

SPECIAL STUDY EIGHT

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPHETS TO THE LAW OF MOSES

The prophets, without exception, took up their position on the basis of the law: they appeared as the vindicators of its authority, the expounders of its meaning, and in a sense also the avengers of its injured rights. When they warned the people to escape the impending judgment for their backsliding, they always advocated a return to the law . . . the spirit of the law. However, the prophets never attempted to go farther and improve upon the principles of the Theocracy, or to inculcate a morality that transcends the idea of the Decalogue. Their teachings did not transcend or remodel what had been previously revealed through the law.

The circumstances of the times were such as to call, in a very special manner, for the bold and explicit announcement of the vital truths and principles in question; only it must be remembered, they were not given for the purpose of initiating a higher form of morality and religion, but rather of staying a perilous degeneracy, and recovering a position that had been lost!

The truths and principles were in no respect new; they were interwoven with the writings and legislation of Moses; and only in the *mode and fulness* of the revelation, but not in the *things revealed*, does the teaching of the prophets differ from the handwriting of Moses.

Their aim was not at the introduction of anything new, in ceremony or ethics from the Old Covenant, but it was the object of their most earnest strivings to turn back the hearts of the children to the fathers, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (cf. I Kings 18:37; Lk. 1:17).

The prophets showed at various times how they could appreciate the symbolical institutions of the law, and enforce their observance (cf. Isa. 42:23-24; 60:6, 13; Mal. 1:11; 3:9-10).

There is *no* ground for regarding the law of God in Israel as the product of a development-process among the people of Israel, who gradually arrived at the consciousness of what is good and right in the relation of man to man and man to God.

WHAT DO THE PROPHETS THEMSELVES SAY?

1. Isaiah says oblations and ceremonies are vain without obedient willingness to keep the spirit of the law . . . but he does not abrogate the ceremonies (Isa. 1)

MINOR PROPHETS

2. Isaiah says "woe to those who reject the law" (Isa. 5:24)
3. Isa. says disregard the false prophets; but hasten to the teaching and the torah (law), Isa. 8:20
4. Isa. says God's law was given to be obeyed; Isa. 42:24
5. Isa. was to inscribe on a book that a rebellious people rejected God's law, Isa. 30:8-11
6. Isa. encourages the people to put the law of God in their hearts, Isa. 51:7
7. Jeremiah said the people could not say "law is among us," Jer. 8:8-13
8. Jer. affirms that the law was valid for the people of his day, Jer. 44:23
9. Jer. rebukes the people for rejecting the law, Jer. 6:16-20; 9:13; 16:11-13; 44:10
10. Jer. says people must walk in the law, and that *the prophets taught the law*, Jer. 26:4-5
11. Hosea reminds the people that their destruction will come as a result of forgetting the law, Hos. 4:6; 8:1; 8:12
12. Joel says that the priests were still to minister at the altar—prophets did not supercede the priesthood or priestly administrations, Joel 1:13-14
13. Habakkuk contends that the law was to be kept in his day, Hab.1:4
14. Amos said "the people rejected the law." Amos 2:4
15. Zephaniah expected the law to be kept in his day, Zeph. 3:4
16. Haggai questions priests about interpretation of the law in his day, Hag. 2:10-14
17. Nahum exhorts to the keeping of feasts and vows, Nahum 1:15
18. Zechariah expected people to keep the law in his day, Zech. 6:8-14
19. Malachi showed that the priests had failed to fulfill their duties of expounding the law, Mal. 2:1-9
20. Malachi exhorts the people specifically to remember the law of Moses, Mal. 4:4
21. Jesus conjoined the "law and the prophets" as a dispensation that was beginning to be superceded at the coming of John the Baptist, Matt. 11:13; Lk. 16:16.