointed time (O'Brien 2007: 176 – 177). Zephaniah echoes the attitudes of the previous two prophets as to God's power over the nations. Judah will also be punished, but God is preparing the salvation of a remnant which acknowledges dependence upon God. God loves his people too much to wish to destroy them (echoes of Hosea).

Zephaniah refers to the "Day of the Lord" more frequently than the other prophets. Because it will be a day of salvation, the "Day of the Lord" will be a feast day. Increasingly the "Day of the Lord" came to be seen as a day of battle when the unrepentant would be destroyed, leaving the remnant of the repentant and forgiven to enjoy God's favour. Such a day continued to be seen as one coming within history (Emmerson 1992: 76 – 78; O'Brien 2004: 30).

For the post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, the return from exile is as if God's promise of restoration has occurred. Yet, it is unsatisfying and incomplete. Harvests are poor.

For Haggai, the people have sinned by looking first to their own interests in rebuilding comfortable houses and not giving glory to God by rebuilding his Temple so that the cult may be properly celebrated.

Zechariah is concerned about this as well as with the impurity of the nation, caused by inter-marriage with foreign wives. Such impurity may lead to laxness in worshipping other gods as had happened in pre-exilic Israel and Judah. When the restored Israelites in Judah worship God in full holiness then God's mercy will be completely released and they will live in a land ruled and protected by a king of David's line. Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, had been appointed as governor of Judah and was the expected king. Probably because such prophecies came to Persian attention, Zerubbabel was recalled, since he fades without explanation from Israelite history. With him faded the hopes of a restored kingdom. So also faded, with one exception, the prophets and their role in Israelite life (Emmerson 1992: 90; Cody 2004: 356 – 359).

Zechariah 9 to 14 is by a different hand or hands. In chapters 12 to 14 Jerusalem will be besieged by the nations and Judah will fight alongside God to defeat them and Jerusalem will be raised high and the people will live in safety in perpetual daylight. We are approaching the symbolic apocalyptic of Daniel and later of Revelations. Such thoughts tie in with Joel, thus further uniting the topics of the "Book of the Twelve".

Common introductory and redactional phrases closely connect Malachi to both Haggai and Zechariah. There is frequent use of variations on the "Day of the Lord". Allusions are made to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As a result, Malachi, the last of the prophetic books, becomes closely linked to the rest of the twelve and to the major prophets (Reddit 2007: 188 – 195).

Zechariah and Malachi see God as a refiner. Malachi also is concerned with worship, but in the rebuilt Temple where the priests are accepting for and offering imperfect animals in sacrifice. Proper tithes are not being offered. Not only are the people cheating God, but they are cheating each other through inaccurate weights and measures and they are ignoring the weak and poor. Secularism, in which people question the purpose of worshipping God, has crept into society. The "Day of the

Lord” will come when the proud and evil will be burnt up, while those who have been obedient will be saved. To warn the people of Israel, the prophet Elijah will be sent to warn the nation before this day of judgement, punishment and salvation comes.

The themes in Malachi help to round off the Book of the Twelve”. Malachi’s concerns are similar to those of the 8th century prophets: improper worship of God in the Temple; injustice towards the marginalised.

In one sense this evidence of close editing helps towards a unified presentation of the prophetic message as we have seen above. In another sense it can detract from our understanding of the historical development of the topics of judgement and salvation and how they are reconciled into a new beginning on the “Day of the Lord”.

For example it seems easier to understand Jonah from a post-exilic perspective than from a pre-exilic one, when hatred of Assyria would have made such a message almost impossible to accept. Even in post-exilic times it would have remained hard to acknowledge. It would have been easier to accept with the hindsight of history and an understanding of how God had used Assyria to punish Israel, and Babylon to punish Assyria, as well as Judah, and then Persia to punish Babylon after which Israelites were allowed a return to Judah. However, because it dealt with Assyria, redactors placed it with the pre-exilic prophets. God had shown that he was king of all nations. An idea had begun to develop that God might accept those gentiles who repented and accepted him as their God.

As much as Haggai and Proto-Zechariah may be interpreted as having themes in common with previous prophets, they also show they are very different because of their post-exilic background which radically alters the whole question of judgement and salvation. The “Day of the Lord’ is the time of return from exile. It has already taken place in history. It is a day of salvation for the people of God. Judgements of them and of their enemies are events in the past. Only their failure to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the cult has prevented them from experiencing the fullness of blessing. How different is such prophecy from that of the pre-exilic period.

Simon de Vries in his essay: *Futurism in the Minor Prophets* is of the opinion that Salvation is a post-exilic concept grafted onto the pre-exilic prophets by what he calls “futurism”. In other words suggestions of salvation are a result of post-exilic editing in which the added poetic formulae lack the integrity of the pre-exilic ones by using anacrusis, or the adding of an unstressed syllable, indicating the future, to the poetic form or by means of a liturgical rubric. An example is to be found in Zephaniah 3:16, in the commonly repeated phrase “on that day”. In prose such phrases may be regarded as expansions (Hos. 2: 16, 21).

De Vries also sees examples of “futuristic” editing where there are sudden changes from judgement to salvation and vice-versa (Micah 5:10) or where secondary material has been added to amplify what comes before, as for example in Micah 4: 6 and Amos 9: 13, where a passage promising further salvation is added to one of salvation. He maintains that he is able to observe very little of a future outlook of salvation amongst the pre-exilic prophets who steadfastly maintain looming disaster. Although both deuteronomistically and priestly influenced redactors have introduced “futurism”, it is mainly the work of the later priestly ones (de Vries 2003: 259-260).

Such an outlook, while probably having truth in it, does not, I feel, take into account the fact that concepts such as salvation are ones which gradually develop over a period of time. The idea of salvation was probably stimulated by the return from exile, but must have already been an idea in Israelite religious consciousness. A consciousness of the concept may well have been developing in pre-exilic times. Indeed, the exile would have caused an intense yearning for its reality. Redactors finding signs, possibly implied rather than directly expressed, may have developed the concept of salvation in terms of their own understanding and hindsight.

To overemphasise similarities and underemphasise differences runs the danger of detracting from the richness of the content of the “Book of the Twelve”. It can also impoverish our understanding of the historical development of the themes of judgement, salvation and of the role of the “Day of the Lord” in reconciling these. Although many modern scholars favour the hypothesis that deuteronomic and priestly redaction at differing times sought to unite the Minor Prophets into a thematic unity, a certain number are wary of this approach or, like Ehud Ben Zvi, deny its usefulness. House quotes Ben Zvi as saying:

Rather than assuming a unified book that is read and redacted as such, it is perhaps better to focus on the common repertoire of a relatively small social group consisting of educated writers and readers within which and for which prophetic – and other “biblical” - books were written, at the very least in their present form. Such a focus is likely to uncover a (largely) shared discourse, a common linguistic heritage, implied “intertextuality,” and shared literary/ ideological tendencies. (Twelve Books or “The Twelve”: 130)(House 2003: 316).

However, to deny the validity of painstaking linguistic, literary and canonical scholarship by skilled and reputable scholars in establishing multifarious links between the prophets seems unwise. At present it would seem that those in favour of editing of the Twelve hold the better cards, but only the playing out of the hand will determine the number of tricks won by each side. Both sides in this scholarship game may yet have to review their play.

It is significant that the Bible does not give a unified title, such as the “Book of the Twelve”, to the works of the Minor prophets, as Ben Zvi has indicated (House 2003: 315-316) in his criticism of the editorial approach. The redactors of the Twelve were obviously in agreement in that, although they had tried to show that all the Minor Prophets had an underlying similarity of outlook, yet they acknowledged the prophets were sufficiently different in approach as to allow them to be read as separate authors. So, as we seek to come to a conclusion as to how the “Day of the Lord” reconciles Judgement and Salvation, we have to acknowledge that the prophets show differences in interpretation as to how this will occur, while at the same time they see the “Day of the Lord” as being the occasion on which God will turn judgement into salvation.

8.9 FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THE “DAY OF THE LORD, JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION

The “Day of the Lord” is not necessarily a day in the sense of twenty-four hours, but is the moment determined by God within history, or at the end of time, when judgement takes place and passes into salvation for those people, Israelite and Gentile, set aside for it. A new dispensation under God will be inaugurated. The “Day of the Lord” becomes, in the “Book of the Twelve”, the moment towards which creation under God is moving.

It will be a “Day” of disaster and terror (Am 5:18 - 20). The metaphors used by the “Twelve” are vivid: drought (Hag 1: 11), locust plague (Joel 1: 4; Amos 7: 1), fire (Joel 2: 30; Amos 7: 4), seismic events (Zech 14: 5) and especially the horrors of war (Mic 5:10 – 11). Such metaphors have been used to emphasise the horror of God’s judgement. That this judgement is just is stressed by frequent use of legal imagery (Mic 6: 1; Hos 4:1) and vocabulary, as we have already seen. God is not a bloodthirsty tyrant, like the rulers of Assyria or like Nebuchadnezzar at his worst, but acts justly. His chosen people are guilty as well as nations which practise a ruthless form of conquest. A just judge will deliver a fair sentence. God is a just judge, but being God he is also a being of unlimited power. Nahum and Habakkuk are both aware of God’s power (Hab 3: 3 – 7; Nah 1: 3 - 6) and that it will be used for justice and ultimately for salvation. Nahum divines that God’s anger is a sign of his justice and love (Nah 1:7). Anger is a reaction of concern and is the opposite of an unemotional, uninvolved God, who dispenses an unconcerned, dispassionate justice.

Of the “Twelve” Hosea is probably the prophet the most aware of God’s love for his people, hence the allegory of his relationship with Gomer. During the Wilderness years and even up to the time of Amos, God was seen more as a God of justice and of punishment. He punished the people because they had broken covenant (Am 2: 4 – 8) with him: they had been immoral, greedy and had not shown faith and trust when they had questioned his divine providence, for example, when the first reached the borders of the Promised Land and only believed in the negative views of some of the party who had been sent by Moses to spy out the land (Num 13). God was viewed rather like a powerful despot who should be obeyed, lest he punish ruthlessly. With Hosea we have introduced the idea of a God who has covenanted with Israel because he loves his people (Hos 2: 18 – 23).

This provided a whole new spiritual perspective. It brings a shift in understanding of God’s nature. It brings a shift, too, in Israel’s response to God. Up to now the response has been one of obedience alone. Now it is one of love and love presupposes willing obedience. A loving response implies that Israel wants to do whatever is pleasing to God. God’s love also is not a distant dispassionate love, but a passionate one like the love, at its best, between husband and wife.

If nine books in the “Book of the Twelve” can be argued to have conceived of a “Day of the Lord”, this indicates that it was a concept which was current in religious thought, at least from the 8th century BC onwards. It might be suggested that the frequency of the appearance of this idea is the result of redaction. While there may be an element of truth in this, it is more likely that the redactors saw in the frequent mention of the idea a theme which linked the outlook of the prophets and which they then sought to highlight. For them this was not tampering with the works of individual prophets, since there was probably no concept of authorial rights. In any case prophets were mouthpieces of God. The words were not those of the individual prophets, but of

God himself, who had commanded his messengers to utter them on his behalf. By editing the individual books the redactors were simply highlighting and emphasising God's message and this, surely, was a godly thing to do.

At the same time they saw in the presentation of the "Day of the Lord" a development of what that day entailed. For Amos it had been a day of punishment. Until his time such punishment was reserved for the enemies of Israel. Amos made a shocking assertion: not only were the nations to be judged, but so were Israel and Judah (Am 1 and 2 especially 2: 4 – 8). Amos lived before the time of Deuteronomist editing, which might have emphasised in the Pentateuch and the "Former Prophets" (ie Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings) the ideas found in the "Book of the Twelve" of God punishing his people. Such ideas were probably already current in early oral and written tradition. God had punished the Chosen People for their backsliding in the Wilderness and for disobedience during the conquest. Only during a long period of religious and moral stagnation under the monarchy could the Israelites have come to see God to be punishing the enemies of his people alone.

Punishment on its own is negative, even if the sentence is fair. It must have a purpose. That purpose must surely be to cause the people to repent. Repentance too must surely call forth a response from God, the response of forgiveness. Forgiveness in its turn must be shown in some kind of way and that is salvation. What form must salvation take? Restoration. Restoration, at its best, must be a return to the relationship between God and Israel before it was broken by God's people. This will require a return to Covenant obedience: acknowledgement of Yahweh as the sole God of Israel, right worship and right treatment of neighbour.

At first restoration was interpreted in terms of a restoration of God's people to the Promised Land under the rule of a king of the line of David (Am 9:11). Such a king would rule under God. In actual fact only a portion of the exiled people from Judah returned to rebuild Jerusalem and, tardily, the Temple. The expectation of a king descended from David was never fulfilled. Haggai and Zechariah had, in their time believed this to be imminent under Zerubbabel (Hag 2: 23), but he faded from history, probably recalled to Babylon by the Persian emperor or order to prevent such a possibility.

Who will be saved? Hosea hoped it would be the nation if it repented (Hos 14). In reality, however, it could not be the whole nation. Many had been killed in warfare. In the case of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Israel, the survivors had been broken up and settled amongst other nations subject to Assyria and it was unlikely that they would ever be able to find their way back home. Then there are always the recalcitrant who refuse to acknowledge they are in the wrong for personal, social or political reasons and so are spiritually incapable of repentance. Those who do repent and those available as it were both physically and spiritually for salvation, can only ever be a remnant (Am 9:8b; Mic 4:7). Also those who repent are likely to be those who have always been faithful to God and who have heeded the prophets.

Those who returned from exile in Babylon were a remnant permitted by God to take up residence again in the Promised Land. That this group had not repented fully is shown by their neglect, condemned by Haggai and Zechariah, to rebuild the Temple while they themselves lived in comfortable houses (Hag 1: 3 – 11; Zec 4: 8 and 8: 9).

They had, as it were to suffer a second judgement, that of losing their hoped-for king and remaining subservient to the powerful Persian Empire. They, too, had to look for a second salvation, which at the end of Zechariah, probably by another author or authors, is expressed in apocalyptic terms (Zech 14).

More positively salvation came to those who acknowledged their sin and repented of it. For Micah God's justice had caused his people to be punished. Punishment led to repentance and repentance to salvation. Judgement was balanced by salvation. Henceforth the people would act justly and walk humbly and loyally with God (Mic 4: 1 – 8; 6: 8). For Zephaniah judgement was a form of purification of a repentant remnant leading to salvation (Zeph 3: 11 – 20). Joel understood that the "Day of the Lord" would be a day of deep repentance (Joel 2: 18 – 3:3). For Malachi it was also a turning to God (Mal 3:16 – 17 and 4: 2). This is a far cry from Amos who starkly saw punishment as a kind of cauterising of the nation's sin, after which there could be a fresh start (Am 4: 12 – 13).

Hosea, who of all the prophets was most aware of a loving God's yearning that his people would return to him, could only see salvation in terms of the People of Israel (Hos 14). Jonah is portrayed as rebelling against the idea that another nation, an enemy at that, could also be praised provided that it repented (Jon 4: 1 – 3). For many of the "Twelve" those who could be saved came to include other nations. (Mic 7:17; Zeph 3: 8; Zech 14: 16) This portrays a shift in theological thinking from foreign nations being worthy of judgement, because they did not worship Yahweh or were enemies of the Israelites to all nations being able to be saved provided that they repented. Part of the message of God to Jonah is that repentance can bring salvation even to those who do not worship Yahweh, provided they repent of their sins and cruelty. God spared the Assyrians (and even their animals), because they repented. Emphasis is moving from judgement towards salvation via repentance.

This implies, also, a development in the understanding of Yahweh's power. As El he had been the God of the clan that Abraham founded. Under Moses he became the God of a people, who at the same time had power over creation and could cause the sea to dry up so that his people could escape the Egyptian army (Ex 14). Yahweh was able to provide food and water in the desert (Ex 16 and 17). He could cause Israel to defeat enemies, provided Israel was obedient to his commands. Doubtless, Deuteronomist redaction tended to shape the sources of the Pentateuch in terms of a Deuteronomist religious viewpoint. However, Yahweh was still a tribal God who protected Israel. Gods at that time were regarded as being limited in their power to the territory in which their worshippers lived.

Israel settled amongst the Canaanites and so took on beliefs and customs from their neighbours (Hos 10: 1 – 2). This was the downfall of Israel which led to the exile of the inhabitants of both Israelite kingdoms.

That God used other nations to punish his people showed that Yahweh could not be just the God of Israel. Furthermore he used powerful nations to defeat other powerful nations who had offended him by their cruelty and hubris. He could use mighty nations to accomplish his will despite the fact that they had their own Gods. He must in some way be a God of the nations and a God of gods. Since Yahweh was a "jealous" God, those who realised his power, worshipped him alone and repented of

their sins would be saved. Those who did so would be a minority and hence part of the remnant whom God would save. Salvation thus came to be seen as reserved for a remnant of Israel and for a remnant of the nations. Such realizations played their part in developing the religious outlook of the People of Israel from Yahwistic Pluralism through monolatry to monotheism (Albertz 2000: 106 – 108).

Monolatry developed about the time of Elijah and Elisha and was encouraged by a group, sometimes referred to as the “Yahweh-alone Party”. Elijah, after his contest on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal in the reign of Ahab, had put the prophets to death and been forced to flee to Sinai (I Kings 18 and 19). The 8th and 7th century prophets had the same message that the Israelites were to worship only Yahweh and the shrines and symbols of other gods in the Temple were to be destroyed. It was with the exile that the Israelites moved from monolatry to monotheism. The Temple cult had been destroyed along with the Temple. The religious gatherings in exile probably led to the development of the synagogue. The need for a written record of Israel’s relationship with God, to maintain Israelite identity and to be read at meetings, and later in the synagogue, became evident (Feinberg 1970:1227). This led to a period of increased Deuteronomist, and later priestly, editing and God’s covenant was edited into an orderly written form.

It is noteworthy that after the exile the criticisms of God via the prophets are different from those before the exile in that, after the exile, there are no condemnations of syncretism, or of worshiping other gods in tandem with worshiping Yahweh. Israel’s fault is religious slackness. The Temple has not been rebuilt years after the return from exile, while the population is living in comfortable houses (Hag 1: 4 – 9). Imperfect animals are being offered in the Temple as sacrifices (Mal 1: 6 – 8). The people are continuing to neglect their duty to widows, orphans, the poor and aliens. During the exile Israel became monotheist (Albertz 2000:106 – 108). If Yahweh could use powerful nations to do his will, he was obviously superior to their gods, or the gods of the nations were false gods. Therefore it was better to worship Yahweh alone.

We have seen also that in the course of the “Book of the Twelve” the eschatological outlook of the prophets has moved from the “Day of the Lord” being an event that will happen within history, first soon, then later at an indeterminate date, to an event that seems to take place at the end of time.

The prophecies of Amos and Hosea in the 8th century about the imminent punishment of the Kingdom of Israel were proved true by the kingdom’s downfall at the hands of Assyria within a comparatively short time. So, at first, the “Day of the Lord” was imminent. It must have seemed likely to Micah that the same fate would overtake Judah, but it was not to do so for nearly another two hundred years. Even the prophecies of the 7th century prophets (Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk) concerning Judah took nearly a century to materialise. It must have seemed that God indeed acted within History, but when he chose to do so.

The crisis in prophecy occurred after the exile when the belief that the returned exiles would be governed by a descendant of David proved false. That Zerubbabel faded from the scene must have been a great blow which was compounded when God appeared not to raise up another descendant to take his place. It was at first, probably thought that God would act when it seemed right to him.

As the centuries passed, eschatology had to be rethought. If God appeared not to be going to fulfil the prophecies of a restored Davidic kingdom, when and how was he going to act? Perhaps the “Day of the Lord” was going to come at the end of time and the new Israel would become a restored nation at the end of time under the eternal kingship of God. The new Israel would consist not only of Israelites but of all those who faithfully worshiped Yahweh (Zech 14: 16 – 19).

This, of course, raises a problem: one with which Christianity struggles. When will the end of time occur and what will be the nature of this ultimate “Day of the Lord”? The Christian answer remains that the “Day” will take place when God decides it is right. The apocalyptic nature of the “Day” has been influenced by the prophetic metaphors which have been used to describe it, particularly those of seismic events, fire and battle. A renewed Jerusalem is described in hyperbolic terms (Jl 3: 16 – 21; Zech 14: 3 – 11). There is the image of a final battle between the forces of good and evil in a specific place: the valley of Jehosaphat in Joel (3:2) and Jerusalem in Zechariah (14). The New Jerusalem will be a city of peace and a centre of worship for all and God will be king. In Daniel chapter 12 we have the Old Testament culmination of apocalyptic development with the end of history as a cosmic battle introducing a secret, mystical time frame for the coming of the end, a kind of “Day of the Lord” when God’s plans of judgement and salvation reach fulfilment. In Revelation, Jerusalem takes on a decidedly other worldly aspect, described in terms of gold and jewellery in an attempt to describe its spiritual beauty and heavenly nature (Rev 21: 15 – 21).

One of the main reasons for the development of the idea of an apocalyptic “Day of the Lord” may be the suffering that the Israelites underwent during the Seleucid conquest. Prophecy concerning a re-established Davidic kingdom seemed to have failed. After Malachi there were no more recognised prophets. This may have been because their message was no longer believed or because prophecy had become dangerous. Any one prophesying the establishment in Judah of an Israelite kingdom may have risked being imprisoned or executed as a political agitator. At best Judah had had limited home-rule under the Persians and this may have become an acceptable second best.

This semi-independence was destroyed by the conquest of Alexander the Great, which, shortly afterwards, was followed by Ptolomaic rule, followed by that of the Seleucids who, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, sought to destroy Israelite culture and worship and replace them by Greek religion and customs. It must have seemed that there was little chance of restoration in historical terms. This and their sufferings, particularly during the Maccabean Revolt (166 -163 BC), helped the development of apocalyptic literature, of which the latter part of Daniel is a result. The book is set in Babylonian and Persian times and Babylon and Persia, as oppressors, become code words for the Seleucids. Expressing a longing for God’s rule, the accounts are dramatic and involve the coming of God on a “Day of the Lord” at the end of time and the establishment of a new creation. The nations will be destroyed in battle and God’s people defended by remnant (Bauckham 1988: 33 – 35). Unlike prophetic writing apocalyptic does not judge Israel and does not have the same moral urgency and priorities (Ladd 1970: 43 – 44). For the early Christians, too, the failure of an imminent Second Coming and persecution would lead to the adoption of an apocalyptic outcome described in Revelations.

The failure of the restoration of the Davidic line also led to concentration on a different form of salvation. From being a national event within the confines of the Near East, it became an international event when the righteous of all nations, but those of Judah first, would be saved and the nations destroyed. From the salvation of the Israelite people it became the salvation of a repentant remnant, first of the Israelites, then of all nations. Henceforward there is a new Israel.

The idea of a “Day of the Lord” as one of judgement and consequent punishment changes, so that these acts become seen as a necessary prelude to repentance in order that God’s love may be shown in salvation. Thus the “Day of the Lord” becomes a moment at the end of time inaugurating a new creation in which the acts of judgement, punishment, repentance and salvation become one. At the moment salvation takes place, God begins to reign in his kingdom eternally. Covenant is everlastingly restored and the Law is written on the hearts of humanity in such a way that it will never again desire to be disobedient (Jer 31:33).

8.10 POSSIBLE ASPECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This thesis has limited study of the “Day of the Lord” as reconciliation between judgement and salvation to the “Book of the Twelve”. Obviously the topic could be studied in other limited as well as wider contexts. The following suggestions move from limited to wider contexts.

- A comparison between the “Book of the Twelve” and the Major Prophets as to how the “Day of the Lord” acts as the moment of reconciliation between judgement and salvation.
- The “Day of the Lord” as reconciliation between judgement and salvation in the psalms. [The psalms have occasionally been referred to in passing in this thesis, but could provide a useful adjunct to this thesis, since many antedate the Minor Prophets.]
- A study of eschatology in the Old Testament involving the “Day of the Lord” as the point of reconciliation between judgement and salvation.
- The development of an apocalyptic view of judgement and salvation in Daniel, the Apocrypha and the New Testament, especially in the Book of Revelations.
- The development of Jerusalem from captured city and capital of David to the City of God and ultimately Heavenly City in Israelite and early Christian eschatology and apocalyptic.
- How scriptural references to the “Day of the Lord”, judgement and salvation are interpreted by Christians today. [It would probably be necessary to limit the application of this topic to references in the prophets or apocalyptic literature.]
- A comparison and contrast of Jewish and Christian views on judgement and salvation on the “Day of the Lord”.
- A study of what the reign of God, inaugurated on the “Day of the Lord”, will involve for those who have been judged and saved in Jewish and/or Christian thought. [Possibly, on a gloomier note, it might be possible to do the same for those who have been judged and damned!]

- Christian ideas of Heaven and Hell and how these have been influenced by Biblical ideas of judgement, salvation and a “Day of the Lord”.
- The extent to which Judaeo-Christian ideas of judgement and salvation on the “Day of the Lord” have influenced secular, western views on judgement, punishment and restoration in a world where life is seen as finite.

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