

BY THE
WATERS OF BABYLON

A Story of Ancient Israel

BY
LOUIS WALLIS



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BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON



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SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
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TO MY WIFE

Grace Tyler Wallis

WHOSE SYMPATHY AND HELP HAVE BEEN
A CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

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I

In the days of king Zedekiah, there was in the hill country of Judah, in the village of Maon, a certain Simeon the son of Abiathar, the son of Joab, the son of Ithamar, whose fathers had lived there since the times when the judges judged, and before ever a king reigned in Israel. This man possessed the fields of his inheritance, with flocks and herds. And he had five sons and one daughter, Miriam, a virgin very fair to look upon, who was in charge over the household since the death of her mother.

Now the village of Maon, whercin was the house of Simeon, stood on a hill which was half a day's journey south of Hebron, that ancient city where David reigned over Judah before he became king of all Israel at Jerusalem. And the men of Maon were wont to rise early in the morning, to go forth unto their labor in the fields that encompassed the hill round about. And at the going down of the sun, when women drew water at the well without the village, the men and youths returned again from their work. And as the stars came out, the custom of the people was to gather here and there in the street. And their talk was of all things, even of their work, and of the near-by villages, and of Hebron, and Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, and of the great cities of Egypt and of Tyre and Babylon. For

they were quick, like the children of the East, to inquire into all things that ever they knew or heard tell.

Now it came to pass, on an evening, that there was no small stir in Maon concerning a messenger from Jerusalem, which had an errand that day unto Simeon the son of Abiathar, saying that he must pay a debt, or suffer the loss of a goodly field given in pledge. The man rode swiftly on a horse; and he delivered a parchment into the hand of Miriam, the daughter of Simeon, while yet her father was at his work in the fields. And the maiden was troubled at the messenger's words; wherefore she pondered the matter in her heart, to find if there was aught she could do. And she told not anything to the women of the village; for so did she in all things, being of careful speech. But at nightfall she went in tears to meet her father and her brethren as they returned from work. So all the people knew that something had befallen; and in the evening they came together in the street before the house of Simeon, to hear concerning his trouble, and to comfort him in finding what should be done. And the people spake unto Simeon, saying, "Tell us of this matter; for the like may come to any of us."

Then Simeon answered, saying, "Ye know that I am of the house of Caleb, which house had much land hereabout in ancient days. But by little and little the fields and vineyards of my fathers passed unto other men. And yet, even so, if the land be fruitful, and the ground be blest of Jehovah, then I and my children can live of our own. And two years ago, as ye well remember, the rain failed; so that many of us, being straitened, were driven to borrow money in Hebron and Jerusalem to pay the king's taxation. But after we paid

the taxes, our debts remained. And some of us have been able to redeem the debts, and others have lost the fields which they gave in security to the money-lenders, even as threateneth to befall me. For when my wife Rebekah lay sick unto death many months, I could not bear the burden of work and yet watch by her. So was I constrained to get hired servants to be in the fields and vineyards with my sons. Therefore it was that I could not pay the debt. And now a messenger bringeth word from the money lender, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, of Jerusalem, saying that I must lose one of my goodliest fields, when I and my children can only live on what we have."

Then were the people angry at Simeon's words, being many of them oppressed by debt; and they said, "Who is this Ahikam the son of Shaphan? Is he any better than we? And is his flesh any better than our flesh? For he and other men like him are the ruin of Judah, even like as men of wealth were the ruin of the ten tribes of Israel which be now lost, and which were destroyed by men like king Ahab, who took away the land of Naboth in Samaria. And now if we rebel not against the rule of such as this Ahikam the son of Shaphan, then will the kingdom of Judah be brought low and fall before enemies from afar, and be overcome, and be carried away into exile, as Jeremiah the prophet saith."

Then Simeon answered, and said, "I know not much about Ahikam the son of Shaphan, save that he is of the richest in the kingdom, and liveth in a great palace in Jerusalem. Moreover he hath also a building near the temple of Jehovah, where servants and stewards have charge of his business, and where I and my son

Joel went to borrow money, and where I gave pledge of the field for my debt. Nevertheless, we saw not Ahikam, but had our dealings only with a steward who was a hard man, and whose name I remember not."

Then did the people speak unto Simeon, and say that some of them should go with him straightway to Jerusalem to see the money lender, and to petition the king against unrighteous counselors in high places, to the end that help be given unto the poor and needy. So should the kingdom of Judah be built up and be protected by the hands of free men, as in the days when David ruled the people, and the enemies of Israel were put down, and the kingdom was exalted.

Then spake Benjamin the son of Zechariah, of the tribe of Levi, who was full of years, being the eldest in the village. And he was a man of much learning and wisdom, who had journeyed to many places in Judah, and had read the parchment rolls which the scribes did copy. And always he held his peace until others gave counsel; and therefore did the people attend well unto his words. So then spake Benjamin the son of Zechariah; and he said, "This thing happeneth overmuch of late. For they take away a man's heritage, and add field to field, putting slaves therein to labor, until rich men have all things and the multitude of the righteous be drawn more and more into poverty. Our taxation is multiplied, and the price of all things increaseth, and behold, the kingdom of Judah is possessed by men who take tribute of us, as did Pharaoh the king of Egypt, when he made our fathers to labor for naught in the land of Goshen. And matters will not be well with us until the arrogant rulers in Jerusalem be humbled, as they were in the time of good

king Josiah, in the days of my youth. For great were those days; and if we now had on the throne of David another such as Josiah, we could be saved."

And when the people saw that Benjamin was agreed that they should journey to Jerusalem to seek justice, they made request that he tell more about Josiah, that they might know how to do and what to speak when they were come to the city of David. Therefore Benjamin answered them, and said, "When I was young, this kingdom of Judah was ruled by Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, and then by Amon, the son of Manasseh; both which kings did evil in afflicting the multitude of the poor and needy. And in those days all the rulers and nobles and judges did oppress the people until the land was in bondage.

"But it came to pass, after Manasseh and Amon died, that the people of the land rose up and established Josiah, the son of Manasseh, to be king over Judah. And in the days of Josiah the people prevailed in the government, so that justice was done, even as it is written in the roll of the book of Jeremiah the prophet, where it showeth how king Josiah and his counselors did justice and righteousness, and judged the cause of the poor and needy, and it was well in those days. Wherefore I and my neighbors did recover again the fields and vineyards that rich men took away from us in the evil times of king Manasseh; and thus we had release from debt and bondage.

"Moreover, the doings of the king and the people were confirmed by a little book, which was found in the temple at Jerusalem, which did say that Jehovah commanded every creditor to release what he had lent unto his brother, and not exact it of his brother; and

that none should hold in bondage any of his brethren, the children of Israel, but should release them at the end of six years; and that everyone, out of his wealth, should give sufficient unto the poor and needy, and should not be backward to do this thing, for Jehovah would bless him therein.

"Furthermore, the little book did command that all other gods beside Jehovah should be put away; for the worship of these gods goeth with injustice unto the poor and needy, and with harlotry and all kinds of wickedness. And the book did say that the people should no more worship in all their villages and cities, as they had been wont to do in times past, but should henceforth bring their sacrifices unto one place only, and should bow down and worship Jehovah there.

"Then did king Josiah and his counselors call a great assembly of the people from all the land of Judah, wherein I myself was; and we made the little book to be a law and an ordinance for the kingdom. Wherefore Josiah commanded the people to sacrifice in Jerusalem only. And the king put down the worship of Baal and Ashtar. And he cast out the harlots from their rooms in the temple. For since the days when the temple was built by king Solomon, the son of David, it was defiled by the altars of Baal and other gods which had been worshiped in Jerusalem before ever the children of Israel came out of the wilderness and entered into this land wherein we dwell."

Now while Benjamin told how Jehovah was a lord of justice unto the poor and needy, and how Baal was lord of the rich and corrupt, the people did press about him, that they lose never a word. And they said unto Benjamin, "We have heard tell of these things before;

but never have we heard the matter set forth so plainly. And now that some do go from us to Jerusalem to get justice, we would that thou tell us who wrote the little book, and where it may be found, that we may bring it again unto the king and his rulers."

But Benjamin answered, and said, "Even could we find the little book, or a copy thereof, the purchase of it would scarce be in our power; for books be costly to write on rolls of parchment. I stood near when the king read it unto the assembly of the people; so that its words came to mine ears; and then once did I read a copy of it in Jerusalem; so that I remember it well. But I know not who wrote it; nor where it may be found at this day.

"Nevertheless, know I this, that it was brought from the temple unto king Josiah by Shaphan, the scribe, the great scribe, who is now dead. And also I know that Shaphan, with other scribes of his company, did take this little book, and did copy it with a collection of ancient rolls and writings, to make a very great book, which is not yet finished, and whereon certain scribes continue to labor until this day. And so, by little and little, they make a book telling of justice and righteousness, the which, when it be complete, will set forth all things in order, from the beginning of Israel until now. And they say that in time to come, it will be the chiefest book of all nations."

And the people were joyful and glad when they heard about the doings of Josiah, and about the great book which was being made by the scribes of Jerusalem. And they said unto Benjamin, "Would that the days of Josiah might be brought back again, and would that the great book of justice and righteousness be

finished more quickly, and read forth unto all the kingdom of Judah."

Then did the people commune with Simeon and Benjamin about the matter of going to Jerusalem. And it was determined to make haste, and delay not, but to send and go the very next day, lest the steward of Ahikam take possession of the field of Simeon suddenly. So all the people consulted with each other to find who of them should journey unto the city on the morrow.

And it came to pass that Miriam, the fair daughter of Simeon, stood by the door of her father's house, nigh unto the place where the people were gathered; so that she heard all things, but went not among the people. And while they were yet counseling together, behold, Laban, the son of Samuel, separated himself, and went unto the daughter of Simeon, to speak with her, for he loved her. And he said, "Thou knowest that I have loved thee since the days of our youth, when we did play here in the street, and gather flowers in yonder fields. And I go on the morrow in the company of those that journey to Jerusalem with thy father. And when we return, I would have thee to wife."

Now Miriam cared not for Laban, to marry him; but yet would she not wound his heart. Therefore she drew back, and spake gentle words unto him, saying, "I am sore distressed about my father. Touch me not, Laban, and speak not thus unto me. For if I were given unto thee, I could be no more a help unto him in this his time of trouble. And moreover, nothing shall keep me from going with him to Jerusalem on the morrow; for I fear lest some evil befall him."

And before the two of them had done speaking, the people went unto their homes; and all the village was quiet. And Laban bade the daughter of Simeon farewell, saying, "Thou hast ever put me off thus, Miriam. But I shall speak to thy father; for he hath good will unto me."

II

And very early in the morning, Simeon and those that went with him rose up to go unto Jerusalem. And they that journeyed with Simeon were Miriam his daughter, and Joel his son, who kept sheep in the wilderness, and Benjamin the son of Zechariah, who, being full of years, nevertheless went in strength, and Joshua the son of Jesse, a near neighbor unto Simeon, and Laban the son of Samuel, who desired the daughter of Simeon to wife.

And while it was yet dark, the stars being bright, they departed on the road that goeth northward unto the city of Hebron. And the sun rose upon Simeon and his company before they were nigh unto Hebron; and at midday they journeyed past the walls of Hebron, going on toward Bethlehem.

Now when the evening drew nigh, they went not to the inn of Bethlehem, for they had not sufficient money. But they turned aside into a field of shepherds, where were men who knew Joel, the shepherd, the son of Simeon. And Joel went unto them, and greeted them, and told them of his father's errand to Jerusalem; and he desired of them that those with him should rest that night by the sheepfold. And the shepherds spake kindly, and brought water from the well of Bethlehem, and gave them bread.

And as they of Maon talked with the shepherds, the sun went down, and the stars came forth, and the

moon rose full. And looking northward, they saw a shining, as of many lights; and behold, it was the shining of Jerusalem afar off. And as they were sitting in the field, the daughter of Simeon drew close to her father and did rest upon his shoulder; and she said, "I like not the great city. For all wickedness gathereth together within its walls; and from it come all oppressions of the people. And therefore I love the villages of the country; but most of all do I love our sweet Maon."

And one of the shepherds asked them, "Know ye what happeneth of late in yonder city?"

And Benjamin, the son of Zechariah, answered, "Nay, for our village lieth not on a highroad; and our people journey not much abroad. Therefore tell us of Jerusalem, that we may know the more concerning it when we go there on the morrow."

And the shepherd answered, saying, "Many tumults of the people have been stirred up of late in Jerusalem by Jeremiah the prophet, who goeth about the streets, and who crieth aloud, in the name of Jehovah, against the injustice and corruption of rulers and judges. And the king and his counselors would find some good occasion to take him and put him to death; but they fear the great multitude of the common people, both in Jerusalem and in the country villages, lest they rise up, and also because Jeremiah ever hath with him some who love him greatly and who will fight on his side."

And Benjamin said, "It is even so. And already hath Jeremiah gone forth among the villages of Judah, strengthening the hearts of the people for justice and righteousness, and prophesying against wicked rulers

and worshipers of other gods besides Jehovah. And I talked much with him on a certain day in our village; and I went with him to other villages near-by. The people trust in him and believe what he sayeth; and yet they understand not fully all his words; for he is wise above his generation."

And the shepherd answered him, "Thou sayest well, for thus believe we also. And we, because we be nigh unto Jerusalem, do hear much about Jeremiah and all that which happeneth in the city. We indeed take him to be a prophet, who hath truly the word of Jehovah. Nevertheless, there be other prophets, who declare things contrary to the word of Jeremiah, who also say, like him, 'Thus saith Jehovah.' So the great men of Jerusalem, who oppress the poor, say, 'Behold this division among the prophets.' And thus it cometh to pass that the multitude of the people be thrown into confusion, and know not always what to believe."

And when they of Maon laid themselves down to sleep in the field, the shepherds whispered among themselves that Simeon and his company were simple folk from the South, who would be wounded at heart when they came to the city.

Now in the morning, before the sun shone, many camels and their drivers went along the highway that passed by the field. So the sleepers were waked, though their eyes were heavy; and they took their journey toward Jerusalem. And when the sun came up, behold, they were nigh unto the city, so that the walls and towers and battlements rose wondrous high before them; and their hearts were stirred. And much people were coming over the hills round about Jerusalem, by divers ways, from country villages and foreign lands;

whereof some had camels heavy-laden with merchandise, and some rode on asses with fruits of the earth for the city markets, and many were on foot.

Then Simeon and they that were with him hasted and entered in amidst a great company of people through the southwest gate of the city. And they were disquieted by the tumult and shouting which went hither and thither. And scarce could they make their way by the narrow streets, or find how they should go unto the place of Ahikam the son of Shaphan. For though Simeon and Benjamin and Joel did come beforetime unto Jerusalem; yet the city was a strange place unto them; and they knew not whether they went onward, or back again toward the gate where they entered.

And when they asked of those that passed by them, one answered hastily, "I know not," and another pushed roughly, saying, "Ask such an one"; but most gave them no heed at all. And going on by chance, they came out on a broad way, where stood an officer, clad in colored garments, with a weapon girded upon him. And Simeon asked of him, "Canst thou tell us how we may find the place of Ahikam the son of Shaphan?"

And the officer answered, "Yea, I can send thee to the place of Ahikam the son of Shaphan. Ye now stand before the entering in of the outer court of the temple. And the son of Shaphan hath a building hard by the rear of the temple. Thereto shall ye pass around by the right hand."

So they went along the broad way before the court of the temple, and turned into a street by the side of the temple, and thence to the rear thereof, where they found the place of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, even

as the officer had said unto them. And it was a building of two stories, whereof the lower one was let out to merchants, and the upper one had many rooms wherein the servants and stewards of Ahikam were busied in their works.

And when they of Maon were come in, a servant inquired their errand, and led them to an inner room, where were two men sitting behind a long table, with many writings and parchments, both large and small, spread out before them. And one of the men was Eliezer the chief steward of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, who ruled over all the possessions of Ahikam. And the other was Nathan the son of Ahikam, a youth of twenty years, strong and well-favored, and of an open countenance, beloved of all; and he was learning his father's business. And Simeon came and stood before the table, with Joel, his son, on his right hand, and Miriam, his daughter, on his left hand. Then Eliezer the steward asked of him, with a sharp tongue, "What is thine errand?"

And Simeon answered him, and said, "Rememberest thou me not? I am the man who came here with this my son two years ago, to borrow money."

And the steward said unto him, "Of a truth, many thousands have been here since two years ago; and thinkest thou that I could remember thee when I saw thee but once? Let us have no vain questions, but show me thy business quickly."

And Simeon answered, and said, "I am Simeon the son of Abiathar, of Maon, which lieth two days' journey south of Jerusalem. And the year before last, when the king's tax-gatherers came to our village, I was not able to pay. And then was I told that I must

needs borrow money for the taxation, else the king's officers would come and sell a parcel of my land. Therefore I and my son Joel came to Jerusalem; and we found that Ahikam the son of Shaphan would lend unto us if we did give pledge of a certain piece of land. So being poor and needy, and with no helper. I consented thereto and gave pledge. Thus the king's tax was paid; but the debt to Ahikam remained. And when the harvest failed, and my wife Rebekah was sick unto death, I was not able to pay the debt. So Ahikam sendeth word that he will take my field."

Now while Simeon spake, Eliezer the steward gave little heed to his words, but busied himself with parchments; for he was many years in the work of Ahikam; and therefore, when people came unto him, he knew the most part of what they would say while yet they began to speak unto him. But though Eliezer was weary to hear Simeon in all that he said, yet nevertheless did Nathan the son of Ahikam give ear to Simeon's words; and the young man looked upon Miriam, so that she was in confusion. Yet he gazed not at her with rudeness, like a man of folly, but tenderly and with kindness.

Now when Simeon made as if to continue in speech, Eliezer the steward spake suddenly unto him, and said, "Yea, we know all these things that thou tellest us, for they be in the records of this place. But Ahikam knoweth naught of them; for I did myself send word unto thee, in Ahikam's name, that he would have thy field. So therefore tell us what wilt thou do in this matter? Hast thou money with thee to pay the debt? Or shall Ahikam have thy field?"

Then answered Simeon, saying, "Nay, there is no

money in my hand; but I am come here with one of my sons and mine only daughter and certain of my neighbors, that we may see Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and give our petition also unto king Zedekiah; that we may get justice, according to the word of Jehovah in the little book which was found in the temple in king Josiah's days, and which the king did make to be a law and an ordinance, namely, that the creditor should release what he had lent unto his needy brother, and not exact it of his brother."

Then also did Benjamin, the son of Zechariah, come near and speak unto Eliezer the steward, saying, "Yea, for justice are we come. And we shall see if Jehovah's people be brought into bondage to men who lay tribute upon the kingdom, and have no regard for the justice and kindness of Jehovah."

Then did Eliezer the steward arise upon his feet, and stand, and speak in a loud voice, saying, "Ye have much opportunity, indeed, to see Ahikam; for he lieth sick, and seeth no man. And even if he lay not sick, yet could ye not see him; for his business hath been too great for him to care about, lo, these many years. Therefore he hath stewards; and therefore the son of Ahikam, who is here with me, and who will inherit the riches of Ahikam, doth learn his father's business. And moreover, ye have much opportunity to present a petition to the king. And if, perchance, ye could see the king, what would it avail? For the king is a prudent man, ruling the kingdom with strength; and he is not one to be moved about by a tumult of the people. And now, therefore, tell me this, thou Simeon, and answer me truly. Did Ahikam, the son of Shap-

han, come to thee? or did either of us ask thee to borrow money of him? But didst thou not, on the contrary, come unto us thyself, and ask us to lend unto thee? And hast thou not had the money of Ahikam these two years, paying nothing thereon?"

Then Simeon, and those with him, were greatly troubled at these words, whereto they scarce knew what could be said. But Eliezer pressed him sharply, and asked him, "What sayest thou? Did Ahikam, or did I, come to thee, and ask thee to borrow? Or didst thou come unto us?"

Then Simeon answered, saying, "I did, of a truth, come unto this place to borrow. But I thought to discover kindness at the hand of Ahikam; so that I and my children should not lose our land, even as was said in the little book of Jehovah's law. For, behold, I and Ahikam the son of Shaphan are of the children of Israel; and we be both of us brothers in the house of Jacob."

And when Simeon spake again the second time of king Josiah's law book, Eliezer answered him, and said, "That part of king Josiah's book is good which commandeth all worship of Jehovah to be in Jerusalem, and which maketh to be unlawful the worship on the high places in the villages of the country; for it causeth more people to come unto the city with money and offerings for sacrifice. Thus do the priests of the city live more prosperously and have more power. And also the people of the villages, when they come to Jerusalem, do spend more for merchandise; and they bring more goods to trade with the merchants. This part of the law book is very good; and therefore

it is diligently kept unto this day by the king and his rulers; and they let no man worship Jehovah in the cities outside Jerusalem, or in the villages of the country upon the high places.

"But that part of the book where the creditor shall release what he hath lent, and where a man may not be held in bondage until he hath worked out his debt, and where a landmark shall not be removed; all such parts of the book agree with the words of that mad fellow Jeremiah, whom some call a prophet; and all such commandments are favored by people like ye, who come here from the country villages and from the wilderness, where they know not the ways of Jerusalem. Therefore let the people of the country and the tribes of the wilderness lend each other, if they will; and let the lenders receive not again from the borrowers. But that part of the book hath no agreement with the ways of the city. Neither is it observed at this day by the king, nor by his counselors, nor by the judges which the king appointeth over the courts. For such laws are contrary to good business, and against prosperity; because the business of the city requireth much borrowing of money, and repayment of it in due time; so that the work of artificers and builders and merchants may go forward. Therefore, if thou, Simeon, cannot pay interest on the money which we loaned to thee, and cannot repay the loan itself, we can lend the money elsewhere and have both interest and repayment. For these matters have not to do with brotherhood; and if brotherhood ruled the kingdom, then ought Ahikam to put a sign on the forefront of this building to read thus: 'Ahikam the son of Shaphan. Money to loan to the poor and needy without interest

and without repayment.' And if all rich men did likewise, then would they all presently be in want, and be poor and needy themselves. And then would all business come to an end. For brotherhood may be a thing of beauty. But the ways of business must prevail; and the borrower must pay the lender."

Then the anger of Eliezer the steward waxed hot; so that he went to a door, and commanded; and, behold, two men, great and strong, came and stood by him, awaiting his word. And at the sight of these men, whose looks were fierce, the daughter of Simeon wept bitterly. Then did Nathan the son of Ahikam arise, and stretch forth his hand toward her, and would have spoken kindly. But Eliezer the steward heeded not anything, and spake in his wrath, saying unto Simeon, "I be minded to thrust thee forth and all that be in thy company."

Now, Nathan the son of Ahikam had said nothing hitherto. But when the maiden wept, he spake unto Eliezer the steward, and commanded him, saying, "Have the strong men out. For we need them not."

Then Eliezer turned to him and said, "Art thou here by thy father's word to learn of me? Or am I here to learn of thee?"

And Nathan said, "I will answer for it before my father when he is recovered of his sickness and I will bear the chance of it." So the strong men drew back by the door, and went away.

Now, even as Nathan spake, behold, there was a great noise of shouting and tumult in the street below; and all they in the room were affrighted, and went quickly unto the windows to see what fearful thing this might be. And, lo, a mixed multitude came onward

in the street; and in the midst thereof was Jeremiah whom many took to be a prophet. And the people compassed him round, and gave him encouragement as he cried out against wicked rulers and against those that oppressed the poor and needy.

And the tumult increased, and came along before the place of Ahikam; so that those in the room, looking down, could see all things. Then appeared three officers who were strong men, gibborim of the city guard, each man having a weapon. And the gibborim strove to break through the multitude by force, and take Jeremiah, and carry him to prison. Yet could they not come nigh unto him; for the people were armed with sticks and stones; and the people contended violently with the gibborim, killing one and driving the others away.

And the multitude stood in the street, between the temple of Jehovah, on the one side, and the place of Ahikam, on the other, with Jeremiah in the midst of them. And Jeremiah lifted up his voice, and cried aloud, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'Run to and fro in all the streets of Jerusalem, and see if there be one man who doeth justice; and I will pardon her. But she is wholly oppression, from one end thereof unto the other. For everyone is covetous, and everyone dealeth falsely.

" 'And they have forgotten my name in Baal. For the false prophets prophesy by Baal, and they uphold the rule of the priests, who ask not, Where is Jehovah? So therefore when they swear, saying, As Jehovah liveth, even so do they swear falsely. And they who administer the law know not Jehovah. For my name,

even Jehovah, is in their mouth, but not in their heart.

“‘And it shall be, if they turn them not from their evil ways; and if they refuse, and be stiff-necked, and seek not after my instruction,’ saith Jehovah, ‘that I will bring the king of Babylon upon the whole house of Judah, even as I brought the king of Assyria upon the ten tribes of Ephraim. And when I do bring the king of Babylon unto this city, he shall utterly destroy it, even as the Assyrians destroyed Samaria. And the king of Babylon shall break down the walls of Jerusalem, and burn it with fire, and carry my people away into captivity.

“‘Nevertheless, if they turn from injustice, and seek my name,’ saith Jehovah; ‘and remember not Baal any more; then will I preserve this city and this kingdom for my name’s sake; and my people shall dwell safely, in justice and righteousness.’”

And the multitude increased until Jeremiah was done speaking; and afterwards the people carried him thence in safety; so that he gat away to a secret place in the country. And thus it was that the king, and all his counselors, and the gibborim, could neither prevent Jeremiah from coming into the city, nor yet could they hinder him from leaving the city. For he came suddenly and went in secret by the hands of helpers. And the common people believed him and heard him with gladness. But the rulers, and the judges, and the priests, and the prophets that prophesied by Baal feared the people.

Now when the tumult had passed away from the street, all they in the room were in confusion; for one

spake one thing, and one another. Thus did Benjamin marvel how the appearance of Jeremiah had changed. And Simeon cried out that he believed in Jeremiah as one who had the word of Jehovah in truth. But Eliezer the steward said, "This mad fellow hath stirred up the common people in vain; and I take him not at all to be a prophet of Jehovah. And I would that the gibborim had been able to seize him away from the people. For then would the king and the judges have put him to death. But what availeth all this talk? It resolveth nothing about our business and leaveth us where we stood at the first."

Then Eliezer looked at Nathan the son of Ahikam, and said unto him, "The matter of this Maonite remaineth as hitherto. And I say that we take his land which was pledged, if he cannot give satisfaction."

But Nathan, the son of Ahikam, spake to the contrary, saying, "I do bring this matter to my father when he is recovered of his sickness. For I have a design whereby we take not the field of Simeon, and remove not his landmark."

Then was the anger of Eliezer kindled; and he said, "Thy design is that of a child. And if thou bringest this matter to thy father, he will blame me. For such things have not been taken unto him, lo, these many years."

Nevertheless did Nathan overbear him, and say, "I am well-beloved of my father; and he will hear me, and incline favorably unto me. For I desire that Simeon the Maonite shall depart in peace from Jerusalem."

Now, as Nathan spake thus, he looked upon Miriam, and she upon him; and the maiden turned herself

unto Simeon, and said, "My father, I do put my trust in the son of Ahikam, that we go in peace."

And Simeon answered her and said, "Even so. Let it be according to the young man's word; for his heart hath been touched by Jehovah, to show kindness unto the poor and needy."

And while they were yet speaking, behold, certain youths of Nathan's acquaintance came into the place, being attired in fine garments, and having merry countenances; and they drew near unto Nathan, and laid hold on him; and one of them said, "See. Thou goest with us this evening to the palace of Gideon, the son of Shallum; for to-night he giveth a great feast unto Tamar, his daughter, who desireth all the choice young men and maidens of Jerusalem; and she hath charged us expressly that we find thee, and bring thee unto the feast."

And when Nathan would put them off, saying he liked not feasting and fine garments, he looked, and behold, Simeon and they that were with him drew toward the door. And Nathan called unto them, saying, "Go ye in peace; and ye shall hear again from me in this matter." And the eyes of Nathan and Miriam were fast fixed on each other; so that all they that were in the room took note of it.

Therefore was Laban, the son of Samuel, inflamed with jealousy; so much so that as they went along the street he walked near unto the maiden, and said, "Thou beholdest the manner of those fellows, the friends of the son of Ahikam. For both he and they are sons of rich men who profit by the need of such as thy father, spending much money in feasting and riotous living. And this Nathan is doubtless in favor with all the

daughters of the rich, who live delicately in fine palaces; and he would care not for a country maiden.”

But Miriam answered him never a word; for she pondered all things in her heart as they went forth out of the city to return unto their own village.

III

Now the youths that came unto Nathan were three, their names being Abner and Zadok and Benomi, sons of rich families in Jerusalem; and their fathers were men of substance, though not so great in wealth and power as Ahikam the father of Nathan. And these young men contended with Nathan, that he go with them, having been privily entreated by Leah, the mother of Nathan, and by Achsah, the mother of Tamar; for there was a conspiracy at the hands of these two women, that Nathan and Tamar should have each other in marriage. Wherefore it was that the young men sought out Nathan, to keep him in charge, until they should bring him unto the feast in the palace of Gideon the father of Tamar. And they said unto him, "Behold, it is but midday. So shalt thou first go with us to thine own home, even to thy father's house, to rest a while; and afterwards shalt thou make ready, and put on thy finest garment, and go thence with us unto the feast." Then did Nathan consent with his lips, but not with a whole heart; for he perceived that his companions were in a device to entangle him; because he knew already that his mother, and the mother of Tamar, and also the maiden herself, were desirous to accomplish the marriage; and therefore he said in his heart that he would bring their purpose to naught.

And when Nathan and the young men were turning to go thence, but before they were yet gone from the

house, behold, the street without was full of camels, heavy-laden with much merchandise; and the drivers did unlade the camels, and bring the merchandise, in bundles and sacks, unto the upper story of the house, where the servants and stewards of Ahikam received it by tale, and made an accounting of it.

And at the sight thereof, the young men, the companions of Nathan, asked him, saying, "What goods are these? And whence come they?"

And Nathan answered, "It is merchandise of Babylon, which cometh from Gedaliah my brother, who liveth in Babylon, and hath charge over all the Babylonish business of my father."

And Abner said unto Nathan, "Yea, I have heard speak of thy brother and of his work in Babylon; but never have I seen merchandise come thus from him."

Now the servants brake open the bundles and the sacks in the sight of Nathan and the young men. And, behold, there was all manner of stuff, even tapestries, and curtains, and carpets, and silks, and fine linens, and strange kinds of wood from India and other countries of Asia, and spices, and jewels, and bars of silver and gold, and great quantity of other metals, and the skins of beasts; wherefore the young men marveled, even as did the queen of Sheba when she came to see king Solomon and all his glory.

Then Abner asked Nathan, saying, "Do not the servants of thy father fear to leave this gold, and silver, and these jewels, and this costly merchandise, lest thieves come and steal it in the night?"

And Nathan answered, "As for the gold and the silver, it will be taken without delay to strong rooms in the temple of Jehovah, where are chests of iron;

and these rooms are guarded, day and night, by armed men; so that thieves and tumults of the people cannot come nigh thereto. For in this manner do the Babylonians and Egyptians and other nations, using their temples to keep gold and silver and precious things. And as for the other goods, they will be mostly taken by merchants of the city who come hither quickly to buy before the day is gone. And even if all the merchandise be not sold, our building here is strong, and is closed by night, and guarded by men of strength, with weapons, who have command to kill any that seek to break in and steal."

And Abner asked him again, saying, "How doth it come that thou, who art younger than thy brother Gedaliah, dost inherit all thy father's riches in Jerusalem and Judah?"

And Nathan answered him, "It is even so by the desire of my brother, because he hath in Babylon much houses and lands and riches. For my father did establish Gedaliah in Babylon, to be over the traffic which our house hath in that kingdom. And Gedaliah became known unto the king of Babylon, who loveth him greatly, and favoreth him; so that the wealth of our house hath grown in Babylon above what it is in Jerusalem. Therefore Gedaliah hath agreed with my father that the possessions of our house in Judah shall be my inheritance when the time cometh."

Then, as he spake, one came to him, and said, "Here are letters from thy brother Gedaliah for thy father, and for thine uncle Gemariah, and for thee also." And Nathan took the letters, and departed with the young men, to go unto his father's house.

Now the streets were filled with much people and

beasts of burden, going hither and thither; so that Nathan and his companions were pressed on every side; and they went on but slowly. And most of the multitude that passed by were simple folk of the common sort, clothed in rough garments, even laborers of the city, whose work was in all kinds of crafts; and also many that came from villages of the country, both near and far, who bought and sold in the market places. But here and there were some in fine raiment, like unto Nathan and the young men with him. Also, now and then came rich men, carried upon litters by servants; and women borne likewise, who covered their faces with veils; and strangers from foreign lands.

And behold, as they passed along the street, many were the salutations between Nathan and the common sort of people; so much that his companions asked him, saying, "How knowest thou such numbers of base and vain folk?"

And Nathan answered, and said, "Call them not base and vain, for without them should not a country be inhabited. And if they find not justice and kindness, then will they fall into poverty and lose heart; and thus a nation is ready to be despoiled by enemies from abroad."

But Abner spake, saying, "The common people must be held down, or they rise up against us; and they are of no account in comparison with such as we; for so sayeth my father, who hath many laborers in his place of metal work, and in his fields in the country."

Whereto Nathan answered him, and said, "There be wealthy men who grind the faces of the poor; and there also be those who say the poor are their brethren, who should have kindness and justice, that the nation

be built up, and all men should have happiness and peace." And his companions wondered at him.

And when they were come unto the palace of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Nathan called a servant to minister unto the young men, and take them upon the housetop, where they should wait for him under the curtains of a pavilion, and have wine to drink, while he went unto his mother's room, to greet her, and tell her of the letters from Gedaliah in Babylon. Now Ahikam his father lay sick, and could have no business brought unto him. And Nathan said unto his mother, "I have a letter which I would send unto mine uncle Gemariah without delay."

And his mother desired to ask him whether he consented to go unto the feast of Tamar that night; but she feared, lest he see her hand in the matter; and she answered, "Thine uncle came of late from his chamber in the temple, with some writing which he layeth up in the strong room here."

And Nathan said unto his mother, "I will examine the letters unto my father and unto me, and tell thee what is therein. But in the meanwhile, thou canst call a servant to take mine uncle's letter to him, desiring him to wait for me before he goeth out again."

And his mother called a servant, and sent the letter unto Gemariah, in the strong room of the palace; and she said unto herself, "O, that I might read; for even though I be married into a family wherein are many scribes; yet I read not, because women are not instructed in such things."

Then did Nathan examine the letters quickly; and he said to his mother, "Gedaliah desireth me to write more particularly of my father's health; but the letter

is chiefly about business, and I shall send it unto Eliezer the steward."

Then went Nathan, to go unto the strong room of the palace, to his uncle Gemariah the son of Shaphan, that he might inquire what word Gedaliah had sent.

And his uncle answered him, and said, "When thou didst visit Babylon last year, thou didst see how the king of Babylon loveth Gedaliah, thy brother, and favoreth him; so that the riches of our house be increased; and how the king hath opened unto him the tablets that be in the temples of the gods and in the king's palace."

And Nathan answered, saying, "Yea, I know that the king hath given leave unto Gedaliah to hire scribes who have already sent us many rolls of parchment in the Hebrew language, whereon are copies of the Babylonian records; and I have examined some of these rolls that be in thy chamber in the temple. So now, what new thing hath Gedaliah done?"

And his uncle answered, "Behold, now, the king hath given leave, and Gedaliah prepareth to send us copies of the records of Marduk, the god of Babylon, from the time when Marduk was but the god of a small city, until to-day, when Marduk is worshiped in the great temple of Babylon as god of gods and maker of heaven and earth."

And Nathan answered him, "This news, of a truth, is more wonderful than before."

And his uncle said, "Yea, it giveth me much joy; since it addeth to the store of knowledge at the hands of our wise men and scribes in writing the great book of Jehovah and Israel, whereon my father Shaphan, with others of our company, did begin to labor long

ago in secret. For already have our scribes gone with merchants unto Egypt, and have learned at the mouth of the priests; and thus we have writings which tell how Amon-Ra was once but the god of a small province; and how his followers made expeditions, and fought, and added unto their possessions until they had all the land of Egypt; and how the Egyptians do now serve Amon-Ra as a great god, even like as the Babylonians worship Marduk their god."

Now as Gemariah spake thus, Nathan said, "Thou shalt more fully set forth all these things unto me at another time. For this day there came unto us, to our place near the temple, certain folk from the South, from a village called Maon, who spake much about a little book which was found long ago in the temple, and which was brought unto king Josiah by my grandfather Shaphan the scribe; and therefore would I learn more about that little book, and also about the great book, whereon ye labor."

Then his uncle's eyes were lightened; and he said, "Yea, I will send thee to Adonijah the wise man, who giveth counsel unto the scribes; and he will show thee all things."

And Nathan said unto his uncle, "Would that I might go unto the wise man at this very hour. But now must I show myself friendly unto three youths that seek to hold me captive; so that when evening cometh I may be taken by them unto the house of Gideon, the son of Shallum, who giveth a great feast unto Tamar his daughter."

And when his uncle heard that, he said, "Go in peace; but beware of Gideon, the son of Shallum, and all his works."

Then did Nathan go up to the housetop, to be in the pavilion with the young men. And when the servants brought food, one of the young men said, "Let us take but little; for when we come this night to the feast of Tamar, we must eat much, and drink much, and be merry withal."

But Nathan answered him, and said, "Ye may do as best pleaseth you; and far be it from me that I should say what ye should eat and drink in this house. But as for me, my pleasure is to dine chiefly at midday, and to have but little when evening cometh, whether I be in mine own home or in another place. So therefore I take not much upon occasions when I go to feasts, which times are few."

Then Abner laughed, and spake unto him, and said, "O son of Ahikam, I say likewise as thou sayest unto all of us. Do as best agreeth unto thy pleasure. But thy thoughts and thine actions are not like our thoughts and actions; and therefore would we deal gently with thee for thine own good."

And Nathan answered him, "Yea, I know ye spake with me in the streets as we came hither, saying that the rich ought to deal hardly with the poor; and we agree not in that, nor in the matter of eating and drinking."

And Abner said unto him, "These be questions of opinion, whereon our thoughts are different; but nevertheless we may be friends."

And Nathan answered him, saying, "It is a matter of opinion, and also a thing of the heart; for as a man is in his heart, so is he in his thoughts."

But Abner had no regard unto the meaning of Nathan's words, and he said, "What thinkest thou of

that mad fellow Jeremiah? Believest thou all that he saith? And dost thou take him to be a prophet of Jehovah? Or doth he speak only from his own heart?"

And Nathan answered him, saying, "My heart inclineth unto Jeremiah; but I have not yet heard all that he teacheth, and I have not pondered this matter as much as I would. But doubtless ye are wholly sure that Jeremiah is not a prophet of Jehovah."

Then answered Abner, and said, "Jeremiah always declareth evil, saying that the Babylonians will destroy Jerusalem and bring the kingdom of Judah to naught. And should we therefore take a man to be a prophet of Jehovah, who speaketh in the name of Jehovah against our country? Nay. I will never take him for a prophet. But I take to be prophets those men who cry out in the name of Jehovah, saying that the Babylonians never shall destroy Judah and Jerusalem."

Now Nathan was a youth of good thoughts and righteous heart, who had more knowledge about many things than was possessed by his companions. Yet he lacked instruction; and never had he gathered his knowledge and his thoughts together; so that he found not ready answers when his companions pressed him. But when Abner spake thus about the prophets of good and evil, Nathan bethought himself of the ten lost tribes of Israel, and he asked quickly, "If, as thou sayest, we should take for prophets only those that prophesy good, what sayest thou of the men who spake against each other, in the name of Jehovah, unto the ten lost tribes of Israel? For some of those men declared in the name of Jehovah that the kingdom of the ten tribes would be swept away, and others to the contrary. And now, therefore, if what thou sayest be

true, that a man is a prophet who declareth in the name of Jehovah that a nation shall stand, what sayest thou of the men who prophesied that the kingdom of the ten tribes would stand against its enemies, when, of a truth, as thou knowest, the Assyrians came, and destroyed that kingdom?"

And Abner answered, saying, "I know not much about the prophets who prophesied unto the lost tribes of Israel. But my father hath told me that if the lost tribes had not rebelled against the house of David, and had remained in the kingdom of David, they would have been saved from their enemies by the hand of Jehovah, even as David was preserved. But they went away from the royal house of Jerusalem, and worshiped no more in the temple of Jehovah; and therefore did Jehovah cast them off. And so, therefore, what sayest thou to that?"

Then did Nathan ask him again, "Thinkest thou not that if enemies took away the kingdom of the ten tribes, they could the more easily take Judah, which is but a little kingdom of one tribe only?"

But Abner answered him again, saying, "I have already set forth unto thee that if the ten tribes had stayed with the house of David, they would have been preserved by the hand of Jehovah, even as David was always upheld and saved. And thus will the kingdom of Judah be established and remain forever, though it be but one tribe only; because we have the temple of Jehovah with us; and Jehovah is a strong one, who can save a people whether they be great or small. So therefore will Jehovah subdue our enemies. And thou must have faith in Jehovah, and believe in him; for thou and thy father's house are princes in Israel."

Now when the young men had contended in talk for a long while, and when Abner and Nathan could neither of them put the other to silence, Abner spake, saying, "Behold the time of evening draweth nigh; and thou must clothe thyself like unto us in garments for the feast; and then shall we go unto the house of Tamar, unto the palace of Gideon the son of Shallum. For we came not hither to talk of the gods, but to bring thee unto Tamar, who is a wise maiden, and who will show thee what thou shouldst do."

And though Nathan would talk the more, they pressed him; and he went down to attire himself. And the young men waited for him on the housetop.

IV

Now the young men remained upon the housetop because a passageway led thence unto the city wall, whereon one could go unto many places without descending into the streets. For the wall of Jerusalem was wide, with towers and battlements all about it; and there was a broad way along the whole of it, with a parapet on either side, so that one could walk safely and encompass the whole city, returning again unto the same place. And thus were many of the great houses of Jerusalem nigh unto the city wall, even the palaces of the rich; whereby the nobles and rulers and their families consorted together as they would, and refrained from the multitudes of the poor.

So Nathan and the young men went not through the streets to go unto the feast; but they went by way of the wall. And the palace of Gideon, the son of Shallum, was far from the palace of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, even in the northeast quarter of the city; and one could stand upon the wall near thereto, and see the mount of Olives, which lay over against the city across the valley of the Kidron. And the roof of Gideon's palace was very spacious; and it was furnished like unto a garden, with trees around the parapet, and much flowers, well pleasing to the eyes. And there were tables a great number. And over all the roof were stretched curtains of fine linen, which by day were a shield from the heat of the sun.

And much people was gathered upon the roof; and yet others were coming also by way of the wall. And the men were attired in fine colored garments and wondrous turbans; and the women were clothed in festival robes, with sashes, and bracelets, and rings, and nose-jewels, and anklets which made a tinkling of the feet.

Now when Nathan drew near, and came unto the housetop, behold, Gideon, the son of Shallum, stood in the midst of the people, with Achsah his wife, the mother of Tamar, on the one side, and Leah, the mother of Nathan, on the other side. And with them was Tamar, whose garments were most gorgeous to behold. And when Nathan greeted these and many others, the servants began to bring in the feast, wherein were savory bake-meats, and fish, and figs, and raisins, and cheeses, and cakes, and honey, and confections, and all kinds of wine in bowls. And Nathan said in his heart, "Behold, these people have more than they need, and they eat overmuch, for so do they ever. But there be many poor folk in the streets of Jerusalem and in the villages of Judah, who lack bread and suffer hunger."

And as the feast went on, the servants drew aside the linen curtains that overspread the housetop; and behold, the sun was gone down, and the sky all round about was full of color, and the stars came forth gloriously, and the moon shone upon the city. And there were many candles and lamps to light the feast; and the people were eating and drinking and making merry.

And afterwards the tables of the feast were taken away; and thereupon came the musicians, with harps,

and viols, and flutes, and cymbals, and trumpets, and cornets, and castanets; and with them were men singers and women singers. And the people danced a long time. Then Tamar said unto Nathan, "I am wearied; and therefore shalt thou take me to the wall, where we may rest a while." So Nathan did as she requested; and they walked upon the wall nigh unto the palace of Gideon.

Now the daughter of Gideon was in a manner the most beautiful maiden in Jerusalem. But her heart was hardened and her spirit was full of deceits and wiles. For, by reason of her father's riches and her fair countenance, she could make conquest of well-nigh any man that she desired; and so she bewitched the youths of the city, and turned the heads of many among the elders also. Yet, for all this, had she never been able to bring Nathan, the son of Ahikam, into subjection. And thus was her desire strong toward him, not only because hitherto he kept his heart unto himself, but because of the riches of Ahikam, in Judah, which would one day be the heritage of Nathan.

And they stood by the parapet of the wall, and looked abroad upon the hills of Judah, which lay in the light of the moon. And Tamar said unto him, "Much trouble have we, O son of Ahikam, in prevailing upon thee to come unto us, to a feast whereunto many would come and cannot. For it seems that we must entreat young men of thine acquaintance to entice thee, and take thee captive, and watch over thee, and bring thee hither. But now must thou mend thy ways, and turn from thy folly, and behave thyself wisely, as becometh people of our sort; for thou comest of a princely house in Judah; and thou art like the

son of king David, even Absalom, whose fame hath gone forth among women to this day, and who was more beautiful than all the men of Israel, and who had no blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And if thou change not thy ways, I know not what I shall do with thee." And thus did she seek to win him with her flatteries. And she laid hold upon the sleeve of his garment, and came near unto him; so that, if he were minded, he could have embraced her and kissed her. And he drew not away quickly, lest he give her offense.

So they stood thus; and Nathan answered her, and said, "Thou hast known me, Tamar, since the days of our youth; and thou knowest, of a surety, that I have not refrained from coming to thy father's house more than from other great houses. So therefore, thou seest that I like thee as well as the other maidens in Jerusalem."

Then she said quickly, "Yea, therein is the trouble. For thou goest not much anywhere at all with people of our kind; and thou art slow to be in feasting and merriment."

And he said, "Neither doth my father care much about these things; and I am like unto him."

Then she asked him, laughing, "And art thou an old man like thy father? Or, perchance, may it be that thou art not old, but art a young man?"

And Nathan said, "My father, indeed, is now old; but he liked not these things when he was young. For in times long ago, when he was a young man, he was given charge over all the possessions inherited by his father Shaphan the scribe, who did bring a little book unto king Josiah, whereby the king changed the laws,

to the end that the poor and needy might have justice."

And Tamar answered him, saying, "Never knew I anything about Shaphan, save that he was thy father's father. And never heard I of any little book about the poor and needy. Moreover, all books, whether small or great, are a vain and foolish labor, both to write and to read. And as for the poor and needy, if they be thus, it is their own fault. And I think thou knowest altogether too much about such people, and not enough about people of our own sort, who live in fine houses and are favored of Jehovah."

And Nathan answered her, saying, "What should I know about people of our own sort that I know not already? Should I know the number of feasts that be given each year in Jerusalem? And who it is that giveth each feast? And should I be expert in the fashion of garments?"

But she cried out upon him, "Nay, foolish one. That is not my meaning."

And even as Tamar sought to tell him what was in her heart, there came unto their ears the sound of men and asses across the valley of the Kidron; and the forms of the men and the beasts were seen by the light of the moon as they passed along in the way that goeth over the mount of Olives. And the asses made a great noise of breathing; and the drivers cried out unto them.

Then said the daughter of Gideon, "I suppose thou canst tell me what manner of people they be yonder, who labor thus after the sun is gone down."

And he answered, "Yea, they be makers of charcoal, who fashion coals from wood, and who bring it unto

the city by night; so that the artificers will have it ready for their work on the morrow. And much of the coals thereof will be used in the labor of workmen and merchants who hire places of business which belong unto thy father and my father in the streets of the city."

Then said Tamar with laughter, "Even so is the meaning of my words, that thou knowest too much about the common sort of people, whose thoughts are vain, such as these makers of charcoal, whose spirit is like unto that of the beasts they drive."

And Nathan answered her yet again, saying, "I seek to learn about my father's affairs; and if I know not the ways of the people, I know not how best to judge matters that arise. And therefore do I study the doings of the stewards in our place of business; and I go about the streets of the city, where the multitudes labor; and I meet people of all sorts, and talk with them; and I ride abroad in the country on a swift steed, and examine my father's fields and vineyards, and inquire how the stewards and servants perform their work. And so do I learn many things that be good to know, even as doth my brother Gedaliah, who liveth in Babylon, and who is in charge over all our trade with that kingdom. Now therefore, are not these things a worthy occupation?"

And Tamar answered him, "They be a worthy occupation for stewards and overseers. But one who hath beauty like thee, and whose father is wealthy, should be among the honorable men of high estate, who work not and have much money."

Now the daughter of Gideon said these things in

her wiliness, thinking to flatter the son of Ahikam, and tempt him. But he took notice that though she made pretense to much knowledge of the world, and much wisdom, she was but a damsel of light mind, whose thoughts were ever upon her own pleasure. Nevertheless, he showed her not that he understood her heart. And therefore, when they returned from the wall, he said with merriment, "I perceive that I am a youth who needeth instruction; and since thou art ready to give instruction unto me, I should come the oftener to thy feasts, that I may take in wisdom with food and drink."

Yet could she scarce divine the words that he spake; and thus was he a riddle unto her.

Now as they returned upon the roof, a servant of Gideon's house was given charge of Nathan's mother, to take her home by way of the wall. Then did Nathan make haste, and give peace unto the family of Gideon; and he ran, and overtook his mother, and sent the servant away. And as they walked upon the wall, to go unto their home, his mother asked of him, saying, "How went the matter, my son? Didst thou and Tamar talk friendly? The hearts of all the family of Gideon are toward thee; and I know the maiden loveth thee, for her mother hath told me so. And therefore, if thou but askest her father, he will give her to thee."

And Nathan answered his mother in the manner wherewith he spake unto Tamar. For it was but a light thing unto him, inasmuch as he loved not the daughter of Gideon, and cared not for the riches of her father. So he answered, "Yea, we talked friendly. And I told her that I was doubtless a youth needing instruction,

who should come oftener to her feasts, that I might swallow her wisdom with my food and drink."

But Nathan was a riddle unto his mother, even as unto the daughter of Gideon; so that she scarce knew what to say unto him. And thus her heart was perplexed as they returned unto their home.

Now Ahikam's palace was inherited from his father Shaphan the great scribe, who likewise did inherit the same from his father Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, whose wealth was gathered in the evil days of king Manasseh, when the poor and needy were much afflicted and oppressed. And it was a wide house, with spacious chambers, having many windows in the upper stories, but not in the lower story, for fear of robbers and tumults of the people; and it was ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion, very wondrous to behold; and it was in the southwest quarter of the city, near the gate which goeth out unto Bethlehem and Hebron and the south country.

And Nathan had a couch upon the roof, under the curtains of a pavilion, whereon he slept, which a servant prepared for him day by day. And now, when he had gone to his rest on the housetop, even before he slept, he went softly by the passageway unto the wall of the city; and he stood in the light of the moon, and looked upon the road that goeth unto the South; and he said, "By this way did she come; and by this way did she return, with Simeon her father, and all them of their company." And he gat him back to the housetop, and laid him down on his couch to sleep. And it seemed unto him that he rode on a swift steed unto Maon, even unto the village where Miriam dwelt; and the damsel came out to meet him, and they two

were alone; and he took her face between his hands and kissed her, and requested of Simeon her father that he might have the maiden to wife; but ere Simeon could make answer, behold, it was a dream.

V

And in the morning Nathan rose up suddenly in fear of heart, lest some evil thing were come to pass. And he said unto his mother, "O that my father would recover him of the sickness, and lie not thus on his bed, so that none can talk with him; and then would I bring certain matters before him of a surety."

And Nathan went quickly unto the place of his father's business. And when he ascended the stairs, to go up unto the room where he and Eliezer the steward were wont to sit, behold, two men rushed down; and one said to the other, "See now: Eliezer hath straitly charged us to make haste and delay not." So they passed him by, and had no regard unto him; and in their haste they would have thrust him down if he held not hard by the side.

And when he came into the room, Eliezer sat by the table, and examined parchments closely, as if he cared not to lift his eyes. And Nathan said unto him, "Verily, I thought to have been thrust down the stairs by servants doing thy commands. Now therefore, tell me what business of my father's requireth such great haste this day."

And Eliezer answered him, saying, "All thy father's business requireth haste; and there is no prosperity in any matter if that matter be delayed."

Then did Nathan perceive that Eliezer sought to

turn him aside; and therefore he pressed him, saying, "I know as well as thou that my father's affairs must have diligence; and thou hast not answered me at all; for I would know what the matter is."

And when Eliezer would put him off yet again, the anger of the son of Ahikam was kindled; and he said, "I know what thou doest; for doubtless thou hast gotten a writ from the court of lands; and thou art sending the writ unto Simeon the Maonite by the hand of a messenger of the court to strike fear into his heart and to take the field that was given in pledge, and remove the landmark."

And when Eliezer denied not, behold, Nathan did lean by his hand upon the table; and his whole head was sick, and his whole heart was faint. And when he had somewhat recovered himself, he said not a word to the steward; but he turned, and hasted, and went away to the court of lands. And the recorders told him that Eliezer had obtained a judgment for the land of Simeon in the name of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and that the deed thereof was already subscribed and was placed in the room of records in the temple of Jehovah.

Then did Nathan know of a certainty that the men whose errand was to execute the writ were even now fast on their way into the south country. And he put his hand unto his forehead; and he did hear again the exceeding bitter cry of the daughter of Simeon when Eliezer the steward called unto the strong men, and would have put forth Simeon and his companions by violence.

Then went Nathan quickly to a certain man of his acquaintance in the city, who kept horses; for he would

not go unto the stables of his father's house, lest the servants tell of it. And he hired the best horse, and he said unto the keeper to tell no man. And he drew the cloth of his turban about the lower part of his face, that anyone seeing him should not know him; and he rode forth out of the city, to go unto the south country. And he urged the horse fast onward, hoping to overtake the men; but they had already gone a great while before him.

And Nathan rode furiously by the highway that goeth unto Bethlehem; so that all who saw him said, "Behold, one that rideth like unto Jehu." And when a company of people on asses came from Bethlehem, to go unto Jerusalem, he stopped them, and inquired of them, saying, "Have ye seen riders on horses going this way before me?"

And they answered, saying, "Yea, we saw four men; and they went swiftly."

And he said, "Think ye that I could overtake them?"

And the people answered, and said, "They be now far hence, of a surety, if they continue on as they were. Nevertheless, if thou hast good fortune, it may chance that thou canst overtake them."

So he rode on; and when he passed by Bethlehem, he spied a cloud of dust on the highway toward Hebron. But when he drew near, behold, it was men on camels. And he asked them likewise; and they answered in the same manner as did the others. And he went on to Hebron, and inquired at the inn; and the keeper told him that four men, riding on horses, had passed that way long ago, asking the road to Maon. Then did Nathan's heart fail him; for he said to himself that

the men would execute the writ ere he came to the village; and therefore would the daughter of Simeon hold him to be as one faithless, whose word was of none effect.

And Nathan inquired carefully how he could come unto Maon. For though he well knew the way that went from Jerusalem unto Beersheba and the far south of Judah, whither he had gone aforetime, yet was Maon strange unto him, for never had he journeyed east of the chief highway. And when they had told him, he departed again in haste. And his way took him over against many villages in the region of Ziph. And he lifted up his eyes, and behold, the sun shone fair upon the hill of Maon, where was the home of Miriam, the daughter of Simeon.

Now when Nathan drew near unto Maon, the sun being not yet gone down, the men were at their labors in the fields below the village. And as he rode up the hill, the women were standing in the street and talking in loud voices. And when he inquired for the house of Simeon, they said there was none in the house, and that all the family of Simeon was in a certain field where were men from Jerusalem who took away a landmark of Simeon's. And when the women showed Nathan where the field lay, he turned his horse about, and drave down thither.

And he came quickly unto the place; and all the family of Simeon was gathered together, with men of the village, whose fields were hard by the field of Simeon. And behold, a messenger from the court of lands in Jerusalem, and with him three gibborim, great and strong men, having weapons in their hands; and the messenger stood with these three men by the enter-

ing in of the field, over against Simeon and the people. And Nathan looked, and saw that the landmark of Simeon had been plucked up, and was thrown by the side of the way without the field.

And the messenger from the court of lands in Jerusalem did read many words from a parchment and make proclamation in the name of king Zedekiah unto all men in the kingdom of Judah, saying that Ahikam the son of Shaphan had obtained judgment in the king's court against Simeon the son of Abiathar, as touching a certain field given in pledge; the landmark being now therefore taken away, and the field being subscribed in a deed placed in the room of records in the temple of Jehovah; and that if any man entered into the field, or gathered from it, or planted seed in it, or did any manner of thing unto it, save by the word of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, he should answer unto the king in the courts royal; and if any man durst lift up a hand against the messenger who executed and proclaimed this action, judgment would proceed against him from the king.

And all the people were sore afraid. Then did Nathan get him down from his horse; and his face was covered with dust and moisture from his journey, so that none knew him. And he went over to the place where the landmark of Simeon was thrown by the side of the way; and he took it up, and came, and put it back in its place at the entering in of the field, where it was of old time. So the messenger, and the gibborim, and the people were taken unawares; and they looked steadfastly upon him. But when he rose up from putting the landmark in its place, and made as if to speak, one of the gibborim drew near unto him,

and smote him, so that he fell down wounded in the head.

Then did Miriam cry out, and say, "It is the son of Ahikam; and I knew that he would bring help unto us." And she went over to him as he lay, and spake gently unto him; but there was neither voice nor hearing; and he stirred not. And when the messenger and the gibborim heard mention of the son of Ahikam, they feared greatly; for they said to one another, "His father is a prince in Israel; and he, when he heareth of this, will have revenge upon us."

And then were the people in confusion; and some took up stones, to stone the men from Jerusalem. But Simeon stood forth, and lifted up his hand, and said with a loud voice, "Contend not with them; for it bringeth only evil upon us and upon our village. Let them depart in peace; and we shall see what Jehovah will do for us." So the people were quiet; and the messenger and his gibborim went their way again, to return unto Jerusalem.

Then the people took Nathan, and carried him up to the village, unto the house of Simeon; and they led his horse after him. And when they came to the house, Nathan opened his eyes, and asked for water; but he knew not anything. And his wound in the head they washed with wine and oil, and placed on it a linen cloth. Then a deep sleep fell upon him all the night; and Joel the shepherd, the son of Simeon, watched with him.

And in the morning he awoke refreshed and in his right mind, but weak and faint. And he looked up, and behold, Miriam sat by the couch where he lay; and they two were alone together. And she spake

unto him, saying, "Peace be unto thee, O son of Ahikam. May Jehovah heal thee quickly of thy wound."

And Nathan answered, and said, "Someone smote me; and I knew not anything. But now my strength returneth unto me." And he essayed to rise; but Miriam restrained him; so that he lay still. Then did she bring him wine and a morsel of bread; and he ate and drank. And she sat by the couch; and they looked upon each other. Then said Miriam to Nathan, "I knew that thou wouldst bring help to us; yet I knew not how, for I am not instructed in such matters. Nevertheless, I have knowledge of thine heart, that it hath been toward my father from the time that we came unto thee."

And he answered quickly, "Thou sayest well that my heart is toward thy father; for I pity the poor and needy. But if thou knowest mine heart thus much, thine heart of a surety knoweth more." And he would have continued speaking; but he was overcome by her beauty; and words failed him. And so also did Miriam desire to say more, yet found not wherewith to speak; for she thought in her heart, "He is the son of a prince in the city of the king; and I am but a country maiden, the daughter of a husbandman; and therefore what seemly thing can I say unto him in all this?"

Now as they looked upon each other, knowing not what to say, behold, Simeon came unto them, and greeted the young man, and asked how he did. And when he saw that Nathan was recovering of the wound, he praised Jehovah, and said, "Verily, mine heart failed me yesterday. For when we had as yet scarce come back again from Jerusalem, the men did ride hard

after us, to take our land. And when the landmark was plucked up, and proclamation was made unto us by the officer, then camest thou suddenly, and restored the landmark to its place. Thus do we know that thine heart is toward us, as thou saidst in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, thy father hath obtained judgment against me in a court of the king, at the hand of the king's judges. And therefore, this thine act, in restoring the landmark unto its place, doth not avail to bring the field back again to me while yet the judgment standeth, and while yet the land is no more in my name, but is in the name of thy father upon the records of the temple of Jehovah."

And Nathan raised himself up, and sat upon the couch, and said unto Simeon, "My father hath not done this thing, but Eliezer, the chief steward of our house, who is in charge over all that we have in the land of Judah. And he hath been a long time deputed of my father to proceed in the name of my father as touching agreements about money and possessions, and as touching matters in the courts. For the business and riches of my father did so increase, and he himself hath become so full of years, that he no longer followeth his affairs, except in greater things.

"And therefore we have this Eliezer as chief steward, with other stewards under him; and I, by command of my father and mine own desire, am learning with him and with my brother Gedaliah, who hath charge over our business in Babylon. And verily, I thought Eliezer would have regard unto me when I purposed to bring this matter before my father. But Eliezer was angry, and waited not that I should make intercession for thee. And not only doth Eliezer act thus quickly; but

my father lieth sick, so that I could not speak for thee when I would.

"And therefore, when I found that Eliezer had obtained judgment against thee in the name of my father, I could do naught but make haste hither. For I know, as thou dost, that it availeth nothing to restore thy landmark to its place if thy name be not also restored in the lawful records of the temple. So now must I rise up, and go back unto Jerusalem, and find what I can do in this matter of thy field."

But Simeon said unto him, "Thou canst not go until thy strength is returned, lest thou fall by the way and perish."

And Nathan answered him, "It is but a bruise of the flesh, and a light matter; and my strength returneth unto me continually."

Then Simeon urged him, and prevailed upon him; and he abode there, eating and drinking. And it was so, when midday was past, that he walked abroad in the village, and went down into the fields and vineyards, and talked with the people at their labor. And Joel, the son of Simeon, went with him, to stay him up if he should be faint, and to show him how the people did. And Joel pointed out many fields unto him, here and there, which fields once were possessed by families in the village, but which were seized for debt by creditors from Jerusalem, who did send bondservants to labor therein. And Joel showed him how the bondservants lived not in the village, but slept in booths and in tents, and worked under overseers.

Now the daughter of Simeon avoided to be where Nathan was, lest he think her a maiden forward in her ways. And when the sun went down, and the

people returned from their work, the family of Simeon was gathered in the house with Nathan to eat. And Miriam waited on them; and when she brought a dish of lentils unto Nathan, he touched her hand, none seeing it. And fearing lest he offend her, he watched as she went again to the hearth, and leaned over the caldron; and, lo, she smiled; and he was glad.

After that, Simeon brought him out again into the street of the village, to mingle with the people, and talk with them in the eventide. And all the people were greatly stirred; and they gathered about him, near to the house of Simeon, and questioned him concerning many things. And when they heard that Nathan had traveled with companies of merchants unto foreign countries, and that his father, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, had servants in Babylon, they inquired more especially about great cities, asking him of Tyre and Sidon and Egypt and Babylon. Then spake Joshua, the son of Jesse, the near neighbor of Simeon, who went with Simeon unto Jerusalem; and he asked Nathan, saying, "Tell us now if the inhabitants of all great cities in the world be churlish and evil in their doings, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

And Nathan answered, saying, "Thy question is not easy to be considered. But I begin to believe that the people of the villages of Judah verily have more abundant goodness and kindness of heart, which we call 'hesed,' and on the contrary that the inhabitants of the cities show not forth such abundance of hesed. And moreover I think this is so in all countries whither I have gone."

And Joshua spake again, saying, "When I went with Simeon to Jerusalem, and we were in the upper room

with thee and with that hard man, the steward of thy father, we heard a tumult; and we looked down from the window, and saw Jeremiah the prophet; and he said, in the name of Jehovah, 'Go everywhere in Jerusalem, and see if there be one that doeth justly; but she is wholly oppression.' Dost thou remember that?"

And Nathan said, "Yea, I remember his words." And Nathan called to mind Tamar, and the young men who brought him to the feast, and Eliezer and many others of his acquaintance; and he said, "The words of Jeremiah be too true. But even so, there be some in Jerusalem that have hesed in their hearts; and therefore what Jeremiah saith is not wholly so; for he speaketh violently, and his wrath blindeth his eyes. But I take Jeremiah to be more a prophet than they that speak against him in the name of Jehovah."

Then did Benjamin, the son of Zechariah, speak unto him, saying, "What thou hast said is true, that there be some in the city whose hearts are good. But mostly the city is a place of hard and evil doings; and if the people that be hard and evil in a city be not overcome by those that be good, then the city becometh an evil place. And I know this is what Jeremiah meaneth by his words, for I have talked with him; and he told me of a time, when thou wast but a small child, wherein he was taken captive, and tried at the gate of Jehovah's temple, and how the hand of thy father, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, was with him, that he should not be put to death. And thus doth Jeremiah know that there be some good people in Jerusalem; yet he declareth, by the word of Jehovah, that the city will be destroyed by the king of Babylon. And thus hath it been said in times past by all prophets

that have spoken according to the tenor of the words of Jeremiah."

Then did Joel, the shepherd, the son of Simeon, speak, saying, "It is even so; for I have met old men who were shepherds in the wilderness nigh unto Tekoa, and these men say that their fathers heard tell of a prophet named Amos, who went unto Samaria, in the days before the carrying away of the ten tribes, and who prophesied against the cities and palaces of that kingdom."

And Benjamin, the son of Zechariah, confirmed the words of Joel, saying, "Thou speakest the truth; for in past years I have seen a little roll wherein are gathered all the words of Amos; and I did read it carefully, more than once or twice; and I especially remember how he said by the word of Jehovah, 'I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate all his palaces. And I will destroy the winter house with the summer house; and the ivory houses shall perish; and the great houses shall come to an end. For I will deliver up the city and all that is within it.' And thus did Amos prophesy against the cities in his day, even as Jeremiah doth prophesy in our day. Moreover, we see how the words of Amos came true when the ten tribes were carried away into captivity; and likewise will the words of Jeremiah come true if the people of Jerusalem show not hesed, and cease not to oppress the poor and needy."

And the people were proud of Benjamin, when they heard him speak thus; and in their eyes he was a man learned in all things; for the people could read not, yet Benjamin was instructed in letters, and had visited many places in Judah, and he knew many great men.

And Nathan said unto him, "That which thou sayest unto me concerning Amos recalleth what hath been told me by Baruch, the scribe, who hath written the words of Jeremiah in a roll of parchment, and who now laboreth with mine uncle, Gemariah, the scribe, the son of Shaphan. For Baruch hath spoken unto me of Amos and other prophets, and of their words which be written in rolls in Jerusalem. And I purpose to read their words more fully. But never yet have I had occasion to examine them, for I have been busied about many things, and my years are few."

And Benjamin answered him, and said, "The rolls of Amos, and of Jeremiah, and of the other prophets, and much more also, even all these wilt thou find in the great collection of writings whereon thine uncle Gemariah, the scribe, laboreth with other scribes, and which was begun long ago."

And Nathan spake, saying, "Yea, I talked but the day before yesterday with mine uncle Gemariah. And he hath indeed wrought with scribes for many years upon this work. And they have chambers in the temple of Jehovah; and there do they work upon the great collection of rolls; and they send forth into the land for all the writings that ever they can find, as well as into foreign countries for the writings of other nations. And they are not yet finished with the work; but they make copies of all which they write; whereof one copy, whole and perfect, is placed in the strong room of my father's house, in chests of iron; and as the work goeth on, they send other copies unto my brother Gedaliah in Babylon, to be kept in safety."

And all the people gave ear and listened until the falling of a drop of water could be heard; and they

said unto Nathan, "This is the book whereof Benjamin hath told us beforetime. And would that it might be finished quickly, that thou, or Benjamin, might read it unto us."

And now as they stood and talked thus in the street, they heard very far off the sound of a storm that arose in the south, in the wilderness, as thou goest unto mount Sinai. And Benjamin pointed thither, and said, "If ye would know about the great collection of writings whereon the scribes do labor in Jerusalem, look ye now toward the wilderness of the south, and fix ye your minds thereon, and give ear unto me, and have regard unto my words; and I will show you quickly the heart of the whole matter." Then Benjamin spake unto Nathan, and said, "Listen well, O son of Ahikam; and when thou returnest unto Jerusalem thine uncle Gemariah will show it unto thee more fully."

So Nathan and all the people attended carefully unto Benjamin; and he pointed again toward the south, saying, "Ye know that yonder is the wilderness, where the tribes of Israel dwelt in their journeyings before they entered into this land. And in that self-same wilderness many tribes of the Arabians do still wander, at this present day, seeking sustenance for their flocks and herds. And each tribe within itself is a company of brethren who do continually show forth goodness and kindness of heart unto each other, even the hesed whereof we spake. And though many such tribes war fiercely against each other for possession of wells and pastures in the wilderness, and are therefore enemies who seek to destroy each other; yet each tribe hath within itself the law of hesed and justice, which hath dominion within each tribe, and

which is enforced by the voice of the tribe and by the elders.

"But though there be many wars between tribes, yet upon occasion there is peace between certain tribes; and in that case, a tribe sheweth forth goodness of heart, even hewed, unto another tribe; and therefore tribes friendly to each other have part in the same pastures and in the same wells of water; and they live nigh unto each other; and they help each other against their enemies.

"These things are known and are understood by many of us here in our village, because we live nigh unto the wilderness, and have dealings with some of the Arabians who come thence unto us. Yet must I make mention of these things which ye know well, in order that I may show forth what ye know not so well.

"Now it came to pass, while yet the tribes of Israel were in the wilderness, that they found wonderful hewed at the hand of a shepherd tribe called the Kenites. And that tribe had a priest of Jehovah before ever there was a priest in Israel; for the Kenites followed Jehovah. Now it was there yonder, in the wilderness of the south near mount Sinai, where we see lightnings and hear the voice of thunder, that the tribes of Israel became worshipers of Jehovah. And likewise from ancient times our fathers have had a psalm, saying, 'Jehovah is my shepherd. I shall not want. Surely goodness and hewed shall follow me all the days of my life.' And thus the scribes of Jerusalem, who now make the great book of Israel, do establish it upon the hewed which is in tribes of the wilderness and in the people of our villages, and which, when it is in the heart, leadeth unto justice and righteousness;

whereas, on the contrary, when great cities arise and rule the world, they lack hesed and they go toward oppression and injustice and all manner of evil."

Then the people said unto Benjamin, "This book whereof thou speakest, will be the most wonderful book that ever was written."

And Benjamin answered, saying, "Even so; and when it is finished, it will go forth from Israel into all the world, and will begin to turn the hearts of all flesh unto justice and peace."

Now while yet they lingered in the street, behold, storm clouds came up over the desert from the south, and blotted out the moon and the stars; and there was the sound of abundance of rain. So the people went away to their houses; and Simeon took Nathan to rest, that he might return to Jerusalem on the morrow. And as they were going toward Simeon's house, they met Laban, who loved Miriam. And Laban inquired of Nathan whether he went to the feast of the fair maiden in Jerusalem. And Nathan answered yea, and would have spoken further unto Laban, to find the cause whereof he inquired; but behold the young man was gone, for he went to tell it unto the daughter of Simeon. And when Nathan laid him down, he could not quickly sleep; for the storm beat upon the village; and he had many thoughts of the hesed of the shepherd tribes in the wilderness, and of Miriam, and of the great book, and of the court of lands, and much else besides; and all his thoughts were mingled together.

And when the morning came, they awakened him early, before the rising of the sun, and gave him food and drink. And Miriam busied herself to prepare parched corn and raisins, that he might eat by the way.

But he would that she talked with him; yet could he not go nigh unto her, and commune with her in the presence of all the family.

And as he went forth from the house, Miriam stood by the door, and gave her hand unto Nathan, and bade him go in peace. And he rode his horse through the street of Maon, to go down the hill. And Joel, the brother of Miriam, went with him, to bring him on his way toward Hebron; and much people were with them, to see him depart. And he leaned over in the saddle, and said unto Joel, "See thou bring word to me in Jerusalem if any evil befall thy father's house. And come not unto our place by the temple, where thou camest before; but inquire for the house of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; and I will give charge concerning thee unto Obadiah the chief servant."

So he parted from them; and when he reached the foot of the hill, he turned him about on the horse, and lifted up his eyes; and behold the daughter of Simeon in white garments, at the brow of the hill; and she stood alone. Then did they two beckon unto each other; and as he looked up steadfastly at the maiden, she seemed unto him as one of the angels that stood above the ladder at Bethel when Jacob dreamed of heaven.

VI

Now when Nathan was come again unto Jerusalem, his father was yet ill and could have no matter of business brought unto him. And also Nathan could not go unto Eliezer the steward, because Eliezer agreed not with him. So therefore was Nathan in great perplexity. And as he pondered these things in his heart, he walked in the broad way before the entering in of the temple; and he met there Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who labored with certain scribes in preparing the great book of Jehovah and Israel, and who also wrote down the words of Jeremiah the prophet. Then did Nathan tell Baruch the scribe all things concerning the matter of Simeon's field; and Nathan asked him, saying, "What shall I do? For I have solemnly promised to give help unto Simeon the Maonite."

And Baruch asked him, saying, "Doth Simeon lack food from day to day? Or hath he enough to keep him these weeks that be near at hand?"

And Nathan answered, saying, "Though Simeon hath enough wherewith to live at this present time; yet if he be despoiled of his field, and have it not for another sowing of seed when the new year cometh round, he cannot then live of his own."

And Baruch said unto Nathan, "If this man hath wherewith to keep him and his family these weeks that be near at hand, thou shouldst compose thyself;

because thy visit unto him giveth assurance that he findeth favor in thy sight. And it may be that before his need becometh urgent, thy father will recover, and thou canst make intercession with him for the man. So be not disquieted in thy mind; but let thine heart be at rest."

Then was Nathan more at ease when he heard Baruch speak thus; and he said unto Baruch, "Simeon the Maonite spake much concerning the little book which was brought unto king Josiah by my grandfather, Shaphan the scribe, and which was made to be a law and an ordinance by king Josiah in a great assembly of the people. And likewise another man of Maon, Benjamin the son of Zechariah, spake saying that he heard the little book read forth unto the people in the assembly. And now, because these writings have much to do with hesed and justice unto folk such as Simeon the Maonite, the desire of mine heart is to learn about them and to read them; and I would that ye scribes were not so secret in all which ye do in the matter."

But Baruch spake unto Nathan, saying, "Since the great book is founded upon hesed and justice, it goeth contrary to the men of wealth and power who serve Baal, and who become rich by adding field to field, and by oppressing such folk as this man of Maon. And because the kingdom is ruled for the most part by oppressors, and is not ruled by men such as king Josiah; therefore the scribes who prepare the great book are ever performing their labors in quiet and in secret, as far as in them lieth; and so they publish not abroad their doings. And even though thine own family hath much to do therewith, yet because thou hast not

hitherto inquired more fully, thou hast been shown but little."

Then spake Nathan, and said unto him, "But now do I hunger and thirst for knowledge of all things that have to do therewith."

And Baruch said, "It is well; and therefore shalt thou go with me unto thine uncle Gemariah and commune with him."

Now Gemariah the scribe, the son of Shaphan, had a chamber in the temple of Jehovah, in the upper court, at the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house. And he was a chief scribe, in the place of his father Shaphan who lived in the days of good king Josiah. And being thus of the lineage and family of Shaphan, Gemariah was a prince of dignity and reputation in Jerusalem and in the kingdom of Judah. And he labored with certain other scribes, chosen men, who prepared the great book of Israel.

And when Baruch and Nathan came in unto Gemariah in his chamber, and Baruch showed how Nathan would be instructed concerning the great book, then Gemariah praised Jehovah, and said unto Nathan his nephew, "I will send thee unto one of the wise men that counsel the scribes, even Adonijah the son of Berechiah, of whom I spake to thee, and who is more fit than I to impart instruction; and he will show thee certain things whereof it is needful that thou shouldst know before thou readest much in the great book."

Then said Nathan unto his uncle, "I have heard of wise men since the time I was a child; but never yet have I talked with one of them. Nevertheless, lately have I heard a man speak who seemeth to be very wise, even a man whom thou knowest, namely Benjamin the

Maonite, the son of Zechariah; and he spake of many things that never I knew before."

And Gemariah answered and said, "Yea, Benjamin I know; and he hath much force and wisdom after his own manner. But he attaineth not unto the wisdom of the wise men who counsel the scribes in preparing the great book. For the wise men of Jerusalem have applied their minds unto all manner of knowledge; and they have journeyed throughout all Israel and Egypt and Babylon and other countries, to get instruction among many peoples; and they know many languages; and they can show the course of all things in many nations and kingdoms from ancient days until now. So therefore shall I send thee unto Adonijah the son of Berechiah, who is the leader of the wise men of Judah at this day."

Then Gemariah wrote a letter, and gave it unto Nathan, and sent him unto Adonijah the wise man. So Nathan went out from the chamber of his uncle Gemariah, which was in the temple of Jehovah. And Nathan came unto the house of Adonijah, which was on a street overlooking the fore part of the temple; and he gave the letter into the hand of a servant. Then presently the servant returned, and took Nathan unto the housetop, where the wise man sat in a pavilion before a table whereon were many rolls and parchments. And Adonijah greeted Nathan kindly, and caused him to sit by the table, and said unto him, "I have knowledge of thy family from the days of Shaphan the scribe, thy grandfather. So now it is well that thou, who art of the house of Shaphan, shouldst have a desire to know about the great book which is, as it were, the chief business of thy family."

Then was Nathan astonished when he heard Adonijah speak thus; and he said, "Always have I known that my grandfather Shaphan and mine uncles Gemariah and Elasah were scribes, and were busily set upon writings. But my father Ahikam the son of Shaphan is not a scribe; and ever have I supposed the chief business of our house is to administer possessions and gather wealth in merchandise. Therefore thy words astonish me; and I pray thee tell me——"

But Adonijah spake, saying, "Thou shalt learn more concerning thy grandfather at another time. And now tell me why thou desirest knowledge of the great book. For thine uncle Gemariah in his letter saith only that thou wouldst learn, but not why it is that thou wouldst be instructed.

And Nathan answered him, saying, "Thou seest that I am but a youth. Nevertheless I have had much opportunity of travel, that I might observe many things, not only in our own land, but in foreign countries; and I have begun to learn about the overseeing of my father's business in Jerusalem. Moreover, since I was a child have I taken occasion to commune with humble folk, and to know of their doings; for we have so great a number of them in our service in Jerusalem, both at our house and in our place of business at the rear of the temple, and also in the country; and always hath our family treated with kindness those that labor in our affairs. And it came to pass of late, when I sat with Eliezer, the chief steward of our house, that a certain man of the village of Maon in the south, who borrowed money of us to pay the king's taxation, came hither in great sorrow, and could not pay his debt. And since the time that my father hath lain sick, it seemeth

unto me that this Eliezer sheweth too much hardness of spirit."

And Adonijah said unto Nathan, "Eliezer is a man of ability and understanding, whose like is not easily found; but his heart is not with the common people; and it may be that thy father hath taken knowledge of these things, that in due time thou shouldst have authority over Eliezer. And now I perceive that thy desire to know more concerning the great book springeth out of thy knowledge of the people and their sorrows, and out of the kindness of thine heart."

Then was Nathan glad; and he told Adonijah how he went to Maon, and how he talked with the people concerning the ways of great cities and the ways of country villages and the ways of the tribes in the wilderness. And also he told Adonijah all the words of Benjamin concerning the hesed which the Arabian tribe of Kenites in the wilderness of mount Sinai did show forth unto Israel.

And Adonijah said unto him, "I am glad that thou hast learned about the people of the villages and the tribes of the wilderness; for this maketh easier my words in showing thee about the great book."

And Nathan spake, saying, "For this very purpose did Benjamin tell me of the hesed of that Arabian tribe unto Israel; for he said the great book is established upon the hesed which leadeth unto justice and righteousness."

And Adonijah answered, saying, "Even so. For this Benjamin of Maon hath shown thee the seed wherfrom the great book ariseth. And now doubtless thou hast knowledge that even as the people of Israel were

once tribes in the wilderness, who formed a nation and a kingdom in this land wherein we live; so likewise all the nations of the earth, such as Egypt and Babylon, do grow up from tribes that wandered of old time in the wilderness."

And Nathan answered him, saying, "I know that our nation hath grown up out of tribes of the wilderness; and also have I found that the Egyptians and Babylonians know that their fathers were people of the desert. But wherein hesed and justice have to do therewith is yet a new thing unto me."

And Adonijah continued, and said unto him, "Not only dost thou know that all kingdoms are formed thus out of tribes from the wilderness; but also thou knowest that when kingdoms are established, and bring forth great cities in their midst, behold, the cities gather dominion unto themselves, and rule with rigor and hardness over the villages of the country; so that the kingdom is divided into the rich and the poor; and the men of wealth seize the government."

And Nathan answered, "These things also have I seen; and I have thought much thereon; but I have not made study of them as thou hast."

Then Adonijah continued, and said, "When a kingdom groweth up from tribes, and becometh a great nation, with strong cities therein, then do the king and his nobles build palaces for themselves; and likewise they build a costly and gorgeous temple for their god, whose fame is increased; and thus their god liveth in a great house like a man of wealth; and he becometh a god of possessions and riches, whose laws uphold the nobles and the king when they take the fields and vineyards of the poor and needy and hold the people in

bondage. And when that nation goeth forth to war, and gaineth victory over other nations, and putteth such nations to tribute, then the king of that victorious people ruleth over the kings that be subdued under him; so that he is called king of kings. And the god of that nation is likewise proclaimed to be a god of gods."

And Nathan spake unto Adonijah quickly, saying, "Thy words are according to what I myself saw in Babylon when I visited my brother Gedaliah. For Babylon, as thou knowest, is a great city, in the midst of a great nation, which beareth rule over other countries; and so the king of Babylon ruleth over the kings of those countries. And as it is with the king of Babylon, so it is likewise with the god of Babylon, as thou sayest; for the Babylonians declare that their god Marduk is god of gods, who hath created the heavens and the earth. And the same have I seen in the land of Egypt, where the great god is called Amon-Ra. And the people of Egypt say that their god Amon-Ra is god of gods, who hath created all things."

Then Adonijah asked Nathan, saying, "When Marduk of Babylon is declared to be god of gods, who created heaven and earth, and when Jehovah of Israel is likewise declared to be god of gods, who created all things, dost thou see any difference between these two?"

And Nathan answered him, saying, "Nay, I see no difference at all, but only the same belief and the same words for the one and for the other. And this recalleth to me that I talked of late with certain youths who said that the ten tribes of Israel were lost because they brake away from the house of David in Judah, and set

roll showeth how the tribes of Israel, when they entered into this land of Canaan, took only the hills and the villages in the open country; but subdued not the cities, which were the chief dwelling places of the Amorites, with strong walls of stone round about."

Then was Nathan astonished; and he said, "Always have I heard say that when the tribes of Israel came out of the wilderness into this land they utterly destroyed the inhabitants and got all the land for their possession with all the cities thereof."

But Adonijah answered, saying, "Not so." And he gave the roll of the book of the judges into the hand of Nathan, and bade him read aloud from a certain place in the first portion thereof.

Then read Nathan these words: "And Jehovah was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the hill country; but he could not expel the people of the lowland because they had chariots of iron."

Then said Adonijah, "Read thou onward in that same portion, and thou wilt see that even as the tribe of Judah expelled not the Amorites who inhabited the land; so also the other tribes of Israel failed likewise; and therefore the Amorites remained in possession of the walled cities of the land." So Nathan looked, and read, even as Adonijah gave direction; and behold, it was according as Adonijah said.

Then spake Nathan and asked him, saying, "Tell me, I pray thee, what became of the former inhabitants, the Amorites."

And Adonijah said, "With thine own eyes shalt thou see the answer to thy question; and with thine own lips thou shalt read the answer aloud." Then Adonijah pointed to a certain place in the third portion of the

now mark well my words, O son of Ahikam. For when a kingdom having such belief and worship is vanquished and subdued by its enemies, and goeth down to destruction; then also its god goeth down likewise, and is no more worshiped. And thus was it with the mighty nation of the Assyrians, who had a great kingdom, ruling over other kingdoms; and their chief city was Nineveh, and their god was called Asshur. And it was the Assyrians who carried away the ten tribes of Israel into captivity. But afterwards the kingdom of Assyria perished; and their city and their temple are destroyed; and their mighty god Asshur is worshiped no more. And thus was it with the great kingdom of the Hittites, which went down to destruction; and its god is likewise forgotten and no more worshiped or inquired after."

And Nathan asked Adonijah, saying, "The kingdoms of the Babylonians and Egyptians are great and strong at this day, bearing much dominion and rule in the world. And what, then, shall become of them and their gods, Marduk and Amon-Ra?"

And Adonijah answered him, saying, "As it was with the Assyrians and Hittites, even so shall it be with the Egyptians and the Babylonians, which to-day have great and strong kingdoms, with gorgeous and costly temples unto their gods. For these nations oppress the poor and needy; so that the multitude of their people are in bondage; and their gods are gods of rich men who seize fields and vineyards; and therefore the people of those kingdoms learn not how they may live together in hesed and justice and peace. And though Babylon and Egypt now stand in strength, yet shall their kingdoms utterly perish and pass away; and there

shall be no more any worshipers of their gods, Marduk and Amon-Ra."

And Nathan asked Adonijah, saying, "Will it not be the same with our nation as it is with other nations that go down to destruction, and which perish with their gods? For the belief and worship which are established by law among our people in the name of Jehovah are the same as that which prevaiileth in these other nations; and even as the multitude of the people in Egypt and Babylon are in bondage under the reign of injustice, so likewise are the people of our nation oppressed."

Now after Nathan spake thus, it came to pass that a sound of angry voices and shouting was heard far away; and when the noise drew nearer and waxed greater, Adonijah and Nathan rose up and went over unto the parapet of the housetop. And they looked down, and behold, a great multitude of people in the broad way before the temple of Jehovah, at the entering in of the outer gate; and the number of them increased more and more; and in the midst thereof was Jeremiah, who lifted up his hand unto the people to still them.

But ere the tumult could be quieted, the captain of the temple-guard perceived the cause whereby the people were gathered together; and he summoned a band of gibborim, which were held ready armed in the temple; and they came and sought to break through the midst of the people, and take Jeremiah to prison. But the people were favorable unto Jeremiah, being men who came in from the hill country, and also laborers in Jerusalem, whereof many were armed with staves and stones. And though the gibborim were in great

number, and brake their way onward into the multitude; yet were they not able to come nigh unto Jeremiah, because the people defended him, and fought for him. And the people rushed in fierce anger upon the gibborim, and fell upon them violently, and beat them down to the ground, and trampled upon them; so that the greater part of the gibborim were slain, their blood being poured out upon the stones of the street. And after that the captain of the temple-guard could no more drive his armed men into the midst of the people.

Now when the multitude was increased yet further, being in all the broad way before the temple, and in the streets near-by, and on the housetops, Jeremiah was raised up on high, on the shoulders of his helpers; and he lifted his hand, and stilled the multitude, and cried out in a loud voice against all who trusted that the temple of Jehovah should never be moved, but should abide forever; and he said, "Thus saith Jehovah, Trust ye not in deceitful words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah are these buildings. For if ye completely mend your ways, and wholly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place; then will I cause you to dwell in this place. Will ye steal and murder, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods? And is this temple, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers? But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people, the ten lost tribes of Israel. Therefore will I do unto this

temple, wherein ye trust, as I did unto Shiloh. And I will cast you out, even as I cast out all your brethren, the ten tribes of Ephraim. And because ye have walked after the Baalim, I will send you into captivity. For I am Jehovah, who exerciseth hesed and justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah."

And while Jeremiah proclaimed these things, Nathan and Adonijah stood upon the housetop, and gave ear, and heard all that he said. Then spake Nathan unto Adonijah, saying, "I pray thee, let me go down among the people, that I may speak with them, and peradventure I may come nigh unto Jeremiah; and then will I return unto thee quickly."

Then went Nathan down from the housetop, and sought to enter into the midst of the people; but the press was great, and the multitude thronged about Jeremiah, and moved hither and thither, like the waves of the sea. And Nathan was borne along by the side of the way, and was pushed violently into another street. And it was the street where were the places of merchants who dealt in jewels of silver and jewels of gold and all manner of precious stones from far countries. And Nathan was even yet carried onward by the force of the people, so that he might not be where he would; and he came on toward the place of Levi the son of Asher, who was of the principal merchants in the street; and Levi stood in the door of his place; and when Nathan was borne along as though he would be carried past the place of Levi, behold, the multitude moved about suddenly, so that Nathan was thrown against Levi the merchant; and then did Nathan the son of Ahikam, and Levi the son of Asher,

even the two of them, fall together within the door. And when they arose upon their feet, Nathan asked Levi, "What thinkest thou of Jeremiah?"

And Levi answered, saying, "Jeremiah is bad for business; because when he prophesieth, behold, all the city is stirred up, and I sell nothing. And so say all the honorable merchants of our city."

And Nathan told Levi how he had been with Adonijah the son of Berechiah upon the housetop, and would return thither quickly again. Then Levi showed him an exceeding narrow way by the rearward of his place. And Nathan went by that way; and he passed between many houses and came out again upon the broad street before the temple. And a multitude of people yet stood and talked there, and looked upon the dead bodies of the gibborim and their blood which was on the pavement. But Jeremiah was gone away, for a band of helpers took him secretly; and therefore the people said that he was hidden by the hand of Jehovah. So Nathan returned again unto the house of Adonijah.

VII

Now when Nathan was returned upon the housetop, Adonijah said unto him, "Thou hast heard again by the mouth of Jeremiah how he is a rebel against the belief and worship which be established by law in Israel. And so hath it ever been with all the prophets who came before Jeremiah and who prophesied like unto him. For Israel hath verily worshiped Jehovah as a god of wealth and power; and the name of Jehovah is forgotten in Baal; and the men of wealth oppress the poor and needy, thrusting them into bondage; so that in these things our nation is like unto the kingdoms of Egypt and Babylon."

And when Adonijah had said this, he arose, and bade Nathan come down with him from the housetop. And he took him to a room in the upper story; and when they were entered into the room, behold, a chest of cedar wood lay on a table; and Adonijah went over to the chest and touched it, and said unto Nathan, "The great book of Israel, as thou hast been told, is not yet finished. But as far as ever the work hath proceeded, a perfect copy thereof is laid up within this chest, roll by roll. And other copies have we for safety."

Then Adonijah lifted up the cover of the chest, and laid the cover back against the wall; and he put forth his hand into the chest, and took thence many small

boxes of iron which had lids closed upon them; and he put the boxes in order, side by side in a row, upon the front part of the table whereon the chest of cedar wood lay. And he spake unto Nathan, saying, "Before ever the tribes of Israel came out of the desert, this land was called the land of Canaan. And the inhabitants of this land were called Amorites, having many strong cities with walls of stone. And the ways of the Amorites were like unto the ways of the Babylonians and the Egyptians. For in all the cities of the Amorites were men of wealth, whereof each man was called a baal; and all these baalim possessed the land of Canaan; so that the multitude of the common people in the cities and in the villages of the country were in bondage unto the lords of the land, even as it is in Egypt and Babylon and other nations.

"Now the gods of the Amorites took their names from the men of wealth; and every such god was called Baal; and every city of the Amorites had a temple or a high place where one of the Baalim was worshiped. And with each Baal was a goddess like unto Ishtar of Babylon, who is worshiped in harlotry. So all the worship of the Amorites, in this land before the coming of Israel, was in the name of the Baalim and the Ashtaroth. And this worship was established in the government and laws of the Amorites, wherein a few of the people were rich and the many were poor and needy, and women were used lewdly, and little children were burned in the fire unto the gods of Canaan."

And Nathan said, "That which thou showest unto me hath a familiar sound; and much thereof prevaieth among us to-day. But never have I studied or known

concerning the inhabitants of this land before the coming of Israel out of the wilderness. And therefore these things are in a manner wholly new unto me."

And Adonijah answered, and said unto Nathan, "When the Amorites lived thus in the land of Canaan, the tribes of Israel dwelt in the wilderness, and lived not after the manner and fashion of the Amorites. And thou hast been shown already that in the desert every tribe maketh no distinction between rich and poor; for each tribe is a company of needy brethren, who show *hesed* among themselves, and whose elders rule with justice over them. And thus every tribe of the wilderness hath its own god of *hesed* and justice. Nevertheless, each tribe is mostly at enmity with other tribes; and so there is war between the peoples of the desert.

"Yet on occasion certain tribes agree together, and form a confederacy against enemies. And thus were the tribes of Israel friendly with a certain Arabian tribe called the Kenites, which dwelt in the region of mount Sinai in Arabia. And the reason thereof was this: The tribes of Israel wandered into the land of Goshen, which is nigh unto Egypt; and they pastured their flocks there in the land of Goshen. And the king of Egypt was evil unto them, and sought to make slaves of them. But the tribes of Israel escaped, and went into the wilderness of Sinai.

"Now the kings of Egypt have ever sought to rule over the wilderness of Sinai, because therein are mines of copper and of turquoise; and so all the tribes of that region have been oppressed by the Egyptians.

"And thus it came to pass that the Kenites did help the tribes of Israel very greatly, and showed forth

much hesed unto them in the day when the king of Egypt oppressed Israel.

"And now, because these Arabians were strangers, and yet did good unto Israel; and because these Arabians already worshiped in the name of Jehovah, and had a priest of Jehovah at Sinai; therefore, by reason of these things, Israel turned unto Jehovah and began to worship in the name of Jehovah at mount Sinai. For Israel believed that the hesed of the Kenites was the hesed of Jehovah. So Israel became a people of Jehovah in the wilderness of Sinai, after they escaped from the land of Goshen which belongeth unto Egypt."

Then said Nathan unto Adonijah, "Thy words make plain unto me that Jehovah and Baal are wholly diverse and contrary, the one from the other; inasmuch as the Baalim have ever been gods of wealth, and gods of them that seek to have mastery over the common people; whereas Jehovah at the first was not a lord over a kingdom; but he was worshiped in the wilderness by poor and needy tribes, who believed in hesed and justice."

And Adonijah answered, saying, "Even so. And now will I show thee what became of the hesed of Jehovah when Israel went out of the desert and entered into this land wherein we live."

Then Adonijah took one of the iron boxes that lay on the table; and he lifted up the cover thereof; and he took from the box a roll of writing, and said, "This is the book of the judges who judged Israel after they came into the land of Canaan out of the wilderness of Arabia, and before any kingdom was yet established here. Now the scribes of our day have made the roll of the judges by copying from ancient records; and the

roll sheweth how the tribes of Israel, when they entered into this land of Canaan, took only the hills and the villages in the open country; but subdued not the cities, which were the chief dwelling places of the Amorites, with strong walls of stone round about."

Then was Nathan astonished; and he said, "Always have I heard say that when the tribes of Israel came out of the wilderness into this land they utterly destroyed the inhabitants and got all the land for their possession with all the cities thereof."

But Adonijah answered, saying, "Not so." And he gave the roll of the book of the judges into the hand of Nathan, and bade him read aloud from a certain place in the first portion thereof.

Then read Nathan these words: "And Jehovah was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the hill country; but he could not expel the people of the lowland because they had chariots of iron."

Then said Adonijah, "Read thou onward in that same portion, and thou wilt see that even as the tribe of Judah expelled not the Amorites who inhabited the land; so also the other tribes of Israel failed likewise; and therefore the Amorites remained in possession of the walled cities of the land." So Nathan looked, and read, even as Adonijah gave direction; and behold, it was according as Adonijah said.

Then spake Nathan and asked him, saying, "Tell me, I pray thee, what became of the former inhabitants, the Amorites."

And Adonijah said, "With thine own eyes shalt thou see the answer to thy question; and with thine own lips thou shalt read the answer aloud." Then Adonijah pointed to a certain place in the third portion of the

roll of the book of the judges; and Nathan read therein according to these words: "And the children of Israel dwelt amidst the Canaanites; and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to the Canaanites."

And Adonijah spake unto Nathan saying, "From what thou hast read, thou canst see, therefore, that when the tribes of Israel came hither into this land, they settled themselves in the hill country, while the Amorites continued to dwell in the walled cities; but afterwards the hill people and the city people made marriages; and thence came the Hebrew nation, which, though it be called the house of Israel, hath not only the blood of Israel, but also the blood of the Amorites."

Then asked Nathan, saying, "If this be so, and if our nation indeed arose from the marriage of two peoples, why then are we called only by the name of Israel, and not by the name of the Amorites?"

And Adonijah answered him, saying, "Before the coming of Israel, the Amorites were not gathered together into a single kingdom or nation under one king and one god. But every city of the Amorites had its own king; and every city had its own god, even the Baal of that city. And it came to pass after the tribes of Israel took possession of the hill country of Canaan, they formed a kingdom wherein at first were only men of Israel in the hill country under the lead of Saul; and this hill kingdom of Israel worshiped in the name of Jehovah.

"But after Saul died, then David became king of Israel; and he took this very city, even Jerusalem, which was an Amorite city until that very day; and he did not slaughter the Amorites that were herein;

but he made peace with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and took unto himself wives of the Amorite women. And likewise David made peace with all the Amorite cities of Canaan, and took them into his confederacy; and thus David was the first who established a kingdom and a government over all this land, both city and country.

“And because the Amorites had never a kingdom over all Canaan, but only separate cities with a king and a Baal over each city, it came to pass in process of time, when the new generations arose, that all the people became known by the name of Israel and not by the name of the Amorites. And so, because the name of Israel continued to live, while the Amorites were supposed to be vanished away, therefore the saying arose until this day that Israel did utterly destroy and slaughter the Amorites.”

And Nathan spake unto Adonijah, saying, “From what thou showest me, I verily perceive that when the worshipers of Baal married with the worshipers of Jehovah, then at that time arose a nation which, though it was in truth a new people, took nevertheless an ancient name, even the name of Israel; and this nation inherited the Baalim as gods of the cities, while also it inherited Jehovah as lord of the whole kingdom.”

Then answered Adonijah, saying, “Even so. And thus the kingdom of Israel not only had gods of the rich in every city; but the selfsame kingdom had over all of it a god of *hesed* and justice for the poor and needy.”

But Nathan spake, and asked him quickly, “If Jehovah was a god of the poor and needy, and if the

Baalim were gods of the rich, why, then, arose not a controversy without delay, from the very first, between the worshipers of Jehovah and the worshipers of Baal?"

Then answered Adonijah, and said unto Nathan, "The reason thereof is very simple. For when the tribes of Israel came from the wilderness, they seized the hill country out of the hand of the Amorites; and thus it was that in the early times of the kingdom, the people of the villages in the highlands possessed fields and vineyards; and so they were not poor and needy at that time; but they were richer than their forefathers in the desert. And therefore, because they had ownership in the land, they were free and not in bondage. But afterwards, in later generations, the king's taxes became heavier; and because of this burden, and also by reason of many troubles, the people of the villages borrowed money on their fields and vineyards; and thus the people fell more and more into debt and slavery; and their lands were seized from them; and therefore our nation was divided into rich and poor, as it is in Babylon and Egypt and other nations.

"And when the rich grew richer, they became ever more zealous to worship the Baalim, which were inherited by the kingdom of Israel from the Amorites, and which were gods of possession and wealth, in whose name are all manner of ancient laws and customs whereby the poor and needy are oppressed and held in bondage. And therefore the rich are zealous unto this day to teach all the people to worship in the name of Baal.

"And at the same time, though the kings and nobles did worship Jehovah as god of all the kingdom, yet they called him Baal, and forgot his name in Baal,

even as Jeremiah saith. And the only difference which the great men would allow between Jehovah and Baal is this: that the Baalim are but the gods of cities and provinces in Israel; whereas, Jehovah is the great Baal of all the kingdom; and he is god of gods, who createth heaven and earth, even as the Babylonians believe concerning Marduk, and as the Egyptians believe concerning Amon-Ra. But in all things else, the men of riches and power in Israel do teach that Jehovah is like unto the Baalim who sanctify wealth and bondage."

Then spake Nathan, saying, "Thus thou bringest again to my mind the question which I asked of thee already. Will not our nation perish like unto the other nations that go down with their gods to destruction? For even now the greater part of Israel hath vanished away in the loss of the ten tribes, whereof nothing hath been heard for more than a hundred years. And will not our little kingdom of Judah, which is all that remaineth unto Israel, go down likewise to destruction; so that both Israel and Jehovah shall perish together?"

But Adonijah answered, and said, "If Jeremiah and such prophets could be put to silence, and slain; and the memory of such prophets could be made to vanish utterly away; and no more prophets like unto them should arise among us; then the belief and worship which are by law established among us would not be touched; and our people would go down to ruin like other nations which perish with their gods.

"Nevertheless, prophets like unto Jeremiah will not cease to arise among us and give their testimony; and if one of them be killed, another will arise in his place. For as I have shown thee, never hath any kingdom

grown up in the earth after the manner of Israel, whereby a god of hesed and justice from the desert hath been lifted up to be the lord over a land wherein are ancient cities worshiping gods of wealth and bondage like the Baalim. And even though our kings and nobles bow down to Jehovah, and acknowledge him as the great Baal of Israel; yet the hearts of the poor and needy will ever turn back to the remembrance of the desert; and because of that memory, prophets like Jeremiah will never cease to arise at the peril of their lives to speak for the poor and oppressed.

"But in every other kingdom whereof we have knowledge, the god of that kingdom hath first grown up with some city, and hath become a god of wealth and bondage, even as Marduk, the god of Babylon, and Amon-Ra, the god of Egypt. And then afterwards that city hath risen up with its god, and hath formed a kingdom over the other cities of that country. And therefore, in such a kingdom, no prophet could rise up, and speak for the oppressed, and say that the god of that whole nation was a lord of hesed and justice unto the poor and needy.

"Thus canst thou perceive how all other nations besides Israel have grown up under the name of gods who stand for oppression and riches; whereas, it hath come to pass in our nation alone that the poor and needy could look back to a time when the god of the kingdom was for hesed and justice, contrary to the manner of city gods. And therefore, when thou readest in the great book, mark thou well, and lay it to heart, that the prophets of the poor and needy in Israel have risen up mostly in the villages, and in those parts of the land which be near the wilderness,

wherein is the remembrance of hewed and brotherly justice which pertain unto the tribes of the desert, where Jehovah was worshiped in the days of old.

"And thus came the first great contender against Baal, even Elijah the prophet from the land of Gilead, which is on the other side of the river Jordan, and which is not a land of cities, but is nigh unto the desert. And Elijah went down to the wilderness of mount Sinai, to the land of the Kenites, where he strengthened himself in Jehovah and in the covenant of Jehovah."

Then Adonijah steadfastly settled his countenance upon Nathan, and said, "By one thing only will the strife between Jehovah and Baal be ended."

And Nathan said unto him, "I pray thee, tell me quickly what it is."

Then answered Adonijah, saying, "If Jerusalem is destroyed, then shall Jeremiah and prophets like unto him be held in honor in time to come; while the prophets that prophesy in the name of Baal, and who now have honor, shall be abased and accounted to be false prophets; and then only will the remnant of Israel turn away from other gods and serve one God alone."

Now when Adonijah said these words, Nathan was astonished, and trembled greatly; for although before-time he heard speak of destruction and captivity, nevertheless he laid it not to heart. But now he said within himself, "Ere this terrible thing come to pass, I must by all means fail not in providing that Miriam be saved." And he would have spoken of her unto Adonijah, but he dare not as yet.

And Nathan went unto the window, and looked out upon the temple, and he lifted his eyes unto a few light clouds that moved slowly toward the great sea. And Adonijah watched him.

Then spake Nathan, saying, "Jerusalem hath been the chief city of Israel these many hundreds of years. And even though there be wicked men herein; yet the city is our dear home, wherein we were born. And if what thou sayest be true, the house of Israel will only come unto one God of justice and righteousness through great suffering and much tribulation. For an army will come and break down the walls of Jerusalem, and burn our city, and slay many of our people, and carry many into a far country. Is there no other way unto the One God save this way?"

And Adonijah answered and said, "Thou beholdest the manner of men that have rule in the government; and thou knowest how they have cast away the little book which thy grandfather Shaphan the scribe did give unto king Josiah, and which thine own father Ahikam did uphold; and thou knowest how greatly these men love wealth, and how they oppress the common people with taxes and heavy tribute, and how they hold the poor and needy in bondage, and how they bow down to Jehovah as unto a Baal of riches and power. And moreover, even at this day, when the greater part of the tribes of Israel are perished, and when only Judah is left, thou seest how the prophets who prophesy like unto Jeremiah are but rebels against the belief and worship which are established by law; for the wound of Israel is incurable, and refuseth to be healed, as Jeremiah saith in the roll of his book. And when thou hast regard unto all this, canst thou

ask how anything save destruction and captivity will cause a remnant of the people to cast away the gods of wealth and oppression, and to turn their faces toward one God who loveth hesed and justice and righteousness?"

Then answered Nathan, and said, "I am only a child; but thou hast applied thyself diligently unto these things for many years; and thou knowest more than I."

And Adonijah said unto Nathan, "There yet remaineth one thing that I would show unto thee before thou goest hence. Thou seest fully that when Israel believeth Jehovah to be creator of the world, this is no more than the Babylonians and Egyptians believe concerning the gods of their kingdoms."

And Nathan spake, saying, "Yea. This is wholly clear unto me, not only by reason of thy words, but also from what I have learned by going abroad in the world."

Then Adonijah continued, and said, "Since many nations and kingdoms besides Israel do declare their gods to be creators of the world, therefore a prophet cannot cry unto Israel, saying, 'Serve Jehovah alone, because Jehovah is the creator.' And of a surety, this hath never been the chief thing whereof Jeremiah and such prophets have cried unto Israel; but they have said, 'Turn unto Jehovah because he is for hesed and justice.' And it is likewise with the great book of Israel; and therefore, when thou comest unto the great book, to read in it, thou shalt observe this carefully, and lay it to heart."

And Nathan answered, and said unto Adonijah, "Yea. I will carefully have regard unto this when I read the great book; for thou and Benjamin the Mao-

nite have both shown unto me that the book is chiefly founded upon *hesed* and justice."

Then said Adonijah, "Moreover, it is the same when Israel believeth Jehovah to be a worker of signs and wonders and miracles. For the Babylonians and Egyptians and other nations believe that their gods have power to work miracles likewise. And therefore, when thou comest unto the great book, to read it, and findest miracles therein, observe thou carefully that in regard to this thing also the great book differeth not from the writings of other nations."

And Nathan answered him, saying, "Though I should like much to behold some great miracle; yet never have I thought much about miracles; and never have I seen one here in the land of Judah, nor in any of the countries whither I have traveled."

And Adonijah answered, and said, "All the miracles whereof I have heard tell, whether they be ascribed unto Marduk the god of Babylon, or unto Amon-Ra the god of Egypt, or unto Jehovah in Israel, are always miracles that were said to be performed at some time long ago, or at some place far away. Therefore, in these latter days, wherein more wisdom and science are stored up, it hath come to pass that the learned men of Judah have applied their minds unto this matter; and the conclusion thereof is that nothing ever taketh place which goeth contrary to the daily course and order of the world; but that all things in the heavens and upon the earth proceed always in their daily path, even in the manner which we now behold at this day in Jerusalem, wherein we see no miracles at all, but only day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest."

Then asked Nathan, "If there be no miracles, why do the scribes put miracles in the great book of Israel? And why write they not the great book without any miracles, according to the measure of the wise men's learning?"

And Adonijah answered, saying, "The great book is chiefly made by copying from ancient rolls wherein many miracles are found, even from rolls that were laid up and preserved in olden time, such as the book of the wars of Jehovah, and the book of Jasher, and the book of the affairs of the kings of Judah, and many other such writings. And because miracles have been believed by the multitude of the people from ancient times until now, as a testimony unto the greatness of some leader or the greatness of things which came to pass; and because the multitude of the people have no time for study and learning, but are ever in toil and weariness; therefore the scribes, by express counsel of the learned men, have copied faithfully from the books of old, and have not cast out the miracles therefrom. And so, if the great book were without miracles, it would be in a manner unfaithful; and it would be above the minds of the people."

Then Adonijah continued and said, "All we that labor in any wise upon the great book of Israel, whether we be scribes or whether we be only counselors in the work; all we that are in this labor do earnestly believe that there is but One God, the creator, who hath no name and no form, as a man hath. And even as the spirit of a man worketh daily within his body, to accomplish all his doings; so likewise we believe that the One God worketh without any miracle in the daily order of the world. And he maketh use of the

worship of Jehovah, which was at first only the worship of a humble tribe of Arabians in the wilderness; yet he maketh use thereof to lift Israel and all the children of men slowly up to himself in hesed and justice and righteousness and peace, here a little, and there a little, precept upon precept, and line upon line; so that when this is accomplished in time to come, neither Israel nor any other people will use a name for him, but will call him God, or the Lord."

Now when Nathan heard these words he was greatly moved; and he spake unto Adonijah, and said, "Even if all things be as thou sayest, and there be no miracles in the world, such as are ascribed unto Marduk, and Amon-Ra, and other gods; nevertheless, that which thou hast shown unto me this day is greater than any miracle that ever was told. For verily I thought that even as the ten tribes were lost, so likewise would the kingdom of Judah perish also; and thus would our people be swept away forever. But now know I that even if our city and our kingdom be destroyed by the Babylonians, nevertheless the house of Israel shall not come to a full end; but a remnant thereof shall be delivered and preserved; for we have a work to do, even a ministry unto all flesh."

Then as they two stood before the table whereon lay the iron boxes, Adonijah reached forth and uncovered all the boxes, one by one, each with its own separate roll. And as Nathan looked upon all the rolls, lying thus in order, they seemed to become holy by the faith, and prayer, and labor of the scribes, and by the counsel of the wise men, and by the work of prophets like unto Jeremiah, and Amos, and Elijah.

And Nathan's heart was greatly moved; and he

looked steadfastly upon the rolls; and being unable to refrain himself, he wept. And Adonijah wept also, and embraced Nathan, and kissed him, saying, "Yea, my son. Though our city be burned with fire, and our people be scattered; and though our kingdom perish utterly; yet shall Israel be saved, as a brand plucked from the burning; that we may bear witness unto the One God invisible, who inhabiteth eternity."

VIII

Now after Nathan went away from the house of Adonijah, and was come again unto his own home, a servant met him, saying, "Thy mother saith, delay not to go unto her; for she hath a letter which a company of merchants brought this day from Babylon."

And Nathan was astonished greatly that his brother should write again so soon; and he made haste, and went unto his mother, and read the letter, and said unto her, "Gedaliah biddeth me to come unto him in Babylon a second time; for he hath much to show me concerning great matters. And he desireth me to go in the train of merchants which leaveth shortly. And moreover, he saith if my father is able, I shall read this letter unto him; but if not, then shall I go hence in quiet, and return hither again, and show naught thereof unto my father."

And his mother said, "The physicians came after thou hadst gone this morning; and found his sickness a little abated; but they said, let no matter of business be shown unto him. So therefore, go thou in unto him, and salute him, and kiss him; and then, when thou art gone to Babylon, if he asketh for thee, I will say thou visitest our possessions."

So Nathan spake with his father; and afterwards he went unto the place where the merchants gathered;

and he found there a very great train of camels making ready to go forth early on the morrow. Therefore he made an agreement with a certain man, to ride upon one of his camels; and when he had done this, he returned and made preparation for the journey.

And because he purposed that he should rise early in the morning, he went unto his rest upon the housetop at the going down of the sun. But he slept not quickly for thinking of Miriam, and of Gedaliah, and of the great book of Israel. And when he had lain thus a long time, he arose, and went by way of the passage that joined the housetop unto the city wall. And he stood, and looked upon the highway that goeth toward the South; and he said within himself, "Surely no evil will come upon her while I am gone; for it will be but a little time ere I return unto Jerusalem. Yet will I carefully charge Obadiah the chief servant, and will describe unto him Joel the shepherd, the son of Simeon; so that if Joel come hither while I am absent, Obadiah shall take his message, and tell him that I return shortly from Babylon." So Nathan went again to his couch, and slept.

And very early in the morning Nathan arose, and carefully charged Obadiah, the chief servant, concerning Joel. Then he went forth unto the place where the merchants and camels were gathered together, nigh unto the Damascus gate. And many people were come thither already, with much goods of all sorts, which they bound upon the camels. And there was tumult and shouting; and the dust of the ground arose, filling all that place like a vapor of smoke. And when all

things were made ready, the whole company set forth amidst the sound of camel bells. And they passed over the brook Kidron, and the mount of Olives, to go down to the plain of the Jordan, by the way that leadeth into the desert.

IX

Now it came to pass, after Nathan went forth unto Babylon, that Eliezer, the chief steward of the house of Ahikam, sent servants with wagons into the south country to the village of Maon; and he commanded them to reap the grain in the field of Simeon, which was ready standing for the harvest, and which was touched not by Simeon and his sons because they feared the proclamation of the king's officer. And in this thing also, as well as in the matter of the landmark, Eliezer had no regard unto the little book of king Josiah's law.

And when the men came on toward Maon, they waited secretly afar off until the sun had set. Then they entered into Simeon's field by stealth, and made all things ready, that they should begin to reap the grain early in the morning before the people came down into the fields and vineyards. For Eliezer had said, "If ye come while all the men of the village are yet at their labors, they may rise up against you, and prevent you. But if ye come secretly, and be started to reap in the morning ere the people descend from the hill, then are ye like to have better fortune."

So it was that when the sun rose the next day, and the Maonites were coming down unto their work, behold, Eliezer's men were already reaping the field of Simeon which had been taken for debt. And Simeon

and his sons and all the people drew nigh unto them, and called them, saying, "Wherefore do ye reap the field? And by what authority do ye this?" But even as they spake, the people saw two of the men who had come there beforetime with the officer; and so the Maonites knew the meaning thereof.

Then came Simeon, and stood by the entering in of the field, and said, "I hoped that this would not come to pass, that my grain should be taken away. And I touched not the field, lest the judges of the king send and punish me, as the officer said. Nevertheless, I verily believed, according to the word of the young man, the son of Ahikam, that I should have help and should keep my grain to lay up against the winter. But now it cometh to pass that even as they took my field, and plucked up my landmark; so likewise they come and reap my grain; and I am left desolate. For if I have only the grain of the other fields which I possess, then shall I and my family be in great need; and we shall come to want."

And Simeon's neighbors gathered round about him, and said, "Thou knowest that hitherto, when others in our village have lost fields unto their creditors, they have submitted lest a greater evil come upon them. But now if we continue thus, and make no resistance, then will all the men of wealth in Jerusalem wax bolder and bolder; and they will devise new devices of evil against the poor and needy of Jehovah's people who dwell in the villages of the country; and all we shall be brought into bondage. So therefore, let us contend with these men; and let us drive them hence."

But Simeon answered, and said unto them, "It avail-eth nothing if we contend with the men, or if we do

violence unto them; for in such case the judges of the king at Jerusalem will send gibborim girded with weapons of war; and they will bring all manner of evil upon me, and upon my family, and upon our village."

Then while Simeon and the people spake thus among themselves, one ran unto the house of Simeon and told Miriam; and she came down quickly. And when she saw how the matter stood, she said unto her father, "Thou knowest how the son of Ahikam, when he was here, gave instruction unto Joel that if any evil befell us further, we should send word unto him in Jerusalem."

So Simeon and all the people left off talking, and departed, to go unto their work; and the men of Eliezer went on reaping Simeon's field. And Miriam sent one of her brothers unto Joel in the wilderness of Maon where he kept sheep.

And when evening drew nigh, Joel returned; and Simeon and all his children were in the house. Then came unto them Benjamin the son of Zechariah, and Laban the son of Samuel. And Laban spake unto them, and said, "Ye see how this Nathan the son of Ahikam hath done as touching the field of Simeon. For not only doth he lack the power to accomplish anything; but now doubtless he hath wholly forgotten the matter; and peradventure at this very time he feasteth at some great palace with daughters of the rich." And all the sons of Simeon, save Joel, assented unto the words of Laban, and agreed therewith.

But Joel spake to the contrary, saying, "When the son of Ahikam was here, he expressly told me that if

any evil befell us further in this matter, I should bring word unto him. And therefore I go on the morrow to Jerusalem, with a message unto the son of Ahikam, for I believe in him."

Then spake Benjamin, saying, "I have no agreement with them that say the son of Ahikam remembereth not his word unto Simeon. For they that speak thus know not how to judge the spirit of a man. And though the son of Ahikam be but a youth, he turneth himself unto wisdom; and he will prevail in the end."

So there was a division among them. And on the one side were Laban and the sons of Simeon, save Joel; while on the other side were Miriam and Joel and Benjamin. But as for Simeon himself, he added nothing unto the words that he already spake in the field; and he went unto his bed, and laid him down, heavy and sore displeased.

And on the morrow, Joel went again to Jerusalem in haste, returning from the city on the third day. And many of the people saw him coming afar off; and they gathered together to meet him, and to inquire concerning his errand. And Joel began to answer them, saying, "The son of Ahikam hath gone away unto Babylon"—and Joel would have spoken further; but the people cried out, and said all manner of things when they heard that Nathan was not in Jerusalem. And Joel strove to quiet them, so that he might proceed; but he could not.

Then came Miriam unto him through the midst of the people; and she raised her hand; stilling the tumult, so that Joel could be heard; and he said, "When I came unto Jerusalem, I found the house of

Ahikam the son of Shaphan; and it was a very great house, even a palace, the like whereof never yet did I see. And I went unto the rearward, to the servants' door, and knocked. And when they came unto me, I requested that I might speak unto Nathan the son of Ahikam. But they said that he went with a company of merchants and camels unto Babylon, leaving instruction that if I came unto the house while he was away, they should carefully take my message against his return. And when I showed my errand unto Obadiah, the chief servant, I asked what time the young man would come again from Babylon; but he knew not."

And when Joel would have gone with Miriam unto their house, to Simeon their father, behold, Laban came and placed himself in the way before them, saying, "Is it not even as I said? For the son of Ahikam told us with his own lips that he went unto Babylon already but a year past; and now wherefore goeth he again so soon, and leaveth no word of his return? Thus ye see that the son of Ahikam gaddeth about the world at his pleasure, and forgetteth us."

But Miriam answered him, saying, "Hinder us not, Laban, lest we be delayed in going unto our father. Thou mayest think of the son of Ahikam according to thy pleasure. But as for me, I believe in him and in his word."

And when they came unto the house, they found their father lying upon his couch, very heavy of heart. And Benjamin was with him. And when Joel told his father how the matter stood, Simeon said, "I knew thy going again unto Jerusalem this time would avail us nothing."

But Benjamin spake unto Simeon, saying, "Doth not Joel thy son show thee how the son of Ahikam hath carefully given instruction unto the servants regarding whatsoever message may come unto them from us? And received they not Joel kindly, according to the word of the son of Ahikam? Now doubtless there is good reason that he should go again unto Babylon: for he hath in that city a brother who doeth great things; and it may be that his brother hath sent for him suddenly. And therefore, beware lest thou do wrong unto the son of Ahikam in thine heart. So let us wait patiently upon him, till he cometh home again to Jerusalem, and findeth our message."

But Simeon refused to be comforted; and he said, "We know not when the young man returneth from Babylon; and even if he were now in the land of Judah at this day, and remembered his word unto us, it might be as it was before, that he would have no power to help us. And so are we left unto our desolation, and unto our own devices. For soon shall we be in want, seeing we now have not enough grain laid up in store against the winter." And when Simeon had said this, he turned his face to the wall as he lay upon the couch; and he would eat no bread.

Now it came to pass, from the day that the men of Eliczer took away the grain out of Simeon's field, that the time was long unto Simeon and unto his family: for week followed upon week, yet they heard not anything from the son of Ahikam. So Simeon's heart failed him, and his flesh wasted away.

And when Simeon saw that his household consumed their food, and no provision was made against the winter, he recalled to his mind a certain man of his

acquaintance in former time, who dwelt long ago in the village of Ziph, which lay north of Maon, upon the east side of the highway that goeth up to Hebron. And this man, while yet he lived in Ziph, was but a poor man, who tilled the fields of his inheritance. But he went and dwelt in Hebron, and gathered possessions therein. And his name was Hashabiah the son of Achan.

And Simeon said in his heart, "I will now go unto Hebron, and see if the man remembereth me." So Simeon arose, and took with him Amon his son; and they went forth to find Hashabiah the son of Achan. And when they came unto Hebron, they inquired; and it was told them that Hashabiah was an elder of the city. And they found the place where he dwelt; and it was a goodly house, with a court before it. And they sent word by a servant, who returned and brought them into the house. And Simeon went up, and communed with Hashabiah the son of Achan upon the housetop.

And when Simeon showed all the trouble that came upon him, Hashabiah inquired concerning his children; and when Simeon told all things about his family, Hashabiah spake, and said, "If thou desirest, I will lend thee enough silver to buy grain here in the market place of Hebron, that thou mayest lay up food in store against the winter."

Then Hashabiah went out with Simeon and Amon into the market place, where was a scribe sitting, who prepared two small parchments, the one for Hashabiah and the other for Simeon. And the scribe called witnesses, and made surety of all things. And Hashabiah

weighed the silver in the balance, even pieces of silver, current money with the merchant.

So Simeon took the money; and as he and Amon his son went along in the market place, to go unto the merchants who sold grain, behold, a woman in scarlet garments came and saluted Simeon, and asked him, "Art thou not Simeon the Maonite?"

And Simeon, being astonished, was minded to avoid her. Nevertheless, he answered and said, "I am Simeon of Maon; but I know thee not."

And he would have continued onward; but the woman spake again, saying, "I am Melka, the daughter of Tobiah, whose house is in Maon, at the farther side of the village from where thou livest; and I remember seeing thee when I was a child." And she looked upon Amon, and asked him, "Where is thy friend who was with thee at another time?"

Then was Amon ashamed; and his father took note of it, and asked him, saying, "Knowest thou this woman?"

But Amon answered not anything, and spake neither to his father nor to the woman; for he feared because he and Laban the son of Samuel had gone unto Hebron when his father knew it not. And while they tarried, behold, many people were gathered about them; and the people spake among themselves; and some laughed aloud. Then Simeon laid hold upon Amon, and spake, saying, "Make haste, and let us go unto the merchants, lest we return not unto our home before evening."

So they spake nothing further unto the woman in scarlet, but went on their way through the midst of the people. And the woman looked with an impudent

face after Simeon and his son. Then one of the men that were standing about spake unto her, and said, "To-day they spend not their money with thee in bowing down before the altar of Baal, and in going into the tents of Ashtar; for the old man is angry, and careth not that he should be with thee; but there is yet hope for the young man, because he hath been here already."

Now it was a little past midday; and Simeon and his son went unto the merchants, and traded with them, and bought grain. Then the merchants put the grain into wagons drawn by asses. And the wagons with their drivers passed on, to go unto Maon; and Simeon and Amon followed after them.

And when they were going by the way, Simeon said unto his son, "Verily, thou knowest that woman in scarlet; for she inquired concerning one who was with thee at some time past; and thou wast ashamed. So therefore tell me now who it was that came with thee unto the woman."

And Amon feared his father greatly, so that his heart fainted; and he answered Simeon, and told him he had gone unto Hebron secretly with Laban the son of Samuel.

And Simeon did chide his son, and said, "What is this that I find concerning thee and Laban? Thou wouldst not have been able to accomplish this evil if thy mother were yet living. And now deceive me not, but tell me if thy brethren do such things likewise." And Simeon's heart was exceeding sorrowful.

Then Amon answered, and said, "I know not concerning any of my brethren save Joel; and he walketh ever in a straight path, turning neither to the right

hand nor to the left. And as for this woman that spake unto us, I know only that Tobiah her father fell into debt which he paid not; and so the creditor came and took this daughter to be a bondmaid; and she went not back again unto her father's home in our village."

And Simeon said, "I now remember a little the trouble of Tobiah; but the matter was kept secret; and I supposed that his daughter was married and abode in some village afar off."

And Amon answered, saying, "Tobiah hath two daughters married, who dwell in Beersheba; but this daughter whom we saw is not married."

Then spake Simeon, saying, "Such evil things were not done in the time of my youth; for in those days, our village had but few households; and ere evil could raise its head, it was corrected by the elders. And in those days my possessions were sufficient for me and for my family, because the lines were fallen unto me in pleasant places; and I was blest of Jehovah; and he maintained my lot. But now behold, the times are changed. And the people are increased and multiplied; and the village hath more houses; and every man hath trouble in living from his fields and his cattle; and thus do I grow old; and my wife is taken away; and my sons fall into evil; and I am become poor and needy."

Now while Simeon and his son went along by the way, the wagons hasted before them, and drew nigh unto Maon toward evening, and went up into the village, and stood in the street. And afterwards came Simeon and Amon; and then was much people gathered together. And when the people knew that the

wagons had grain for Simeon from the market place in Hebron, they said, "He hath borrowed money to get grain." And they helped Simeon and his sons and the drivers to unlade the wagons.

And when the drivers made ready to sleep in the wagons, to depart early on the morrow, the people said unto them, "Lodge not in the street, but come ye into the houses here and there." But the men answered, "We have provender and straw for our asses, and bread and wine also for ourselves; and we need not anything." Nevertheless, the people brought them in and showed kindness unto them.

And when Benjamin the son of Zechariah heard that Simeon had gone unto Hebron and borrowed money for grain, he came unto Simeon, and asked him, "Why wentest thou without showing me thine errand?"

And Simeon answered, and said, "I pray thee, let me go unto thine house; and when we be alone, I will tell thee all things." So they went out, and came unto the house of Benjamin.

Then Simeon told Benjamin of the reason that he went unto Hebron, and of Hashabiah the son of Achan, and of the silver which was borrowed, and of the parchment which was given into Simeon's hand. And Benjamin asked him, "Did the man take any pledge of thy land, as did the steward of Ahikam the son of Shaphan?"

And Simeon answered, saying, "Nay, he required no pledge of my land; but he gave me this parchment, which I have brought hither, that thou shouldst read it."

Then Benjamin took the parchment, and examined

it by the light of a lamp, and said unto Simeon, "All things herein are verily as thou sayest; for the man hath not exacted any pledge of thy land. But knowest thou not that except thou pay the debt in due season, he can come and take one of thy children to be a bond-servant?"

Then did Simeon's heart faint within him; and he answered Benjamin, and said, "Surely such an evil as this will not come nigh my dwelling."

And Benjamin spake, saying, "Thou knowest of a surety that certain ones have been taken away from this village aforetime, and thrust into bondage because of debt, and that many such be in bondservice throughout all the land of Judah at this very day."

And Simeon answered, saying, "Yea, I know these things; but never did I lay them to heart until the steward of Ahikam took away my land. And never have I thought much concerning the poor and needy, save that in former times, when the harvest came round, I reaped not wholly the corners of my fields, and gathered not the fallen fruit of my vineyard, but left it unto the poor, as did my fathers of old. For the lines were cast unto me in pleasant places; and I desired only that I and my family should live in quiet and in peace, without harming any man. But now, wherein is my fault? And what is my sin before Jehovah, that all this evil riseth up against me and against my house?"

Then Simeon told Benjamin of the woman in scarlet, and how she said that her father was Tobiah the Maonite, and how Amon said that she became a bond-servant because of her father's debt. And Benjamin

answered, saying, "Now I recall to mind that our neighbor Tobiah was once in debt, and paid it not; and the creditor took one of his children. But never doth Tobiah speak of this; and I doubt not that the woman is his daughter, who hath fallen into evil ways, and hath become an harlot by the altar of Baal in Hebron. But verily I had thought that all the daughters of Tobiah were married in other villages afar off."

And Simeon said unto Benjamin, "Though I know, as thou sayest, that children have been taken for debt, nevertheless, what could I do save that which I have done? For I need much grain, that I and my family shall be fed when the winter cometh. And there is no man of our village who hath sufficiency to give unto me; and I will not steal; and to beg I am ashamed. And though thou art a good friend unto me, there is naught that thou canst do in this thing. So therefore I must needs go and get grain where I could."

And Benjamin would have spoken further; but Simeon went away unto his house, and laid him down; and his tears watered his pillow. And Simeon said in his heart, "My wife is dead; and I know not how many of my sons fall into evil ways; and my goodliest field is taken away; and the grain thereof is reaped at the hands of strangers; and I have borrowed for the winter; and now, if I repay not the lender, I and my family shall be like unto them that go down unto the pit."

Thus did Simeon mourn from day to day, and would not be comforted. And though he continued still at his labors, yet was he pained and bowed down greatly. And on a certain day, when the household of Simeon rose up in the morning to eat bread and go unto their

work, it came to pass that Simeon rose not. And when Joel his son went in to find the cause thereof, behold, Simeon lay dead upon his couch. And all the village lamented him; and he was buried in the burying place of Maon, and slept with his fathers.

X

Now after Nathan had journeyed many days through the desert with the merchants, it came to pass that they began to enter into the country of the Babylonians, going onward therein a long while until they drew nigh to the great river, even the river Euphrates. And they lifted up their eyes, and beheld on the other side of the river the great city of Babylon, which was higher and mightier than all the cities of the earth. And though Nathan had come already unto that place aforetime, yet his heart was moved as he saw from afar the walls and battlements and towers of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of kings, and over all, in the midst thereof, the temple of Marduk, the god of gods, which rose up as a tower of seven stages.

And after they crossed the river, they went onward by a straight way toward the city; and behold, on either side of the way, were fields wherein were many thousands of men with weapons, who marched in ranks up and down, going and returning at the command of captains and officers, who shouted at them; and the armed men appeared to be like unto the sands of the seashore for multitude. And Nathan spake unto his camel-driver, and asked him if this were the army of the king of Babylon. And the driver laughed, and told him that the king had many others besides this.

And when they were entering into the gate of the city, a man came unto them, who was a servant of

Gedaliah; and the man searched for Nathan, and found him, and brought him quickly to Gedaliah, unto his place of business, which was nigh unto the outer court of the temple of Marduk. And when Gedaliah beheld Nathan, he embraced him, and kissed him. And Nathan asked his brother, saying, "Wherefore sendest thou for me again so soon, when I was here but a year ago? And why art thou in such great haste?"

Then Gedaliah took him to an inner room, and closed the door, and said unto him, "Dost thou remember that when thou wast but a little boy, our kingdom of Judah was in a sworn confederacy of peace with the king of Babylon against the king of Egypt?"

And Nathan answered, "I know not much about these things, of a surety. Nevertheless, from my youth up, I remember hearing tell about kings of Babylon and of Egypt; and I know that Nebuchadnezzar did once come unto Jerusalem with his army; but yet he took not the city."

Then Gedaliah said unto him, "What thou sayest is true; but there is yet more concerning the matter. For Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came unto Judah many years ago, because Judah had broken the oath of peace that she had sworn unto the king of Babylon. And at that time Nebuchadnezzar carried away many of the nobles and artificers; and he also carried away Jehoiachin who was king of Judah at that time. And Nebuchadnezzar could have destroyed Jerusalem; but he refrained himself therefrom; and he took the king's uncle, even Zedekiah, and made him king of Judah; so that Zedekiah swore peace, and now reigneth by the grace of the king of Babylon. And though Nebuchadnezzar could have destroyed Jerusalem, and burned it

with fire at that time; yet because he refrained, and destroyed it not, and because he hath come not again these many years unto the city; therefore the rulers of Jerusalem say in their pride that Nebuchadnezzar hath no power against them, to destroy the city of our fathers, because the temple of Jehovah is therein, and because Jehovah the god of Israel is greater than all gods, and will by all means preserve the city of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah forever."

And Nathan spake unto Gedaliah, saying, "Though I knew that strong kingdoms are in the earth, which have armies greater than Judah; yet have I not laid fully to heart that the house of Israel is at the mercy of the king of Babylon. But now that I have heard all thy words, and have seen the armed host of Babylon, I doubt not that king Nebuchadnezzar can take Jerusalem if he desireth."

And Gedaliah said, "Even so. And word hath now come unto me that Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar did raise up to be king of Judah, hath broken his oath which he sware unto Nebuchadnezzar. And therein is the cause wherefore I have sent unto thee again so quickly; for I know not fully what the king of Babylon will do; and there are many things that I desire to show unto thee, which I deemed it not prudent to write."

And Nathan spake, and said, "Thus it is that I must go unto a foreign land to learn what the king of mine own country doeth."

And Gedaliah answered him, and said, "How many of the people of Judah know whatsoever is done by the king and by his counselors? For verily the king and the nobles that counsel him keep such matters very

secret, as long as they may; and few there be among the multitude of the people who know anything until evil befalleth openly, in such wise that all men perceive it; and thus do the people suffer innocently for the sins of rulers."

And Nathan asked him, saying, "What then will the king of Babylon do concerning Zedekiah, and concerning Judah and Jerusalem?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "When the king of Judah brake his oath unto the king of Babylon, then, at that time, Nebuchadnezzar could have taken me, because I am a subject of Zedekiah; and he could have cast me into prison, or even put me to death; and he could have taken all our possessions which we have gathered here in Babylon, even our houses and lands and silver and gold and merchandise, which are greater than we have in the land of Judah. But the king of Babylon and his counselors did not any of these things unto me; for they know that our family of the house of Shaphan doth favor Jeremiah the prophet, who crieth unto the people to serve the king of Babylon. And therefore, by reason of this, and also because I have counseled how the trade of Babylon should be set forward; therefore is Nebuchadnezzar very friendly unto me, and unto our house. But because I am a subject of the king of Judah, therefore the king of Babylon showeth not openly unto me as yet what he will do concerning Zedekiah and concerning Judah. Nevertheless, now must I speak plainly unto thee, and say that because of what I have seen with mine eyes and heard with mine ears, I am fully persuaded that the king of Babylon hath determined to destroy Jerusalem."

Now when Nathan heard this, his heart grew faint; and he remembered the words of Adonijah the wise man; and he desired greatly to speak unto his brother concerning Miriam, but he could not; and he asked Gedaliah, saying, "What then shall we do?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "First, observe what I tell thee, and speak thou not anything of these matters when thou art here in Babylon, save when thou art with me alone. Neither shalt thou speak of them when thou returnest again unto Jerusalem, save as I show thee. For if thou speakest of them to any in Jerusalem, and it is reported unto Zedekiah, or his counselors, or unto his officers, then destruction will come upon thee, and upon Ahikam our father, and upon Gemariah our uncle; and there will be nothing left of all that pertaineth unto the house of Shaphan in Judah, so much as one man."

And Nathan said unto his brother, "I perceive, then, that our house is neither with the king of Judah on the one part; nor wholly with the king of Babylon on the other part. And therefore if we walk not with discretion, we shall be destroyed by the one or by the other."

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "Even so."

And Nathan said, "Then of a certainty are we in an evil case."

But Gedaliah answered, saying, "Not so, if thou but observe to do all that I tell thee. For the king of Babylon is friendly unto me, and unto all our house, and unto Jeremiah the prophet. And therefore must we prepare beforetime. Because even though we have found favor in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors; yet if he sendeth an army with engines of war, to besiege Jerusalem, and to set it on fire, and

to destroy the city, and to carry Judah away captive, know thou of a surety that it will be a time of dismay, and confusion, and shedding of blood, and great terror; and every man will take care only for himself and for his own family; and will care not for any other. And therefore must we make ready in season."

Now after Gedaliah had spoken these words, he led Nathan unto another room, where was a chest of cedar wood, which lay on a table. But ere Gedaliah could show him aught in respect thereto, Nathan spake, and said, "Verily have I seen a chest like unto this in the land of Judah, in the house of Adonijah the wise man."

Then was Gedaliah glad; and he said, "Thou hast been told, therefore, concerning the great book of Israel whereon the scribes and wise men have labored, beginning with Shaphan the scribe, our grandfather, even unto this day."

And Nathan answered, "Yea, much hath been shown unto me by Adonijah the wise man. And now doubtless thou canst show me what our family, the house of Shaphan, hath especially to do therewith."

Then Gedaliah said, "Thou hast known since thy youth that our grandfather Shaphan and two of his sons, even our uncles Gemariah and Elasah, were scribes, and that other scribes, who were not of our house, were with them in certain labor."

And Nathan answered, "Yea; I knew this of a surety. But I inquired not much concerning their work until of late, because I was forward to learn other things."

And Gedaliah said, "That was the cause wherefore nothing was told unto thee. For the work hath been accomplished in quiet, and hath not been much talked

about, even among them of our own household. And this matter is among the causes wherefore I have required thee to come again unto Babylon, that thou shouldst be told concerning our family, wherein the house of Shaphan hath to do with the great book of Israel. And I would that thou shouldst have a part in bringing away secretly the copies of the great book, to carry them in safety from Jerusalem unto Babylon. For the preparing of the book hath cost more than can ever be told, not only in money, but in great searchings out of books from ancient days, and great labor, and thought, and also the making of many copies like unto the first writing of the book. And therefore, ere the day cometh when the kingdom of Judah is destroyed, the rolls must by all means be saved and brought hither against the time to come; whereby the scribes and wise men shall continue in the work and at length finish the book."

Then said Nathan unto his brother, "I will observe to do according to thy words; and mine heart hath joy and gladness to help in any wise concerning the great book of Israel."

Then went Gedaliah unto the chest of wood, and opened it, and said unto Nathan, "This chest hath within it iron boxes, like unto the ones thou sawest in the house of Adonijah; and the boxes have rolls of the great book, as far as the work hath proceeded."

And Gedaliah took out thence two of the iron boxes, whereof one contained a roll of the book of the kings which was not finished; and the other contained the roll of the book of Jeremiah, which Baruch the scribe had made, but which likewise was not yet complete; and he removed the covers of the iron boxes, and

took out thence the rolls of these two books, even the roll of the kings and the roll of Jeremiah, and laid them on the table.

Then Gedaliah opened the roll of the kings, and spread it out upon the table; and he turned unto that portion of the kings whereof the first words are, "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign"; and Gedaliah showed it unto Nathan, and said, "This portion of the kings telleth how the little roll which was made to be a law and an ordinance in the time of king Josiah, was found in the temple by a certain priest, and brought unto the king by our grandfather Shaphan, the principal scribe in those days. And also if thou wilt look, and read in this portion of the kings, thou wilt see that our grandfather Shaphan was the son of a certain Azaliah, who was the son of a certain Meshullam."

And Nathan looked; and saw that it was so; and he said unto Gedaliah. "Though I knew of a certainty that our grandfather was the great scribe Shaphan, yet never did I hear of his fathers before him in our family; and I am glad that the great book of Israel containeth in itself so many names of the fathers in our house."

And Gedaliah continued, and said, "These men, even Azaliah our great-grandfather, and Meshullam our great-great-grandfather, these two men lived in the evil days of king Manasseh. Now it came to pass that these fathers of our house gathered unto themselves great possessions in silver, and gold, and houses, and lands, and servants. And the riches of these men became the inheritance of Shaphan the scribe, our grandfather; and so it was that their possessions were the begin-

ning of the wealth and power of our family in the kingdom of Judah."

And Nathan asked him, "How came it to pass that our grandfather Shaphan had so greatly to do with the little book which was brought unto king Josiah?"

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "In the days of Manasseh, the kingdom was full of oppression and violence; and innocent men were slain throughout all the land of Judah; and there was bloodshed in Jerusalem, from one end of the city unto another; and the common people were held in bondage; and the worship of Baal flourished greatly; and the rich became richer, while the poor grew poorer; so that all the kingdom was like to perish of wickedness and injustice. And the reign of Manasseh was very long, for he sat upon the throne of his fathers five and fifty years; and after him reigned his son Amon, who was like unto Manasseh in doing all manner of evil.

"Then at that time certain great ones in Jerusalem gathered together secretly, and communed among themselves, to the end that there should be more heseed and justice and righteousness in the land of Judah. And chief among these were our grandfather Shaphan, and his son Ahikam our father, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shallum the son of Tikvah the son of Harhas, and also the wife of Shallum, whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess of Jehovah, and a woman of great repute among all the people, both rich and poor.

"Nevertheless, these great ones in Jerusalem were outnumbered by wealthy men who were counselors and ministers and judges and priests unto king Manasseh and unto king Amon the son of Manasseh. And

therefore Shaphan our grandfather, and the princes that were with him in seeking hese and justice, could do nothing of themselves without the help of the common people. So they sent secretly unto the elders of the villages in the country; and there was a great stirring and uprising of the people of the land throughout all the kingdom of Judah; so that they refused any longer to pay taxes and tribute unto the king and his princes and nobles in Jerusalem.

"And when the kingdom thus rose up against oppression, it came to pass that the counselors and ministers who served king Amon sought falsely to gain the favor of the people; and therefore they conspired against Amon the son of Manasseh, and put him to death in his own palace; for they hoped that when they had slain the king they might have more favor in the eyes of the common people, and thus keep the government in their own power. But the people of the land had no trust in these men; so the people slew the counselors and ministers who had ruled with king Manasseh and king Amon.

"And after these things the people of the land went unto the royal palace; and they took the son of Amon, who was but a child of eight years, even the boy Josiah; and they made Josiah king. And moreover, inasmuch as the people had slain the counselors and ministers who served under Manasseh and under Amon, the slaughter of these men struck terror into the hearts of all wealthy oppressors in Jerusalem, who had now no leaders accustomed to rule in the offices of the government. So therefore the opportunity and occasion were at hand that other men should be counselors and ministers, and rule the kingdom in the name of Josiah.

"And thus did the government come into the power of princes among whom our family was the chiefest. For Shaphan our grandfather became the head of the scribes; and with the king also were our father Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah; and at that time Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, became keeper of the royal wardrobe; and he was the husband, as aforesaid, of Huldah the prophetess, who was favorable unto Josiah. And though the new counselors who served the king were but a small part of the wealthy men in Jerusalem; yet because the multitude of the people were with them, and because the ministers of Manasseh and Amon were slain; therefore the greater number of wealthy men in Jerusalem, whose hearts were not with the common people, were brought into fear and into subjection under the counselors of king Josiah.

"Then also did the king's ministers appoint judges to judge in the courts with hesed and justice, and to try with equity the cause of the meek and the humble. So the oppressors were put down; and the people of the country villages took possession again of their fields and vineyards which creditors had seized. And thus were the people delivered from tribute which they paid formerly unto men of wealth. And therefore it is said in the roll of the kings that Josiah did right in the eyes of Jehovah. And likewise in the roll of Jeremiah, which is here spread out before us, we see in the twenty and second portion thereof, how Josiah did justice and righteousness, and judged the cause of the poor and needy; and then it was well in his day. But inasmuch as Josiah began to reign when he was only eight years old; and his footsteps were guided by others; there-

fore when the great book saith Josiah did right, it meaneth chiefly his ministers and counselors."

Then spake Nathan unto his brother, saying, "What time in the days of king Josiah was the little book brought unto the king by our grandfather Shaphan, and made to be a law and an ordinance?"

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "After many years, when all these things had been accomplished; and the poor and needy had recovered their fields and vineyards from the hands of their oppressors; and justice had been established; and the multitude of the people had confidence in the king's ministers; and the kingdom was confirmed in the name of Josiah; then it came to pass that the king's counselors were fully persuaded in their minds that the government was waxed powerful enough to change all that part of the worship in Judah which had come from the Amorites who married with the children of Israel, even the service of the Baalim, the gods of oppression, and the service of the Ashtaroth, the goddesses of harlotry and lewdness."

And Nathan said, "Tell me, I pray thee, how the worship of the people was changed."

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "When the king's counselors were fully minded to root out the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, behold, the little book was brought unto king Josiah by our grandfather Shaphan the chief scribe. And this book not only confirmed the ordinances of justice and righteousness which were already put into effect by the counselors of the king; but it wholly denounced and condemned the worship of any other god besides Jehovah; and it commanded the destruction of every altar in every village, so that neither Jehovah nor any other god should be wor-

shipped outside Jerusalem; and it solemnly required that henceforth all sacrifice unto Jehovah should be in the temple of Jehovah alone, and at none other place whatsoever; to the end that the worship of Jehovah should be under the care of the king, and his priests, and counselors."

And Nathan asked him, "Thou sayest, then, that the little book was not found until many years after the time when the people of the land rose up and made Josiah king?"

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "Even so. As thou canst read in that portion of the roll of the kings which lieth here before us. For the little book was found in the temple in the eighteenth year of king Josiah. And when it was brought unto the king, he commanded Shaphan our grandfather, and Ahikam our father, and others of his council, and sent them unto Huldah the prophetess, who pronounced the book to be the word of Jehovah. And the king and his counselors published the tidings thereof throughout all the kingdom; and they called a great assembly of the people; and both the king and the people made the little book to be a law and an ordinance. And this was the first time in Israel that ever the king or the people had established by law a book to be used in the worship of Jehovah.

"Then did the king and his counselors and servants put away the worship of the Baalim and the Ashtaroth from the country villages and from the temple in Jerusalem; and they cast out the women that were harlots in the temple of Jehovah, and also the men that were therein who pandered to lewdness. And the king commanded the people to sacrifice unto Jehovah alone, at

one place and at one altar only, even in the temple at Jerusalem. And thus did Josiah and his counselors lift up Jehovah before the hearts of all the people, as the lord of hesed and justice and righteousness, that he should not be served as a Baal according to the ways of the Amorites."

Then spake Nathan, and asked, "How came it to pass that the kingdom was turned back again, so that the Baalim and Ashtaroth are served, and the temple is polluted, and the name of Jehovah is forgotten in Baal, and the people are brought into bondage under oppressors, as it is this day?"

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "In process of time, the good things which were done by king Josiah and his counselors were slowly overcome, by little and little. And moreover, it came to pass that the king of Egypt, Pharaoh Necho by name, brought his army into the land of Israel; and when king Josiah went out against Pharaoh to battle, then was Josiah slain; and he was brought back dead in a chariot unto Jerusalem. And thereupon the men of wealth in Jerusalem, who were against king Josiah and against the house of Shaphan, lifted up their heads once more, as in the days of Manasseh; and they and their prophets declared that Jehovah was not with Josiah. And then was all the kingdom in confusion; so that the lovers of Baal gained the advantage, and brought the government back into their own power, as it remaineth until now."

And Nathan said unto him, "Doubtless therefore the worshipers of Baal straightway made the little book of king Josiah to be of no more effect in the laws and ordinances of the kingdom."

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "Even so. For they brought back the worship of Baal in all the cities and in many of the villages; and they appointed other judges in the courts; and they oppressed the poor and needy. And there was only one part of the little book which they continued to observe, namely, that which commandeth all sacrifice unto Jehovah to be in Jerusalem alone; for this giveth power into the hands of the priests, and it bringeth business into the city. Therefore it came to pass that the little book, which was founded upon the words of prophets like unto Jeremiah and Amos, was the means whereby priests who care not for justice were established more securely in the kingdom."

Then spake Nathan and asked, saying, "When our grandfather Shaphan saw that all these things were come to pass, what did he do?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "It was a time of gross darkness; and Shaphan our grandfather made a league and a covenant with others whose hearts were like unto his heart; and they determined that all things concerning Israel should be gathered together into a collection of rolls to make a great book against the time to come. So therefore Shaphan called unto him his sons Gemariah and Elasa, who were also scribes; and he made an agreement with another scribe, Elishama by name, to join himself unto them; and afterwards their company was increased by Baruch the scribe, who now specially helpeth Jeremiah. And these five scribes called yet other scribes unto them, as the labor became greater. And moreover, all of them communed with certain men of knowledge and wisdom, such as Adonijah, whom thou didst visit, and whose

counsel and advice they followed. And thus they labor and work together upon the great book; and when some die, their places are taken by others."

And Nathan said, "Now do I begin to understand many things in our family which never have been shown unto me hitherto."

Wherefore Gedaliah answered him, saying, "Even so. For it hath been a rule in our family from the days of Shaphan, that this matter be not noised about more than is needful, even within our own household. And thus, according as the temple of Jehovah was built in quiet, with stones hewn into shape at the quarry, and no sound of a workman's tool was heard upon it; so also is it with the making of the great book; for the work proceedeth quietly; and there is nothing told unto any man except he first show a desire of the heart thereto."

And Nathan said, "Thus also doth it become clear unto me why so many scribes, who were learned and grave men, did visit our house, coming and going, from the days of my childhood; and peradventure it was for this reason that no costly feasts and merry-makings were given in our house, even though it be a palace like unto the other palaces in Jerusalem."

And Gedaliah answered him, and said, "Thou thinkest rightly. For when our grandfather Shaphan entered upon the doing of this great work, he took all which he inherited from Azaliah and Meshullam, even his palace and all his possessions, and gave them in trust into the hand of his son Ahikam our father, to rule over the same; and from that day forward until now, the cost of making the great book is chargeable unto the riches of the house of Shaphan, even the living of thine

uncles Gemariah and Elasah, and the living of all the scribes that be in the work. Moreover, since the time when Shaphan was minded to begin the great book, the wealth of our house hath increased greatly, so that the possessions and riches that be in the name of Ahikam our father do exceed the wealth of any prince or noble in Judah or Jerusalem; and likewise the possessions that be in my name here in Babylon are even greater than all that which pertaineth unto us in the land of Judah."

Then said Nathan unto his brother, "When the worshipers of Baal gained the advantage after the death of king Josiah, and brought the government into their own hands, why refrained they from devising against our family, that we should be consumed in the midst of Israel?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "This they might encompass in a time of war if the men of our house behaved not wisely. But in time of peace, the worshipers of Baal dare not seek our destruction, lest the multitude of the common people rise up and fight on our behalf, as in the day when the people of the land slew the ministers of Manasseh and Amon. And moreover they refrain from devising against us, to consume our family, because of our wealth, which is great, and which ever becometh greater and giveth us much power. For the men of Baal show respect unto any that have possessions and riches."

Then Gedaliah turned again to the table, and took the roll of Jeremiah's book, and spread it out at the six and twentieth portion, where it saith, "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah." And Gedaliah said unto Nathan, "Read thou herein; and

thou shalt see that even when king Josiah, whom our family upheld, was dead; and when Jehoiakim his son reigned by the help and counsel of them that worshiped Baal; even then, at that very time, was the power of our family shown forth, so that all Judah and Jerusalem could see it. For at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, it came to pass that Jeremiah the prophet was laid hold upon by the priests of the temple of Jehovah, and by the prophets of Baal, who cried out that Jeremiah was a traitor, and was worthy of death. And they brought him for trial, that he should be tried in a special court of the elders and princes at the gate of the temple of Jehovah. And behold, Ahikam our father, the son of Shaphan, was among the princes who tried Jeremiah. And the power of our father, and of the house of Shaphan, was of exceeding greatness in Jerusalem and in Judah, being upheld by the multitude; and so the hand of Ahikam our father was with Jeremiah, that he should be set free and should not be put to death."

Then did Nathan read all these things fully in the roll of Jeremiah, at the place which Gedaliah showed him. And when he had read all that portion of the roll, he spake, saying, "I knew that our father was favorable unto Jeremiah; but I knew not these things that are told herein; and now am I the more desirous to examine all the rolls of the great book of Israel."

And Gedaliah said unto Nathan, "When thou understandest how our family hath been careful and courageous in these matters, thou wilt be the more diligent and faithful in doing that wherewith I charge thee as to the carrying away of all the copies of the great

book, to bring them out of the land of Judah unto Babylon. Know thou therefore that soon after the time when our father procured the release of Jeremiah in the court of the princes, it came to pass upon a certain occasion that two other of the men of our family, of the house of Shaphan, went into the royal palace, and stood up against king Jehoiakim and against his counselors the princes of Baal; and then at that time these men of our family, fearing nothing, interceded with the king that he should not destroy the roll of the book of Jeremiah, which Baruch the scribe had made, and which was to be a part of the great book of Israel in the division of the prophets."

Then Gedaliah took in his hand again the copy of the roll of Jeremiah; and he turned unto the six and thirtieth portion thereof, beginning with these words, "And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah." And Gedaliah said unto his brother, "It was on a day when all Judah came out of their villages to sacrifice unto Jehovah in the temple at Jerusalem.

"And Jeremiah gave his roll into the hand of Baruch the scribe, and commanded Baruch to go unto our uncle Gemariah the scribe, unto the chamber of Gemariah, which thou knowest is in the upper court of the temple, at the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house; for Jeremiah desired that Baruch should stand in the window of the chamber, and read the roll in the ears of all the people who were in the court below. So Baruch went thither; and he found there Gemariah our uncle, and also the son of Gemariah, who helpeth him in the work, even Micaiah our cousin. And then did Gemariah grant leave unto Baruch to stand in the

window and read the roll in a loud voice unto the people.

"And straightway after that, when Baruch had finished reading the roll in the ears of all Judah, behold, our cousin Micaiah made haste, and went unto the king's house, where all the princes of Judah were then sitting. And Micaiah told the matter unto the princes that were in the house of king Jehoiakim; so that the princes caused the roll of Jeremiah to be brought and read unto them also.

"Then went the princes unto the king, who sat in the winter house, where was a brazier with a fire therein burning before the king; and they told the matter unto him. Then the king commanded that the roll of Jeremiah be brought, and read unto him. But it came to pass, when only a few columns of the roll had been read, that the king cared not for it; and he took the roll, and began to cut it with a penknife, saying that he would cast it into the fire which burned in the brazier. Then did our uncle Gemariah, with certain other princes, make intercession that the king should not burn the roll. But the greater part of the princes were with the king in that which he did. And the king said that his father Josiah, who reigned before him, got no advantage from a certain roll which was brought unto him by Shaphan the scribe, for his father Josiah was killed in battle with the Egyptians. Therefore king Jehoiakim said that he would have no regard unto this new roll, which was favored by the sons of Shaphan. So the king followed not the counsel of our uncle; but he cast the roll of Jeremiah into the brazier until the roll was wholly consumed. And the king commanded his officers to go and lay hold upon Jeremiah

the prophet and upon Baruch the scribe. But the officers found neither of these two; for Jeremiah and Baruch had been warned by Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and by Micaiah the son of Gemariah, and by certain other of the princes.

"Then it came to pass, after all these things, that Jeremiah took a fresh roll, and gave it unto Baruch the scribe. And Baruch wrote again from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words that were in the roll which had been burned in the fire by Jehoiakim the king of Judah; and also many other words were added thereto. And the new roll of Jeremiah is copied into the roll which lieth here before us."

And Nathan took the roll, and read in it at the place whereof Gedaliah showed him, even the six and thirtieth portion. And Nathan said unto his brother, "Now can I see, from all thy words, and from that which is written in the roll of the kings and in the roll of Jeremiah, that our family hath been faithful unto the words of hesed that be written in the great book of Israel, from the day when Shaphan our grandfather and Ahikam our father upheld king Josiah in all the good that he did, even unto this day."

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "Yea, verily. And so likewise we shall be faithful in days to come, that the great book shall be preserved, and shall be finished, and shall at last be honored in Israel, and shall go out from Israel into all the world; and men shall cast away all their gods; and they shall seek to serve one God alone in the doing of hesed and justice and righteousness.

"For the children of men shall go onward slowly toward truth; and they shall mend their ways, here a

little and there a little; until a time cometh, whereof no man yet knoweth, when justice shall prevail in every kingdom and between all the peoples of the earth, as hath been prophesied by Micah and Isaiah, whose rolls are here in the great book; for when that time cometh, no nation shall prepare war against any other nation; and they shall make their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."

And Nathan spake, saying, "Thy words are like unto the words of Adonijah the wise man, for they cause my heart to burn within me."

And Gedaliah answered, and said unto Nathan, "Much have I learned from Adonijah; and I would that we might talk of these things without end. But now must we go unto my house, that we may rest and be refreshed."

So they went away, to go unto the dwelling place of Gedaliah. And they walked through a broad street where were high buildings with places of merchandise both large and small, and wherein were much people buying and selling. And great multitudes were going hither and thither hastily on all manner of business; not only the Babylonians, but others in strange garments from all the nations of the earth. And the streets were full of horses and camels and wagons, going to and fro throughout all the city. Moreover there were also chariots a great many; whereof some were driven by nobles in fine clothing, who rode proudly; and others bore officers and men girded with weapons. And there was great noise, and shouting, and tumult; so that Nathan was confused and faint.

And they turned into another street, wherein, behold, a chariot came with speed; and the driver pressed

his horses against the side of the way; so that Nathan and Gedaliah seemed about to be overwhelmed. But Gedaliah laid hold upon Nathan, and drew him into a merchant's door, so that no harm befell them. And the chariot went on, and crashed into the wall of a building; and the driver thereof was thrown headlong, and killed; and the horses thereof brake loose, and raced away as lightning.

And when Gedaliah and Nathan had recovered themselves, Gedaliah said unto his brother, "I could have brought thee by a longer way through more quiet streets; and now I would that I had done so. Nevertheless, it was only a chance that happened unto us; and if one looketh carefully to the right hand, and to the left, and forward, and backward, and watcheth every moment, one can dwell safely in Babylon for many years, even as I have, who love not the great city, but must abide in it. So therefore, lay not these things to heart; for it may be that ere long thou also shalt live herein."

Then they went onward through streets where were not so many high buildings and places of merchandise, but more dwellings and quietness. And they came unto the house of Gedaliah, which was by itself, with grass and flowers round about. And when they were nigh unto the entering in of the gate, Nathan turned and looked back by the way they had come; and he gazed at the high buildings, and lifted up his eyes, and saw again afar off the tower of the temple of Marduk, the god of Babylon. And Nathan said, "Verily, did I once think that our city of Jerusalem was a large place, with many buildings and a multitude of people. And then afterwards, I thought the cities of Tyre, and Sidon,

and Damascus, and those of Egypt were great cities. But Babylon is greater than all of them; and it seemeth even greater than when I was here before."

Then answered Gedaliah, saying, "Yea, doubtless it is even so. For in the meanwhile, since the time of thy former visit, the people of Babylon have gone hither and thither to build many more buildings and high towers; and the city hath grown larger; and people come hither from the villages of the country, to increase the multitude that live here already. And moreover, the fields of the country are swallowed by mortgages, whereby the nobles of Babylon gather all the land into their power; and the husbandmen fall into bondage. And as if the city were not great enough, behold, the merchants, in the chamber of their assembly, have resolved upon a Greater Babylon. And if any ventureth to speak to the contrary, and saith, 'Let us build up the villages and give help unto the country places,' they cry, 'Away with him.'"

XI

Now in the morning it came to pass that Gedaliah spake unto Nathan, and said, "To-day is a great feast day of Babylon, when the people of the city and of the country are gathered together in the temple of Marduk, to offer sacrifices of burnt offerings. And thou sawest not this great sight when thou wast here the first time, because no feast day fell upon the occasion of thy former visit. But now I would have thee go with me unto the temple of the god of Babylon."

And Nathan asked Gedaliah, saying, "How can we, who are foreigners and strangers, enter into a temple where the god of another nation is worshiped?"

And Gedaliah answered him, and said, "I am friendly with the priests; and they will give us leave to be in a certain place where we can behold all things, and yet mingle not with the multitude of the worshippers."

And when they were going unto the temple, Gedaliah spake, and said, "Behold, the son of Buzi walketh in the way before us. Let us make haste, and overtake him."

And Nathan asked, saying, "Who is the son of Buzi? I know not anything of him."

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "He was among the exiles which Nebuchadnezzar carried away from Jerusalem ten years ago. And he cometh of a priestly house; but he speaketh also in the name of Jehovah,

as a prophet. And he prophesieth unto the exiles from Judah, who dwell here in the kingdom of Babylon by the river Chebar; but they believe him not when he saith unto them that Jerusalem will yet be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. And although the son of Buzi agreeth wholly in this thing with Jeremiah, and hath written a roll of prophecy in the name of Jehovah; nevertheless, the scribes at Jerusalem will not as yet number his roll with the rolls of the great book; and there is a division among the scribes concerning him, and concerning the manner wherein they shall finish the great book."

Then they hasted, and overtook the man. And Gedaliah spake unto him, saying, "What doest thou here Ezekiel, thou son of Buzi?"

And the man turned quickly; and when he saw who spake unto him, he said, "What doest thou here, thou son of Ahikam?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "I go to the temple of Marduk, that my brother, who is come to me again from Jerusalem, shall see all things on a feast day. And I would have thee go with us; for I may bring with me whomsoever I will."

Then Ezekiel joined himself unto Gedaliah and Nathan; and they drew nigh unto the great temple of Babylon. And when they were by the side of the temple, Gedaliah reached forth his hand, and knocked upon a little door in the wall. And a porter opened unto them; and they entered in, and went unto the room of the priests. And Gedaliah gave a piece of silver to one of the priests, who took them unto a gallery, whence they could look down, and behold the great hall of the temple, and the mighty image of

Marduk, and the altar which was before the image. Then the priest went away and left them. But the hour of sacrifice was not yet come; and many attendants were going about, to make all things ready.

And Nathan spake unto Ezekiel, and said, "My brother hath told me that thou agreest with Jeremiah in prophesying destruction unto Jerusalem, and hast written a roll of prophecy in the name of Jehovah. And now, I pray thee, tell me why the scribes will not put thy roll in the great book whereon they labor."

And Ezekiel answered Nathan, and said, "The greater part of the scribes agree with Baruch, who is a disciple of Jeremiah; and they believe like unto the teaching of Jeremiah, who saith, 'Do justice and righteousness, and ye shall know God'; and like unto Hosea, who saith, 'I will have hese, and not sacrifice'; and like unto Micah, who saith, 'What doth Jehovah require of thee except to do justice, and to love hese, and to walk humbly?' And therefore the scribes thus far have prepared the great book upon the foundation of the prophets; for Baruch and the scribes with him do say that when the remnant of the house of Israel turneth unto Jehovah alone, they will care not for sacrifices of burnt offerings. But I believe that the multitude of the people in all nations are as children; and they need a manner of worship which they can see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and handle with their hands, even as these Babylonians who worship in this temple. And therefore in the roll of my book are many ordinances of sacrifice for the time to come, which I have prepared in the name of Jehovah. Nevertheless, the scribes who follow Baruch will not

take my roll and number it among the rolls of the great book. But there be a few of the scribes who agree with me; and I believe that I shall prevail in the end; so that my roll will be accounted worthy to be put in the great book of Israel."

Now while they sat and talked, behold, many people began to come into the hall of the temple, a very great multitude, until all the temple of Marduk was filled from one end to another. And the voices of the people rose up like the sound of many waters. And the multitude looked upon the image of the god of Babylon, which was very high and mighty behind the altar. And when the house was full, the chief priest came, and stood before all the people, and cried in a loud voice, and said, "Our god hath made the heavens and the earth; and we are created by his power. So therefore, worship him; for he is our lord, and he giveth prosperity unto our kingdom."

Then the lesser priests came forth from the rear part of the temple with bullocks, and goats, and sheep, and lambs, a very great number, which had been slaughtered for the offering. And the priests put the sacrifices upon the altar, and placed the fire thereunder. And the musicians came, and stood round about the altar. And when the multitude of the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; and when they beheld the smoke ascending from the altar; then all the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

And after these things, the people began to go forth from the great hall of the temple, to make room for yet others who waited to come in unto the sacrifice. And Nathan stood, and looked down from the gallery,

and said, "This is like unto the worship of Jehovah and Baal and Ashtar in the temple at Jerusalem, except that Marduk hath a greater temple and more worshipers."

And Gedaliah said, "Even so. And it is like the temple of Amon-Ra in Egypt, where they have multitudes of worshipers, and many priests, and great offerings upon the altar."

And Ezekiel spake, saying, "The multitude everywhere, in all kingdoms and nations of the earth, require a priesthood and ordinances of worship. And therefore, in time to come, when the people of Judah put away Baal and other gods, and turn themselves about and become converted, and worship one God of justice; then must they needs have sacrifices of burnt offerings throughout many generations before the day cometh when the house of Judah shall worship God in spirit, without any burnt offering, even as Micah and Hosea and the other prophets do foretell."

Then they went forth from the temple; and when Ezekiel made haste to depart unto his own village by the river Chebar, Nathan said unto him, "I will speak with the scribes of Jerusalem concerning the roll of thy book; for I believe that thou hast a work to do in the house of Israel."

Then went Nathan and his brother unto Gedaliah's place of business. And Nathan was there many weeks with Gedaliah, and with the stewards, and with all the servants and workmen, that he should become expert in all things, and should learn the language of the Babylonians. And on a certain day, when they examined accounts of money and possessions, behold, a messenger brought a letter from the royal chamberlain,

saying that on the next day king Nebuchadnezzar would speak with Gedaliah.

And on the morrow, Gedaliah took Nathan with him, and went forth to go unto the king. And when they were come into the palace, the chamberlain said unto Gedaliah, "The king would speak with thee alone. So therefore, leave thy brother here with me, and go thou in by thyself." And when Gedaliah was come to the inner audience room, Nebuchadnezzar greeted him kindly, and asked him of his welfare, and said, "How is thy father?"

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "My father lieth sick, so that he is not like to live. And now my brother is come unto me the second time from the land of Judah, that he should learn the business of our house in thy kingdom."

And when Nebuchadnezzar heard mention of Judah, the fashion of his countenance changed; and he said, "That kingdom hath greatly distressed me of late; for they have not only turned away from me; but they have also requested the Egyptians to be ready to fight against me in case I send my army unto Jerusalem. And although thou art a man of Judah, I know of a surety that thou favorest not the rebellion of thy king, Zedekiah. And moreover, it is well known unto me, not only through thine own words in former times, but through reports which come unto me secretly, that certain of thine own prophets are in agreement with thee against the rebellion of Zedekiah, namely, Jeremiah, who is in the land of Judah, and Ezekiel, who dwelleth in my kingdom. But since I have never paid anything unto them, and since thou hast expressly told me that no one in the land of Judah hath

ever given them a single piece of silver, I know not why these prophets are for me and against the Egyptians."

Then Gedaliah answered, and said, "I can tell thee, O king, why Jeremiah and Ezekiel are for thee and against the Egyptians. They take thy part because they are men of wisdom."

And when the king heard Gedaliah speak thus, he was pleased greatly. Nevertheless, he said nothing for a time, but looked steadfastly upon certain rolls which were spread out before him upon a table, wherein was written much concerning the kingdom of Judah, and the house of Shaphan, and the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And when he was done reading, Nebuchadnezzar looked up, and spake unto Gedaliah, saying, "Many years ago thy family, of the house of Shaphan the scribe, was foremost in setting up Josiah, of the house of David, to be king, and in causing the government of Judah to put down oppression, and to do justice unto the people. But thirty years afterwards, king Josiah was killed in battle by the Egyptians, who are mine enemies. And at that time thy family, of the house of Shaphan, lost rulership in the government; and then the kingdom of Judah was turned about, and was brought into the hands of nobles who were confederate with the Egyptians. And the king of Egypt required much tribute from the land of Judah, year by year. And this tribute was paid by taxation upon the multitude of the poor and needy in the kingdom of Judah. For the nobles of Judah paid not the tribute from their own wealth; and they had no regard unto the good of their own people. And thus the nobles of

Judah waxed richer while the people of the land waxed poorer, and were in bondage unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt.

"Then I went with my army, and fought against the Egyptians, and vanquished them, and set up Zedekiah to be king; and he swore faithfulness unto me. But after I went away with my army, and came back hither unto Babylon, the greater part of the nobles of Judah were yet inclined unto Egypt; and they had power in the government; and they oppressed the poor and needy.

"Nevertheless, thy family, of the house of Shaphan, joined not with the nobles who inclined unto Egypt. And even though the men of thy family no longer had part in the government, yet they had great power and reputation among the people of the land; so that thy father Ahikam was able to deliver Jeremiah the prophet from death when he was tried for treason by the nobles of Judah.

"Now therefore, though I must of a certainty visit punishment upon Judah for its rebellion; yet, because of the house of Shaphan, and because of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, I would not deal hardly with Judah according to the manner wherein the king of Assyria dealt with the ten tribes of Israel. For the king of Assyria not only destroyed their chief city Samaria; but he brake up and scattered the people of that kingdom, and sent strangers among them, to rule over them. But I would proceed according to another manner in dealing with the kingdom of Judah. For I would first remove and punish king Zedekiah and his nobles, who have oppressed the people. And I would then appor-

tion fields and vineyards among the poor and needy; and after that, instead of sending foreigners to rule over the land of Judah, I would appoint thee, Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to be governor."

Now when Gedaliah heard these words, his heart was greatly moved; and he scarce knew what answer he should make unto the king. For never had he thought of returning again to live in the land of Judah; and he desired to remain in Babylon, that he might continue to gather wealth whereby the great book should be finished. Yet he dare not refuse to do according to the word of Nebuchadnezzar; and therefore he spake, saying, "Always, O king, have I believed in the prophecy of Jeremiah, that Judah is to be punished; but never have I supposed that I should once more be called upon to dwell in the land where I was born. Yet I cannot fail to heed the voice of the king in this great matter."

Then spake Nebuchadnezzar unto him again, saying, "I desire not to punish the innocent with the guilty; but rather would I save life, and bring not thy country into ruin. And even now, at the most, if the city of Jerusalem refuseth to yield unto me, I would only destroy Jerusalem, and leave the rest of the land of Judah in freedom. So therefore, ask of thine heart whether it were not well that thou, being of the faithful house of Shaphan, shouldst rule over Judah, and make trial of justice."

Now when the king spake thus of saving life, and making trial of justice, Gedaliah's heart burned within him; and he answered, saying, "If the king would have me to be governor over the land of Judah, I will do as the king desireth, according to my ability."

Then was the king pleased greatly, when he heard these words; and he spake further unto Gedaliah, saying, "Egypt hath ever been a country wherein kings and nobles have held all the land as their own possession; and they have thrust the multitude of the people into bondage and into a furnace of iron; and they have ruled with rigor over all traders and merchants within their borders; for they allow not great numbers of merchant-people to rise up, and increase, and come between the nobles above and the multitude of the poor and needy below. And moreover, they violently hated a certain king who arose at one time in the land of Egypt, and who sought to make justice prevail; for they blotted out all his laws, and called that king a man of wickedness.

"But in Babylon, many years ago, king Hammurabi put forth laws whereby he sought to make justice prevail, and to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak; and we still follow his laws; and we do him honor. And Babylon is a kingdom wherein much encouragement hath been given to those who would put their money into the hiring of artificers to make goods, and into the buying and selling of merchandise throughout this country and between all nations. And in this kingdom the nobles have not ruled with hardness over the merchants and artificers; but they have put money into business; and they have caused land to be sold more freely than the custom is in Egypt.

"Nevertheless, though the people have more justice in such a country as this, yet would I freely acknowledge that even trade and the making of much goods avail not everything. For behold, the husbandmen who till the ground are impoverished, we know not

why; and their number becometh less; while Babylon groweth continually greater; and my merchants foolishly seek to go on building up the city when the husbandmen fall into ruin and have no power to buy what they need. And thus it cometh to pass that although the sons of men have accomplished curious and great things upon the earth; yet never in any country have they found how they shall form a nation according to the full measure of justice.

"And because of this evil, it may be that Babylon and all kingdoms hercabout will perish, and that the dominion of the earth will pass unto other peoples and nations far distant, whereof I possess knowledge through my traders and spies. And moreover, at this very day, certain officers of my army do continually hold watch upon our borders, lest the Medes and Persians and others break through and overcome us. And therefore have I taken a princess of the Medes to be my queen, that they shall be friendly with me. But this marriage giveth no security that the Medes and Persians will not send an army against Babylon.

"And so by reason of all these things, I would have thee to be governor over the land of Judah. And I will punish the king and the nobles who have oppressed the people; and I will take the poor and needy, and lift them out of bondage, and apportion lands unto them; and I will give leave unto Jeremiah the prophet that he shall be free to dwell among the people. And then it may be that thou canst help to search out more perfectly how justice may be established in the government of a nation."

And Gedaliah made answer unto Nebuchadnezzar,

saying, "Thou knowest, O king, that my work hath ever been to gather wealth in business; and I have had no experience in government. But it seemeth to me that the doing of justice in the government of a nation is an easy matter; and I will do as the king desireth, according to my ability."

But Nebuchadnezzar said unto him, "Thou mayest not find the business of government to be so easy as the business of gathering wealth. Nevertheless, it is worthy of many trials. So therefore, be thou diligent at this time to set thine affairs in order; and when the day cometh, I will send thee hence into the land of Judah."

Now after the king of Babylon had made an end of speaking, Gedaliah went forth from the audience chamber unto the place where Nathan waited. And when they were come out from the royal palace, and walked upon the street, Gedaliah told Nathan all things which Nebuchadnezzar had shown unto him, save that the king had appointed him to be governor over Judah.

And in those days, while Nathan was made yet to tarry, that he should learn the affairs of business, his heart was greatly troubled concerning Miriam; and he spake fully unto Gedaliah. And when he had told all things, he said, "O that I might make haste, and return unto the land of Judah."

And Gedaliah answered not at first; but on a certain day he spake, and said, "I will help thee in this thing; for such a maiden would be a better wife unto thee than would the daughter of some wealthy noble in Jerusalem."

And Gedaliah prepared a secret letter for Adonijah the wise man, and placed it in a girdle with many pieces of silver. And he bound the girdle upon Nathan, and sent him away in a camel train of merchants going forth unto the land of Judah.

XII

Now on the day when Simeon of Maon died, it came to pass that Nathan the son of Ahikam was returning across the desert from Babylon, to come again unto Jerusalem. And while Nathan was yet distant about two days' journey from the city, Joel the shepherd, the eldest son of Simeon the Maonite, rose up and went quickly unto Jerusalem, to bring word the second time unto the house of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, hoping that Nathan was returned unto his home. But when Joel found that Nathan was even yet absent, and Obadiah the chief servant could tell him nothing of a surety, Joel showed his errand as before, and went away in distress and sorrow of heart.

And when Joel came back to Maon, certain of his brethren met him while he was yet some distance from the house, and told how Hashabiah, the elder of Hebron, who loaned money unto their father, had sent saying that if they paid not the debt without delay he would have one of the children of Simeon to be a bond-servant. And when Joel heard this, he was amazed; and his heart failed him; and he said, "We have no money wherewith to redeem the debt, nor so much as to pay but a small part thereof."

And while Joel and his brethren were yet in the street, they said unto him, "The money lender sent by the hand of a messenger, who read from a piece of parchment which he left with us, and which Benjamin

the son of Zechariah took away, that he should examine it by himself."

And while they yet spake, behold, Benjamin came and brought the parchment unto them, and went with the sons of Simeon unto their house. And also Laban the son of Samuel was with them. And when they were come in, behold, Miriam had made ready a meal; but she sat by the hearth and would not eat. And Laban spake, and asked her, "Dost thou yet have faith in that prince of Jerusalem who promised help unto thy father?"

And Miriam answered, saying, "Yea, I know he will come unto us." And when she spake, the fashion of her countenance was such that Laban durst not say anything more unto her.

And Joel spake unto Benjamin about the money lender of Hebron; and Benjamin answered, saying, "When thy father told me that he had gone unto Hebron to borrow, he said the man inquired what children thy father had, but he took no pledge of land, as did the steward of Ahikam the son of Shaphan in Jerusalem. And therefore I showed unto thy father how a lender of money who taketh no pledge of land for a debt can come and take a child of the debtor to be a bondservant, according to the law of Baal, which is observed in all the courts of the cities of Judah and by all the judges thereof."

But Asher, one of the sons of Simeon, spake and said, "If the money lender cometh from Hebron, to take any of us, of the sons of our father, to be a slave, then will all of us fight against him, and utterly drive him away; for we be free men of the house of Caleb, in the tribe of Judah. And therefore, if we drive him away,

he can do nothing, because he hath no pledge of land which he can take; and then shall we be rid of him. And afterwards, at some other day, if we get money, we can repay the debt."

And all the brethren of Asher agreed with him, save Joel, who said, "Thy words are fair; yet if the money lender cometh, and we fight against him; or if perchance he come not himself, but send an officer with gibborim, and we fight against them; in that case, because we resist the law, the judges will make yet another matter of it, and send yet more strong men, until we be overpowered; and then will punishment be meted out unto us by reason that we have resisted."

And they talked a great while, but found nothing which they could do; and being wearied, they went unto their rest. And in the morning, according as their custom was, they went forth unto their labor.

So Miriam was left alone in the house. And she made dough, and kneaded it, and baked little cakes in a pan on the hearth. And at the same time, when all the sons of Simeon and all the men of the village were gone, and the women were busied at their work in their homes, behold, four men drew near swiftly upon horses; and they turned aside from the highway, and rode not in the street, but went about by the rear unto the back side of the house of Simeon, where were many trees. So they came unto the door; and one of them watched with the horses; and the others entered into the house of Simeon, going quietly, as Miriam stood by the hearth, pouring out the little cakes from the pan. And because the men came silently, Miriam knew not that they were within the house; and when she turned herself about and saw them, she had no power

of speech. Then the men laid hold upon her, and bound a cloth upon her mouth, and put a turban upon her head, and drew the cloth of the turban about her face. And they carried Miriam quickly, and put her upon a horse, and bound her with the rider that was thereon. Then the men rode away hastily. And so expert were they that for a little time no one in the village knew what was done. And even the men of Maon, that labored in the fields, when they lifted up their eyes, believed they saw only riders going swiftly. And so the horsemen swept onward like wind, going along by the road that leadeth unto Hebron; and they vanished in a cloud of dust.

Now after these things, the village was quiet for a short space. But soon rose up a sound of tumult and shouting, as women and children ran to and fro in the street, and came and stood at the sides of the hill, and raised an alarm; so that the men in the fields were full of terror, and rushed up into the village. Then were all the people of Maon gathered together in the street; and some cried one thing, and some another; and scarce could the men find the cause of the tumult; for the women went on weeping, and the little children also, because their mothers wept; and the whole place was filled with lamentation and woe.

Then came Benjamin, and mounted upon a wagon that stood in the street; and he lifted up his hand unto them; and when they were silent, he spake, saying, "A great wrong and wickedness hath been done this day; for cruel men have come suddenly into the house of Simeon our neighbor who died of late; and they have stolen away Miriam his daughter. And though I know not who they be, nevertheless am I certain that they

come from the money lender of Hebron, who hath taken the maiden to be a bondservant, according to the law of Baal, because of her father's debt. And ye know that this is not anything new in Israel; for the law of Baal giveth creditors power to take young or old, either peacefully or by force; and when the poor and needy are thrust into bondage, they remain therein, and are not released as it is commanded in the little book of king Josiah's law. And moreover, ye know that in times past others have gone from our village into bondservice; but each family is ashamed, and maketh excuse unto the neighbors, and saith such an one is away on a journey or worketh in a city, or such an one is married and liveth in some other village far away. And all these things are even as I have heard say by Jeremiah the prophet; for he showeth how the followers of Baal regard not the cause of the orphan, and consider not the needy; but they lie in wait, and set traps to seize men and women; and afterwards, when they have brought them into bondage, they release them not again. And now therefore, if ye rise not against bondage; and if these things be not ended, the whole house and kingdom of Judah will be ruined, and will go down to destruction, and will utterly perish."

And when Benjamin had said these words, he trembled exceedingly, and was in sore distress of mind; and his heart fainted; and he fell down backward by the side of the wagon; and his neck brake, so that he died; and he was eighty and six years of age.

Now when the people heard these words at the mouth of Benjamin, and when they saw him die thus in their presence, it came to pass that their confusion

was worse than hitherto; so that no more work was done that day in Maon. And some of the people ran to lift up the body of Benjamin, and carry him unto his house; and others went quickly and entered into the house of Simeon, where the sons of Simeon were gathered, and where were certain women who lamented and wept, and showed the little cakes which Miriam had made, which were fallen from the pan, and lay all along the floor.

And the sons of Simeon made bitter lamentation and weeping. But Joel strengthened his heart, and said, "This is not a time for weeping. Up, and let us go in haste, and journey unto Hebron, that we may bring back our sister by force. For that money lender shall not have her to be a bondservant."

So the brethren of Miriam rose up hastily; and one took with him an ax, and another an ox-goad, and another carried a hay fork, and another bare a mattock, and another had a great knife. And when the five sons of Simeon went thus armed, and came out of their house, behold, the people pressed round about them, to send them on the way.

Then did certain youths of the village offer themselves to go unto Hebron with the sons of Simeon. So they made a band with the brethren of Miriam. And as they passed along the street, some cried out, and said, "Why goeth not Laban the son of Samuel with us who seek to rescue the daughter of Simeon? For he desired the maiden in marriage." But Laban stood afar off, and joined not himself unto them. And they railed at him as they went forth to take the highway that goeth unto Hebron.

Now already it was come to pass in the morning of

that day, even the selfsame day, that Nathan the son of Ahikam returned from Babylon unto Jerusalem; and he was in fear of heart, as on the day after the feast of Tamar, when he arose in the morning and found how Eliezer the steward had sent forth men to take the field of Simeon. And when Nathan came unto his home his mother said unto him, "Thy father is neither better nor worse; and after thou hast saluted him, I would that thou shouldst go this day unto Tamar the daughter of Gideon; for she desireth greatly to know all things concerning thy visit unto Babylon; and she would hear it from thine own mouth."

But Nathan said unto his mother, "I pray thee, wait until a more convenient season; for I have much business wherewith Gedaliah hath charged me, both here in Jerusalem and in the country."

Then went Nathan unto Obadiah, the chief servant, and asked him if word had come from Joel the shepherd of Maon. And the chief servant told Nathan how Joel the brother of Miriam, had come twice unto the house, telling how Eliezer the steward had sent again to Maon the second time, and reaped the grain that was in the field of Simeon; and how Simeon had then borrowed money for his need; and how Simeon had lately died.

Then said Nathan within his heart, "Now of a certainty the daughter of Simeon will hold my word to be utterly worthless and of no account; and she will believe not in me any longer."

And Nathan made haste, and went unto the stable of their house, and took his best horse; and he rode forth to deliver the letter of Gedaliah his brother unto Adonijah the wise man. And when he had left the

letter with the servant of Adonijah, he rode on again, to go out from the city. And he had the leathern girdle about him, wherein were all the pieces of silver which Gedaliah had given him.

And because he had already journeyed that way before, and knew how he should go unto Maon without inquiring of any man, it came to pass that he went more quickly than hitherto. And after he rode through Hebron, and was in the way that goeth down to Maon, behold, the sons of Simeon, with the other youths of the village, came on toward him, even the whole company of them, with all manner of tools of the husbandman, to deliver the daughter of Simeon out of the hand of the money lender.

Now when Joel the son of Simeon lifted up his eyes, and saw Nathan riding swiftly, he cried out, and said unto them that were with him, "The riding is like the riding of Nathan the son of Ahikam." Then the young men of Maon stood still by the side of the road. But Joel stood in the midst of the way, and beckoned with his hand, and called out with a loud voice, "Art thou the son of Ahikam?"

And Nathan saw Joel, and heard his voice, and knew him, and was greatly astonished. And he reined in the bridle, and lighted off the horse; and ere Joel could speak unto him, or show him aught concerning Miriam, Nathan told how he came that very day, in the morning of that day, from Babylon, and how he waited not, but was come with silver to succor the children of Simeon. And Nathan asked of Joel, "What meaneth all this company that is with thee?"

And when Joel began to tell him how the money

lender sent strong men that very morning, who took Miriam away by force, because of Simeon's debt, Nathan waxed pale, and leaned against his horse, and found not anything at first that he could say. But when Joel showed him how the sons of Simeon and certain youths of Maon formed a band, to go unto Hebron, and search for the maiden, and rescue her, Nathan said, "Behold, I will go with you; and we will find the money lender, and redeem the debt, and release thy sister."

Then Joel and the others that were with him, when they heard this, were exceeding glad. So Nathan turned, and joined himself unto their company. And it was but a little way back again unto Hebron; and they came into the city toward evening.

And Nathan asked of Joel, saying, "What is the name of the money lender? And how shall we come unto him? For behold, this is a city of many houses and much people."

Wherefore Joel took a writing from his bosom, and answered, saying, "The man's name and the sum of the debt are on this paper; but I cannot read them. And his house is known unto our brother Amon who is with us, and will help us to find it."

Then Joel gave the writing unto Nathan; and he read therein the name of Hashabiah, the son of Achan, and also the sum of the debt, which was fifty shekels of silver. And Nathan said unto Joel, "I have in my girdle more than sufficient wherewith to pay the whole debt and the interest thereon. And now, seeing we are so many, let us have care lest we rouse the fear of the people as the night falleth; and therefore let us go into

the inn, and say that we are from the south, and are weary, and would remain a while ere we go onward again. And thus the greater part of the company shall abide for a time at the inn; and thou and thy brother, who hath been here before, shall go with me, and we will spy out the city, and find what we shall do."

So they went unto the inn. And Nathan gave the keeper a piece of silver, and said unto him, "I pray thee, bring us food and drink; for we have journeyed far, and we are weary, and would be refreshed, that we may continue on our way."

And when all the company was provided with food, Nathan and Joel and Amon separated themselves from the others, and went forth into the street, to make inquiry where they might find the house of Hashabiah the son of Achan. And as they passed out, behold, a woman came, and laid her hand upon Amon the son of Simeon, and greeted him; and he looked, and saw that she was Melka, who spake unto him and his father when they came unto Hebron to borrow money, and whose acquaintance he made already. And the woman said, "I saw thee and thy company but a little while ago, when thou wast entering into the city; and I know wherefore thou art come; and I can show thee all things concerning Miriam thy sister."

Then Amon and Joel and Nathan, when they heard these words, gave ear unto the woman; and she spake further, saying, "I pray you, swear unto me by Jehovah, if I deal truly with you, that ye likewise will deal truly with me, and will tell no man."

Then did Nathan and Joel and Amon swear unto her; and they took an oath, saying that if she dealt with them in truth, deceiving them not, they would

show no man what she did, and would reward her according to her kindness.

And the woman answered and said, "I care not for any reward at your hands. But I would that I might bring to naught the purposes of Hashabiah the son of Achan, and that I might save the daughter of Simeon the Maonite. And moreover, if it were in any wise possible that I could compass the death of the son of Achan, I would slay him with mine own hand. But he is an elder in Hebron; and he hath much gold and silver and possessions; and he hath many friends, and is held in great esteem and honor; and I can do nothing of myself against him."

And Nathan asked her, saying, "Wherefore art thou filled with such wrath against this Hashabiah? And what hath he done, that thou shouldst have desire to slay him?"

And the woman answered, and said, "When I was but a little maid, scarce twelve years old, my father, Tobiah the Maonite, borrowed money of this Hashabiah the son of Achan; and when my father was not able to pay the debt, Hashabiah took me to be a bond-servant in his house. And afterwards he came unto me secretly, and humbled me; and he took me unto the tents which are on the high place where Baal is worshiped. And when men and youths came unto me, and gave me money, behold, I could have but little wages thereof, because most of the money was taken from me and was divided between Hashabiah and the priests of Baal. And they are ever saying unto me that the money is not enough wholly to pay the debt for which I came here at the first; and I am not able to buy food and clothing; and so I have yet other

debts of my own, which keep me always in bondage. And Hashabiah hath never ceased to procure maids and women to be in the worship of Baal and Ashtar; whereby both he and the priests of the high places grow ever more wealthy, purchasing houses and lands unto themselves. But as for me and the women like unto me, we are ever poor and needy, and cannot go free of them that rule over us. And now what good is my life unto me? For I would that I were dead. And as concerneth Miriam the daughter of Simeon, this thing was determined upon by Hashabiah from the time when he found at the mouth of Simeon that such a one as Miriam was in the household of Simeon. And if her father had not a maiden among his children, he would have had no loan of money at the hand of Hashabiah. Now therefore, give ear and attend unto me; and I will show what ye shall do; for I was in the house of Hashabiah this day, in the servants' quarters, even this very day, when the daughter of Simeon was brought bound into the house, and prisoned in a room which is in the upper story thereof; and I know the place well."

Then Nathan said unto her, "Make haste, we pray thee; and show us and all our company the way thither. And thou shalt go in the midst of us; and if thou playest us false, thy life shall be forfeit."

And the woman answered him, "Ye shall slay me if I show aught but the truth unto you."

Then Joel returned unto the inn, and made his brethren and the youths come into the street. And it was the time when people were in their houses eating at even. And Joel bade all the company go softly

and utter not a word. So they went with the woman through many streets, and came nigh unto the house of Hashabiah. And the woman took them into a parcel of ground in the rearward of the house, where were many trees; and she spake in a whisper unto Joel and Nathan, saying. "When the daughter of Simeon was brought hither to-day, Hashabiah commanded to thrust her into the room in the upper story where I myself was put when my father brought me unto Hebron at the first. And this room hath a strong door, with fixtures whereby it can be barred from the outside or from the inside; and the door hath a small round opening in the upper part, as large as a man's hand, where food is passed through, and where one may speak. And when they thrust the daughter of Simeon within this room to-day, she was put there alone, the door being barred from the outside, where a maidservant was left sitting to watch. And this is all whereof I know concerning the matter. So now, if I be given a man's turban, wherewith to disguise myself, then will I go with you, in the midst of you, and I will show you the way."

Then Joel gave her the turban of one of the youths, and asked her, saying, "How many people are in the house of this Hashabiah? And is the place guarded by strong men whom we must overcome?"

And she answered, saying, "Hashabiah hath two wives and many children; and he hath also four women who are bondservants, and two men who are bondservants. But I know not where any of the household may be, or what ye shall do after ye are within the house."

And Joel asked her, "Think ye that the servants will fight for their master? Or can we strike fear into their hearts, that they may do nothing against us?"

And she answered, and said, "I know not what the servants will do; but none of them love him. And even his wives care not for him, and are at enmity between themselves. And this recalleth to me how to-day the servants told me that when the daughter of Simeon was brought here, the wives of Hashabiah saw her, that she is a maiden of a beautiful countenance and well favored; and they were angry, and said, 'Will he take unto himself a new wife, to exalt her and abase us?' But I know not what any of the household will do when ye are come within the house."

And when the woman had shown all these things unto them, she said, "Let us draw nigh now, and see whether we may come in to get the maiden; for it may be that some of the servants are busy in the rear; and if ye knock softly, and they open unto us, we can enter."

Now it came to pass about this time, that Hashabiah the son of Achan was in a room upon the second story at the fore part of his dwelling; and he stood at the window, and looked down upon the garden that was before his house; for he had straitly charged his wives and his servants, and had commanded that when the evening was come, all the household should be in the garden, and have many lights, and make a feast, and eat, and should remain therein until he gave word unto them. And he commanded thus, thinking that when all the family was gathered in the garden before the house, he would go into the back room in the upper story, where the daughter of Simeon was. And

while he was looking down from the window, behold, all his family came, according to his word, with many lights and much food, and made a feast in the garden.

And when Hashabiah saw this, he turned himself, and went over to a table whereon lay parchments with records of possessions and of money taken in and paid out. And he looked, and saw how his account stood for that day; and his heart was glad; and he lifted up his hand, and smote with joy upon his breast and upon his forehead, saying, "Soon Hashabiah will be the richest man in Hebron." And when he had said this, he raised a bowl of wine from the table, and drank mightily thereof.

Then Hashabiah took a lighted candle and went out softly, to go unto the room in the upper story where Miriam was. And when he came to the door, he sent away the maidservant that watched; and he commanded the maidservant to go unto the garden, and eat with the household, and remain with them until he gave word. And after the maidservant had gone away, he opened the door, and carried the bar within, and closed the door and barred it upon the inside, that no one should enter.

Now Miriam lay upon a couch, and had wept herself to sleep in a horror of great darkness wherein she dreamed that the son of Ahikam drew near, and opened the door, and came to save her. And while she lay thus, behold, Hashabiah came, and entered with a candle and barred the door from within. Then Miriam awoke, and rose quickly from the couch, and stood, and looked upon the man and said nothing. For she was minded to make no cry, but to keep her force within herself.

Then the man drew near, until he was about four paces from her; and he said, "Hitherto I have not come unto thee this day, because I would deal kindly with thee. Thou art my bondwoman; and I am thy baal; and I would ever show kindness unto thee. Hast thou no greeting for me?"

But Miriam, thinking still to preserve her strength and put the man to confusion, stood yet and looked upon him, and answered him nothing.

Then Hashabiah spake, and said, "Thou answerest me not; but there is much that I would say unto thee. For I can make thee my chiefest wife, and show thee honor, and give thee a place above all my household; or I can sell thee to service in whatsoever city or place that I will; or I can put thee in the tents on the high place of Baal and Ashtar, and divide thy wages with the priests of Baal; and no man can prevent or hinder me in doing any of these things."

Then Miriam drew herself up, and spake with a quiet voice, and said, "Not while I live shall any of these things be done unto me."

And Hashabiah was astonished greatly; and he said unto Miriam, "Knowest thou not that this is the law, even the law of Baal? For I lent thy father money; and when he died, thy brethren paid nothing. So therefore I sent and took that which I had the lawful right to take. And if I choose, I can send away my other wives with bills of divorcement, and make thee to be my wife. So now let us reason together. I would give thee a better home than thou hadst with thy father and thy brethren. And I have left thee here in this room to rest from the journey; and I have sent

food unto thee by the hand of a maidservant; when already, by this time, I could have come and——”

But Miriam raised her hand, saying, “I care not what thou couldst have done, or what thou hast power to do by any law whatsoever. And I have told thee that none of these things whereof thou speakest shall be done unto me while yet I live. For I will neither be thy wife; nor will I be sold as a bondservant; nor will I be a harlot on the high place of Baal.”

And Hashabiah answered, and said, “How now? Verily thou art a maiden of good spirit. And therefore I be the more determined that I shall have thee and tame thee. For I have sent and found concerning thee, that thou art of good understanding and expert in the household; and I will have thee without delay this very night.”

Then Hashabiah went, and set his candle upon a table that was by the side of the wall; and he turned himself, and came over unto Miriam. Now Hashabiah was not a large man, being of middle stature; and he was gluttonous in eating, and of much lewdness withal. And it came to pass, when he drew near, to lay hold upon Miriam, that the maiden, being of strength because of much labor in the household, reached forth suddenly, and seized him, and threw him upon the floor; so that he was bruised, and lay in exceeding amazement; for he was not accustomed that women should thus deal with him, who was an elder in the city.

And while Miriam looked upon the man, and knew not what to do, he recovered himself, and rose upon his feet in hot anger, and spake, saying, “Now shalt

thou pay dearly." And scarce knowing what he did, he came unto her in fierce wrath, and sought to smite her. But Miriam watched him, and seized him, and threw him upon the floor the second time. And there was no help for Hashabiah, because he had commanded his household to be far away, that he might deal as he would with the daughter of Simeon; but he reckoned not with her spirit and her strength. So it was that while he lay now yet again upon the floor, he was in confusion, and could think not what to do; and he ventured not to call aloud for aid, lest the maiden do more violence ere help should come. But as for Miriam, she stood still, and lifted not her hand against him.

Now when these things were coming to pass, behold, Nathan and the company of rescuers were already within the house, in the rear thereof; and Melka the daughter of Tobiah was in the midst, whispering unto them how they should go. And all the company went softly, with Nathan and Joel before them. And when they were coming by the stairway unto the top story of the house, behold, it was then that Hashabiah fell the second time upon the floor; and the rescuers heard it.

And Melka hasted, and showed them the door with the little opening therein. And Joel went, and stood by the door, and called unto Miriam. And she knew the voice of her brother, and answered him, saying, "Come in hither quickly. My strength faileth. For I have twice thrust away this man who seeketh to do evil unto me; and he lieth now upon the floor."

Then Joel and Nathan beat upon the door, and sought to enter in, but could not. And Joel called

unto Hashabiah, and commanded him, saying, "Open unto us; for we are come to take our sister away hence. Therefore, open thou quickly, or we break down the door." But Hashabiah was in terror, and knew not what to do, being afraid to make answer, and fearing to rise and open unto them lest he be slain. And because he lay near the door, Miriam likewise feared to go and take away the bar, lest before she could do so, the man would rise and prevent her.

Then Joel swung his ax, and brake down the door; and he bade his companions to watch in quiet, and speak no word; and he took Nathan with him, and entered into the room. And they looked, and beheld Miriam standing by the table. And they spake to her, and went over where she was; but she began to faint. And Nathan reached forth, and caught her, and laid her upon the couch. And when Miriam revived, lo, Nathan was holding her hands; and she said unto him, "I knew thou wouldst come. And I pray thee, take me away hence quickly out of this evil place."

Then went Joel unto Hashabiah, and raised him upon his feet; and Hashabiah was in terror, and spake, saying, "Do me no harm, for I harmed not the maiden."

And Joel answered, and said, "We will do thee no violence if we be hindered not in taking the maiden hence. And we will pay our father's debt this very night; and thou shalt give us a writing of redemption therefrom."

Now when Hashabiah heard mention of money; and when he understood that no violence was determined against him; and he knew not as yet how great a number of rescuers were in his house, because they

kept silence without the door; then did Hashabiah begin to wax bold; and he bethought himself that he would require a large sum of money; and he spake unto Joel and unto Nathan, saying, "Ye break the law, for ye come into my house against right and contrary to justice. And ye——"

But ere Hashabiah could speak further, behold, Nathan went over to him, and said, "Who art thou to speak of entering into a man's house? Didst thou not send men who not only entered into a house; but carried thence a maiden by force?"

Then Hashabiah looked at Nathan, and laughed, and spake, saying, "Thou knowest not the law. For I loaned money unto the maiden's father; and when he died, and her brethren raised not a hand to do aught, I had lawful right and power to come and take one of the man's children to be my bondservant; and in this thing all judges and courts in the kingdom of Judah will give confirmation. And by this law I sent and took the maiden, whether peacefully or by force maketh no difference. But thou hast no right that thou shouldst come hither unto my house; nor have ye any right to carry away the maiden by force, for she is my possession by the law of Baal, which hath been the law of this land from ancient days, beyond memory of man."

Now while Hashabiah was uttering these words, Nathan recalled within himself what Adonijah the wise man had shown unto him; how the worshipers of Baal dwelt in the land of Canaan before the coming of Israel from the wilderness; and how Israel destroyed not the former inhabitants, but made marriages with them; and how the law of possession, which was in

the name of Baal, was not overcome by the hesed and justice which pertain unto the desert, and which the tribes of Israel brought into Canaan under the name of Jehovah. And when all these things came into Nathan's mind, he said unto Hashabiah, "Thy law of Baal, which thou lovest, putteth money and possessions above the souls of men; and I will contend not with thee as touching this law. So now therefore, we would pay the debt which the maiden's father owed; and we would carry the maiden hence quickly."

Then Hashabiah answered, and said, "Ye are not come to take the maiden away by force; but ye acknowledge the law; and ye would redeem the debt, and so release the maiden." And he rubbed his hands together, saying, "I will therefore determine the price of her redemption."

Then spake Joel, and said, "That is an easy matter; for I have here with me the writing wherein the debt of my father is written and subscribed to in thy name. And now let us pay it quickly and go on our way."

But Hashabiah answered, and said, "Be not hasty, lest injustice be done unto me. For the debt hath interest added thereto, and also the cost of sending the messenger when thy father was dead and ye made no answer unto me what ye would do, and also the cost of sending men on horses unto thy house to take the maiden, and also the food which I provided this day unto thy sister, and also——"

And when Hashabiah paused, Nathan spake, and said unto him, "Yea, see that thou forgettest not anything at all; but reckon unto Baal everything which belongeth unto him."

Nevertheless, Hashabiah regarded him not, but went

on and searched in his mind; and suddenly he looked, and beheld the pieces of the door which the ax of Joel did break, and which lay scattered about; and he said, "I knew there was yet something. And now must ye make restitution also for my door."

But when he said this, they heard a murmur and a sound of angry voices in the darkness without the room. And Hashabiah drew nigh unto Joel, and said, "What is this? Are there yet others with thee in my house?"

But ere Joel could make answer, behold, out of the darkness came the two prongs of a hay fork which was in the hands of a youth of Maon, who spake, saying, "I and my companions cannot stand here all the night in this place, or presently the man, when he discovereth us, will charge us money for the hire of his house. So therefore, make haste, lest we come in, and fall upon the man, and slay him."

Now when Hashabiah heard mention of slaying him, he laid hold upon Joel and said, "I have determined upon the price of the maiden's redemption." And he named a certain sum of money. Then did Nathan open his girdle, and count the silver unto Hashabiah, requiring him to give a receipt upon the writing that was in the hand of Joel.

And Hashabiah answered, saying, "Come ye with me unto my room, that I may weigh there the silver, and examine it; and I will give a receipt."

Then the whole company descended; and they waited while Hashabiah weighed the silver, and gave a receipt for it, and wrote a release of all the debt. And after that, Nathan turned unto Hashabiah, and took him by the throat, and said, "If ever again thou sendest

unto Maon, or doest aught in this matter, I will come upon thee with a host of armed men, and burn thy house, and slay thee."

So Hashabiah was in terror. And they made him come down with them through the house, unto the parcel of ground in the rear thereof. And they left him there, and went away quickly; and no man knew it. And when inquiry was made for Melka, she was not found; for she had stolen out unawares.

Then they made haste, and came unto the inn where Nathan's horse was. And they put Miriam with Nathan upon the horse, and went all night, returning unto Maon at the break of day. And they came unto the village in great weariness, and scarce could they find words to speak unto the people, or to answer them.

Then did Nathan abide with the family of Simeon. And on the next day he spake unto Joel, who being the elder brother was now head of the house. And Nathan said, "I would that thy sister were betrothed unto me; but I cannot yet take her unto me to wife because I have no possessions in mine own name, and because my father lieth sick and cannot have any matter brought before him. Nevertheless, I have spoken of Miriam unto my brother Gedaliah, who liveth in Babylon and will one day be the head of our house; and he is favorable unto me."

Now Nathan and Joel were by themselves on the hillside near the house; and they stood under an oak tree. And Joel was glad, and answered Nathan, saying, "I go to find the maiden and send her unto thee; for thou knowest that I would give her into thy keeping."

Then went Joel unto the house; and Nathan stood

by himself, and lifted up his eyes, and looked afar off, and heard the voices of them that labored in the fields and vineyards of the valley; and he beheld in the distance the hills of Maon, whereof part were in pasture and part were covered with trees of the forest. And on a certain hillside were sheep, with a shepherd lad, who piped unto his flock; and the sound of the piping came unto Nathan upon a gentle breeze that stirred the tree above him. And he said in his heart, "This land of Israel is beautiful above other lands of the earth; and yet it hath great sorrow."

And while Nathan spake thus within himself, behold, Miriam came unto him, knowing all things from the mouth of Joel. And Nathan took her and kissed her; and they two were alone under the oak tree. And when they had talked a long time, he said unto her, "I would that I might abide in Maon, and live here forever. But I must needs make haste and return unto Jerusalem; for many things call me, whereof I shall tell thee later."

And Miriam answered him, and said, "I pray thee, when thou returnest unto Jerusalem, take not the road that goeth past Hebron; for if that wicked man see thee, I know not what he would do. But there is another way, which goeth up through the wilderness of Maon and the wilderness of Ziph, and passeth along by the hill of Tekoa; and thou wilt learn of that way from Joel who knoweth shepherds in those parts of the land."

So she made Nathan promise that he would not go by the way of Hebron; and they returned unto the house. And about the time of midday, Nathan made ready to depart. And Miriam gave him a little bundle

of food for his journey, and went with him unto the door; and they kissed each other. And she stood by the door in tears, but came not without the house. And Joel went forth with Nathan, and showed him how to enter upon the way of the wilderness.

XIII

Now it came to pass that Nathan went on slowly because the way of the wilderness was crooked, and because he must needs inquire of the dwellers in those regions. And about the going down of the sun, he lighted on a certain place where were shepherds of Tekoa with their flocks. And when he told them of his journey, the men spake kindly unto him, and said, "Abide with us, for the evening falleth fast. Therefore tarry here, and strengthen thine heart with a morsel of bread; and afterwards in the morning thou shalt go thy way."

So Nathan abode that night with the shepherds; and they did eat and drink, all of them together. And they were by a great rock which formed the one side of a sheepfold, whereof the other sides were of stones laid out from the rock and coming back unto it; and the sheep were gathered within the fold. And Nathan sat with the shepherds about the fire of wood that lighted all the place.

And when Nathan told them how he came from Jerusalem to give help unto a certain family of Maon which was in debt, the elder shepherd said unto him, "Never heard we of one wearing goodly raiment like unto thee, who desired to see justice done unto the poor and needy; but all great ones band themselves together, even the nobles and princes and kings and

judges and priests, that they may the more easily oppress the people, and grind the faces of the poor."

But Nathan answered him, and said, "Among the mighty there hath never lacked some that care for the poor, and who seek justice for the oppressed. And have ye never heard of Shaphan the great scribe, who formed a confederacy with certain princely houses, to make Josiah king when he was but eight years old, that they should establish heseed and justice and righteousness in all the land of Judah?"

And the shepherd spake, saying, "Many kings have reigned in Jerusalem upon the throne of this kingdom; and many are the lords and princes that have ruled with them. But we poor folk in the wilderness know not who they be; and scarce can we tell the name of him that now reigneth. And as for Josiah, it seemeth unto me that my father, who is an old man, hath spoken the name of that king in time past. But what doth it profit us that we should remember names? For our lot is hard, and our way is weary, whoever be the king that sitteth upon the throne."

And Nathan asked him, "Know ye not of Jeremiah, who hath prophesied these many years in the name of Jehovah on behalf of the poor and needy?"

And the shepherd answered, and said, "We have heard mention of the name of this prophet; but we know nothing of him, so much as whether he be now alive, or whether he be dead. And even if he crieth out by day and by night for the poor and needy, he getteth nothing for us. And whoever it be that prophesieth, or whoever it be that sitteth upon the throne of the kingdom, we must ever pay dear for what we buy in Hebron, or in Bethlehem; and we must ever

sell the wool of our flock for little. And when we deal with the merchants of the cities, they use false weights and false measures. And whensoever we go into the city, behold, an officer layeth a tax upon us."

Then was Nathan's heart sad, when he heard all these words; and he asked the shepherd, saying, "Think ye that it will be well in time to come?"

And the shepherd answered him, and said, "What know we of the time to come? But as for the times that are past, we have heard that when Jehovah brought our fathers into this land from the desert, they lived at first in prosperity. But now they serve Baal, who is the god of oppressors; and all things become daily worse."

So they talked together a long time after the stars came forth. And the elder shepherd said unto Nathan, "When thou goest hence unto Jerusalem, thy way lieth past the hill of Tekoa, where is the house of my family, and where liveth a very aged man, Elkanah the son of Bethuel, who hath a writing wherein are the words of a certain prophet Amos, who dwelt of old time in Tekoa. And this man Elkanah knew not the prophet; but his grandfather knew him. And if thou wilt turn aside, and ascend up into the hill of Tekoa, thou canst find him, and talk with him; and he will read unto thee from the little roll. But the prophet Amos hath never gotten anything for us. And therefore, what good is the prophet or that which he prophesieth?"

And Nathan was minded to reprove the man, and tell him how the prophets led the way toward the true God, and how the scribes labored upon the great book in Jerusalem. But when he would have spoken,

he looked upon the face of the shepherd by the fire, and marveled at the sadness of his countenance; and he considered his garments, which were exceeding rough, being made of the skins of beasts; and Nathan said in his heart, "This man of the wilderness hath always a great struggle to maintain himself; and he showeth himself unto me a stranger; and who am I, that I should rebuke him?" So Nathan spake not, but held his peace.

And afterwards they laid them down to sleep by the fire, save one that watched. And when the morning was come, Nathan made ready to depart; and the elder shepherd went with him some distance, to set him in the right way; and Nathan journeyed on by himself alone till midday, when he drew nigh, and ascended up into the hill of Tekoa.

Now when he was come into the street of the village, behold, a little lad ran forth to meet him; and Nathan inquired for the man whereof the shepherd told him. So the lad took Nathan unto a certain house; and the man came unto the door; and Nathan asked him, "Art thou Elkanah the son of Bethuel?"

And he answered, saying, "Yea, I am he."

And Nathan said, "I am of the house of Ahikam the son of Shaphan at Jerusalem; and I am returning through this wilderness from Maon; and a certain shepherd which I met yesterday told me that if I would ascend up into this hill, I should find one here who hath a roll of an ancient prophet who spake for the poor and needy in the name of Jehovah. And now therefore, if thou hast the roll, I pray thee, show it unto me, that I may see it without delay; for my journey presseth."

And Elkanah the son of Bethuel answered, saying, "Blessed art thou of Jehovah. And peace be unto thee, for thou art of that faithful house which helpeth certain scribes to prepare a great book which telleth of Jehovah and Israel. Therefore come thou in hither, and refresh thyself; and I will show thee the roll of Amos, the prophet of Tekoa."

Then the man called unto his wife to bring bread and wine quickly. And he went and fetched the roll of Amos the prophet, and spread it out upon the table before Nathan. And Elkanah said unto Nathan, "Long ago, certain scribes of thy father's house went round about all the land, in search of ancient writings; and when they heard tell of a roll in this village, behold, one of the scribes came unto me, with a parchment, and a pen, and a writer's ink-horn; and he made a faithful copy, which he took unto Jerusalem; and they put it with the rolls of the other prophets in a great book whereon the scribes labor, even unto this day."

And when Nathan heard that the roll of Amos was already copied by the scribes, he was glad, and said unto Elkanah, "I will tarry not to read thy roll, since I am in haste; but I will read the copy thereof when I am come again to Jerusalem."

Then Elkanah took him forth into the street of Tekoa, and showed him a very ancient house of stone at the end of the street, where in old time dwelt the family of Amos the prophet; and he took him unto the burying place of the village, where was the prophet's grave. And he spake unto Nathan, saying, "Amos was a keeper of sheep in this wilderness round about Tekoa. And he had groves of trees in the low-

land, bearing fruit. And at certain times he left the sheep with his brethren, and went here and there in the land of Judah, to inquire concerning the people and their ways. And he was neighbor unto my grandfather, and gave unto him this roll of his prophecy; and my grandfather gave it unto me, that I should keep it against the time to come, as a witness forever."

And Elkanah took Nathan unto a place upon the brow of the hill without the village, and said unto him, "Lift up now thine eyes and look all abroad. And when thou lookest unto the south and the west, behold other hills rise up which prevent thee from seeing far away. But when thou lookest eastward, behold the wilderness falleth toward the Salt Sea, even the sea which is by the mountains of Moab. And when thou turnest unto the north, behold the village of Bethlehem, and beyond that is the mount of Olives; but Jerusalem lieth hidden because of the mountains that be round about it. And when thou lookest beyond the mount of Olives, thou seest the hill country of Ephraim, which is north of Jerusalem, and which was once the habitation of those tribes of Israel that were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians. And those tribes were in Ephraim in the days of Amos. And when he looked abroad from this hill, and beheld their dwelling place far away, he desired to go and prophesy unto them. So therefore he journeyed unto Bethel in the land of Ephraim, and spake against oppressors who trampled upon the poor and sold the needy into bondage; and he cried out in the name of Jehovah, saying that justice should roll down like the waters of an everflowing stream. Nevertheless, the priest that was in Bethel came forth and drove Amos away. And all

these things wilt thou see when thou readest the roll of Amos."

Now after Elkanah showed him all these things, Nathan bade him farewell, and went down from the hill, to go onward through the paths of the wilderness until he should come to Bethlehem. And when he drew near unto Bethlehem, he rode out upon the highway, and returned quickly unto Jerusalem to his father's house ere the sun went down.

And when Nathan was putting his horse within the stall, behold, Obadiah, the chief servant in Ahikam's palace came unto Nathan secretly. Now Obadiah had been forty and six years with Ahikam, being established over the household in the lifetime of Ahikam's first wife, the mother of Gedaliah. But when Gedaliah's mother died, Ahikam took unto him Leah who bare Nathan; and this woman was not favorable toward Obadiah the chief servant. Nevertheless, because Obadiah was a man of wisdom and understanding, who ruled with justice and kindness, Nathan's mother found not anything that she could do against him. But it came to pass, when Ahikam was taken sick, that Leah the mother of Nathan began to behave herself proudly, and to do things which Ahikam had forbidden. And so it was that Obadiah, the chief ruler of the palace, protested unto her, but without avail. Therefore Obadiah watched her the more diligently, and required that certain servants whom he trusted should report unto him day by day concerning her. And it was for this reason that Obadiah came secretly unto Nathan while he was yet putting his horse within the stall.

And Obadiah said unto Nathan, "I would speak with

thee concerning thy mother; for since thy father hath lain sick, and more especially while thou hast been away this time in Babylon, she goeth against thy father's instructions. And I would have spoken unto thee when thou didst return the other day from Babylon; but thou hast away quickly."

And Nathan answered Obadiah, saying, "I and my mother agree but little in anything; and even she herself is wont to say that I am like my father and bear no likeness unto her."

And Obadiah said, "Thou knowest how she seeketh to bring about a marriage between thee and Tamar."

And Nathan answered, and said, "Yea, I know this. But her word moveth me not at all. And now, I pray thee, tell me what she hath done."

Then Obadiah showed the matter unto him, saying, "She is weary of the restraint which thy father hath put upon her these many years, commanding her to worship in the name of Jehovah only, and to refrain from other gods and from all that pertaineth unto their worship. And therefore she hath gone with the family of Gideon the son of Shallum, and hath worshiped in the name of Baal and Ashtar, not only in the temple but also in the high places of Baal. And she saith that those few people which worship in the name of Jehovah only are solemn and sad folk, who are very pure, and who cry out against all other people, even as doth Jeremiah the prophet; whereas the worship of Baal and Ashtar is full of merrymaking and joyfulness among all the multitude, both rich and poor. Moreover, she believeth not that thy father will recover of his illness; and therefore she saith that he will never know of her doings."

And Nathan said unto Obadiah, "She is a woman of sharp speech and quick wrath; and if she obeyeth not my father's commands, how much less would she give heed unto the word of any other. And therefore I know not what should be done."

Then Obadiah continued, and said, "This is not all that I have to show unto thee concerning thy mother. For Eliezer the steward hath sent and told her all things that have to do with the matter of Simeon the Maonite, and of thy love for the daughter of Simeon. And both Eliezer and thy mother seek to prevent thee from having the maiden to wife."

Now when Nathan heard these words at the mouth of Obadiah, his anger was kindled; and he would have gone hastily unto his mother. But Obadiah laid hold upon him, and said, "Thou canst accomplish nothing by angry words. And therefore, when thou seest her, thou shouldst behave wisely and cunningly, and speak not at all concerning this matter; and whatever she doeth or sayeth, bring word again unto me."

So Obadiah restrained Nathan until his wrath was abated somewhat; and when Nathan had promised that he would observe the counsel of Obadiah, he let him go.

Then went Nathan into the house; and his mother met him, and said unto him, "So my son loveth a poor country maiden when he could have to wife the daughter of a rich man who is counselor in the government of the kingdom. And therefore thy ways are strange; and thy doings are not according to the manner of princely houses."

But Nathan guarded his lips, and answered, say-

ing, "My brother in Babylon, when I showed him all things, thought not that my ways are strange."

And his mother spake, and said, "What care I for the thoughts of that son of a perverse woman? My hope is in thee; and if thou marriest this maiden whose brethren keep a few sheep in the wilderness, behold, all her family will descend upon our house like a plague of locusts; and thou wilt do this to my shame in the eyes of all the high and honorable families in Jerusalem. And therefore, if thou takest a wife of such people, what good shall my life do me?"

And his mother wept, when she had said these words. But Nathan feared to speak further, lest he reveal that which Obadiah showed unto him; and knowing not what to say more, he departed, to go unto his rest.

And in the morning, Nathan's mother went unto him, and said, "Come quickly; for one is here that would have a word with thee." And Nathan, supposing that peradventure he should see a messenger from Adonijah the wise man, or from the village of Maon, went hastily with his mother; and when they came unto the chamber, she opened the door, saying, "Go thou in thither." And being taken unawares, Nathan stepped within the room; but his mother stood without, and closed the door upon him.

Now when Nathan was come into the room, he saw no one. But while he looked about him, behold, a woman stood forth from behind the tapestry; and Nathan was astonished, and spake unto her, saying, "Is it thou, Tamar? How camest thou in hither? I knew not that thou wast in our house."

Then Tamar drew near unto him, and said, "Speak not so loudly, my beloved, lest thy voice be heard." So she came, and caught him by his garment, and kissed him, and embraced him. But he brake away, and left his outer garment in her hand; and when he would have escaped, lo, his mother opened the door, and stood at the entering in of the room.

But in a moment, before any of them could frame words to speak, they were affrighted by a sound which proceeded whence they knew not. And while they were in astonishment, behold, a certain place in the wall of the room opened upon itself; and a man came forth; and it was the chief ruler of the palace, even Obadiah, who looked upon the two women, and said, "Ye thought to entangle the young man, that ye might send word unto the south country by the men of Eliezer the steward; so that the village maid and all her brethren should hear say that the son of Ahikam was in the embraces of Tamar the daughter of Gideon. And ye would have sent word unto the maiden while Nathan as yet knew not that ye did so. But the foolish device which ye framed hath come to naught."

Now when Obadiah said these words, the two women could find nothing wherewith to answer him; and they were in great distress and vexation of spirit. And they would have gone away quickly because they were confounded and put to shame; but Obadiah stood before them, and said, "Ye fear lest this thing be told; but neither I nor the young man will say aught concerning the matter; and nothing will be made known if ye look well to your ways, and seek not to devise foolish devices against the innocent."

So Obadiah let them depart. And when they were

gone away, he spake unto Nathan, saying, "Fear not what such as these may do; for God is with us to bring their foolishness to naught. And now attend unto my words. Behold, a servant of Adonijah the wise man is come hither; and thou shalt go with him, and remain certain days in the house of Adonijah. And if need arise for thee in thy father's house, I will send word quickly. Make haste, therefore, and prepare thyself."

Then was Nathan glad when he heard mention of Adonijah; and he prepared himself, and went forth, to go unto the house of the wise man. But his mother and the daughter of Gideon were enraged against him, and against Obadiah; and they sought what they might do, but found not.

XIV

After these things Nathan went forth with the servant of the wise man, to go unto the house of Adonijah: And as he passed along through the city, he thought how Miriam was like to have been sold forever into bondage, and how the poor and needy in all Judah were oppressed by the great men who ruled the government in Jerusalem; and he recalled again to his mind the words of Jeremiah, that Jerusalem was wholly oppression in the midst thereof, and that ungodliness had gone forth from her into all the land. And passing onward from one street into another, he looked round about upon the buildings, and upon the multitudes of people going hither and thither; and he said within himself, "Behold, all the world now seemeth different unto me than it did but a little time ago." And he spake to the servant of Adonijah, and said, "The kingdom of Judah is a house of bondage; and it is a place wherein the rich mostly follow after Baal, to live upon the labor of the poor and needy; wherefore it deserveth to be punished, even as Jeremiah saith in the name of Jehovah."

And the servant of Adonijah answered Nathan, saying, "These many years hath my master spoken likewise; and so also speak the multitude of the people, being poor and oppressed. Yet are they held back in murmuring against their lot because if the kingdom be destroyed, they know not what cometh upon them.

And so all things go on from day to day. But as for me, even though I was bought with money by my master Adonijah, when I was a little lad; yet have I always been dealt with in kindness; and so it is with servants of Ahikam thy father, who are all of them treated with kindness by Obadiah, the ruler of the palace. And if all the nobles and rulers of Judah were like unto Adonijah, and unto Ahikam, then would the laws of this kingdom be changed; and it would be a nation of justice and righteousness."

And as they went onward through the streets, Nathan said, "Behold all these that labor and are heavy laden. They do the work of the world; and yet their garments are poor, and the food which they eat is not good. But the rich, who work not, are clothed in purple and fine linen; and they fare sumptuously every day."

And as he spake thus, a company of bondservants passed by with grievous burdens upon their backs; and they were driven by an overseer, who struck them with a scourge of cords. And the overseer cried unto them, saying that they were but lazy beasts, who should go more quickly. And one of the servants, who bare a bundle which was exceeding heavy, stumbled and fell; and the overseer cursed him, and scourged him, so that the blood gushed out upon him.

Then went Nathan, and spake sharply unto the overseer, who raised his whip and would have struck him; but beholding the manner of Nathan's garments, and hearing his words, which were not as the speech of the common people, he asked hotly, saying, "By what right chidest thou me? For I am not answerable unto thee. And what knowest thou of servants and their

ways? For thine apparel and thy speech are princely; and thou art not used to the bearing of burdens. So therefore, see to thine own affairs, and delay me not; lest my master chastise me also."

But Nathan regarded not the words of the overseer. And he went, and raised up the servant that was fallen upon the pavement, and spake kindly unto him, saying, "I will bear thy burden for thee unto the place where thou goest." And Nathan lifted the bundle from the ground, and placed it upon his own shoulders, and said unto the overseer, "Go onward now." So Nathan walked with the bearers of burdens; and after them came the overseer, and the servant who was wounded, and the servant of Adonijah; and all of them wondered in their hearts, but knew not what to say. And because of the tumult, and noise, and uproar of the city, none of the people in the streets had regard unto the matter.

And after they had proceeded a great distance, they came unto a certain place where every man loosed his bundle and set it on the ground. And when Nathan had put off his bundle, he looked up, and behold, they stood by the rearward of the palace of Gideon the son of Shallum, who was the father of Tamar; and all the company of servants were of the household of Gideon.

Then spake the overseer, and asked of Nathan, "Who art thou?"

And Nathan answered him, and said, "Seek not my name; but seek rather to deal kindly with them that be under thee."

But the man spake, saying, "Yea, thou biddest me deal kindly; but my master Gideon the son of Shallum

biddest me deal rigorously, that the servants may labor the more. And as for me, I waited long that I should have this place of authority; but if I do as thou sayest, I have no more the favor of my master, who will thrust me down from being an overseer, and make me to be again as one of the other servants. And therefore thy words and thy counsel are not good."

And Nathan stayed not that he should speak any further with the overseer; but he went unto the servant that was wounded, and gave him a piece of silver. And when he had done this, he turned unto the servant of Adonijah, and said, "Come, let us go hence quickly."

And they departed in haste, and went unto the house of Adonijah. And when they were come in, the servant brought Nathan upon the housetop. And behold, a company was gathered together, sitting under the curtains of a pavilion upon the forward part of the roof which was over against the broad way before the temple. And when Adonijah saw Nathan, he rose up, and came over unto him, and greeted him, and said, "Thou goest about on so many journeys that I feared lest my servant found thee not."

And Nathan asked him, saying, "What meaneth all this company which mine eyes behold? And how shall we commune together as touching the matters whereof I would speak with thee?"

And Adonijah answered him, saying, "Fear not to speak with me in the presence of these gathered here; for they are as foundation stones of the new Israel which God hath laid, whereof some are already known unto thee. And therefore shalt thou commune with all of us regarding thy journey; and after that I will make known the words of thy brother Gedaliah in the

secret writing which thou broughtest unto me the other day."

So Nathan went with Adonijah unto the pavilion. And he found there faithful men, who labored upon the great book of Israel, even his uncle Gemariah, the great scribe, the son of Shaphan, together with Baruch the scribe, who wrote the roll of Jeremiah the prophet, and Elishama the scribe, and many others of that occupation. And also he found certain wise men, whereof Adonijah was chief.

And when all of them had greeted Nathan, he sat down in the midst of the company. And they spake unto him, asking many questions; and he answered and showed them all things concerning his journey to Babylon, and his brother Gedaliah, and Nebuchadnezzar the great king, and Ezekiel the prophet. And also he told them of his going unto the south country on the day that he returned from Babylon, and of how he helped in the rescue of Miriam at Hebron, and of his journey through the wilderness of Tekoa, and of his return again to Jerusalem, and of Obadiah the ruler of his father's palace, and of his mother and her worship of Baal, and of Tamar the daughter of Gideon. And they gave ear unto him, and attended carefully unto all his words, and encouraged him, that he show forth all things fully unto them.

And afterwards Nathan spake unto Adonijah, and asked him, saying, "Shall we not be accounted traitors by all generations in time to come, because we knew that the destruction of our city was prepared; and yet we warned not king Zedekiah and his counselors?"

And Adonijah answered, and said, "Not so. For king Zedekiah and his counselors have broken the oath and

the covenant, which the king sware in the name of Jehovah unto Nebuchadnezzar; and they have refused tribute, and have sent ambassadors into Egypt, that the king of Egypt might give them horses and men of war. And therefore, that all generations may know in time to come, behold, these things are declared in the name of Jehovah by Ezekiel the prophet, whom thou sawest in Babylon, and whose roll is prepared even at this day, but is not yet made to be a part of the great book."

Then went Adonijah unto his chamber of writings, and brought up thence to the housetop a copy of the roll of Ezekiel the prophet; and he read from the seventeenth portion thereof, where it saith, according to the word of Jehovah, that the house of Judah, being bound in a covenant with Babylon, was rebellious against its oath, and must go into captivity. And when Adonijah had read this portion from the roll of Ezekiel, Nathan spake unto him, saying, "Of a certainty, these words are like unto the words of Jeremiah, which he crieth aloud in the streets of our city, that we should serve the king of Babylon. And even though it be charged in this our own day that such words are treason to our nation, yet in time to come the remnant of the house of Judah will know the truth."

Then spake Gemariah the scribe, the son of Shaphan, unto his nephew Nathan, saying, "However, know thou, and lay well to heart, that we do these things in peril of our lives; not only because we know that destruction is to be visited upon our city, but because they that rule this kingdom would not have their deeds recorded in any books. For they hold in contempt the little roll of king Josiah's law; and likewise

they hate the roll of Jeremiah, whereof one whole copy was cut with a knife by king Jehoiakim, and burned with fire in the presence of many princes and nobles who stood beside the king, even though I and certain others made intercession with the king that he should not destroy the roll. So therefore, we know from these things that if the rulers had the power, they would cause the great book to be destroyed, that it should never be finished."

And Nathan answered Gemariah his uncle, saying, "Of a certainty, the house of Israel will have nothing whereby it is remembered among the generations of men in time to come, save this book only, which telleth how God is made known. Yet the great book must nevertheless be prepared and wrought in fear and in secret, as though it were altogether evil. And this thing seemeth terrible to me."

And Gemariah continued, and spake unto Nathan, and said, "Verily, the great book goeth contrary to that which is established by law in Jerusalem; and for this reason it is a thing unlawful in the eyes of them that now have dominion over the kingdom of Judah; for it setteth forth all the evil which they and their fathers have done in serving the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and in worshiping Jehovah under the name of Baal, to do injustice unto the poor and needy. Therefore have they persecuted the prophets that prophesy like unto Jeremiah; and because of these things the rulers are against the great book."

Then answered Nathan, and said, "All that thou showest unto me will I remember and lay to heart; and I will speak not unto any man regarding it. Nevertheless, one thing troubleth me: Why are ye scribes

agreed not that the roll of Ezekiel should be a part of the great book, when this prophet is like unto Jeremiah in saying that the people should serve the king of Babylon? Why put ye the roll of Jeremiah into the great book, but refuse thus far to put the roll of Ezekiel in also?"

Then all the scribes and wise men looked upon one another, and spake among themselves, and said, "Shall we show this thing unto the young man, or shall we forbear?" And there was a division among them. But the counsel of Adonijah prevailed; and he spake unto Nathan, saying, "A controversy hath arisen among us, which hath to do not only with Ezekiel's roll, but which holdeth back the scribes from laboring together any longer upon the great book; and they are now divided into two companies, whereof the larger part followeth after Baruch, and the smaller company followeth after Gemariah thine uncle. Thus thou seest that although the scribes were hitherto united as one man; yet now are they divided. And never will the great book be finished if they agree not among themselves. And for this cause have we been meeting of late, that we should commune together, and reach a conclusion."

Then spake Adonijah unto Baruch the scribe, the disciple of Jeremiah; and he requested Baruch that he speak on behalf of the scribes which were in agreement with him, to show how they would have the great book to be finished. So Baruch arose, and spake, saying, "Ye know how our fathers have served many gods from ancient times until this day; and how even our small kingdom of Judah hath but once followed after Jehovah alone, in the days when our kingdom was

established for a season upon the little book of king Josiah's law.

"And furthermore, ye well know how that same little book is now held in contempt by them that rule the kingdom of Judah, save where it commandeth all worship of Jehovah to be in Jerusalem alone, and maketh unlawful the worship of Jehovah upon the high places of the country villages. And therefore we see that while the Baalim and the Ashtarothe are everywhere worshiped throughout all Judah, and in Jerusalem; yet when the people of the land would gather together upon a feast day, and bow the knee unto Jehovah, they must go unto Jerusalem, and pay the priests' due of sacrifice, namely, the flesh of an ox or a sheep, the first fruits of grain, and new wine, and oil, and the first of the wool of sheep.

"And when the people come thus unto Jerusalem, they must go into a temple where not only are the Baalim and Ashtarothe served, but where even Jehovah is called Baal; and where harlots abound without shame; and where the rich have strong rooms for storing up wealth extorted from the labor of the poor and needy, so that my master Jeremiah calleth the temple a den of robbers. And therefore in the end, the little book hath only this effect, that the multitude of the people resort unto a great den of idolatry, and harlotry, and robbery, corrupting their ways, and exalting the power of the priests.

"And now the days draw nigh, wherein our city shall be destroyed. And against the coming of these days, great labor hath been done, to prepare a collection of rolls in a book; so that when God bringeth again the remnant of Judah into this land, they may

read therein, and learn from the sins of their fathers, and establish themselves upon the worship of one God, in righteousness and justice and purity. And we perform this labor upon the great book, so that not only the house of Israel may know God, but also that the book may go forth unto every nation.

"Nevertheless, of late, we that labor upon the great book have been more and more divided into these two companies, whereof the scribes that agree with me would establish the book wholly upon the words of prophets like Jeremiah; while, on the contrary, the scribes that hold with Gemariah the son of Shaphan would have us prepare and put in the very forefront of the great book certain rolls containing ten thousand precepts and laws of sacrifice and worship, which the scribes in my company believe would blind the eyes of the people to the weightier matters of justice and hewed and faithfulness whereunto Jeremiah and prophets like him have borne witness for many generations.

"Now therefore, give ear and consider this: In the spirit of Jeremiah and such prophets, we have sent throughout the land, and gathered many ancient records; and therefrom have we prepared rolls which tell of the judges, and of Samuel, and of the kings of Judah and Israel; and these rolls of the judges, and Samuel, and the kings are prepared in the spirit of the prophets. Moreover, we have gathered up the rolls of Amos, and Micah, and Hosea, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah; and we have made these also to be in the great book.

"So come now, and let us reason together about this thing, lest we spoil the book before it cometh unto the

multitude of the people. How need we any rolls more? How need we to go about, and gather ten thousand precepts and laws of sacrifice and worship to be placed in the very forefront of the great book? For consider Jeremiah, in the twenty and second portion of his roll, where he telleth how king Josiah did justice and righteousness, judging well the cause of the poor and needy. And then Jeremiah asketh, *'Was this not to know me? saith Jehovah.'* And now, behold these words mean one thing only, that God is known through justice and righteousness, without the offering up of sacrifice upon an altar. For elsewhere Jeremiah saith, in the name of Jehovah, in the seventh portion of his roll, *'I spake not nor commanded your fathers concerning sacrifice and burnt offering when I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.'* And Amos likewise, in the fifth portion of his roll, asketh, *'Brought ye sacrifices and offerings unto me forty years when ye wandered in the wilderness, O house of Israel?'* And Hosea saith, *'I will have heseid, and not sacrifice.'* And Micah saith, *'What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justice, and to love heseid, and to walk humbly before thy God?'* And likewise, Amos declareth in the name of Jehovah, *'Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as an everflowing stream.'*

"If therefore Israel served Jehovah in the wilderness without sacrifices; why need we any priests or burnt offerings in the worship of Israel? Let us then establish the great book upon the witness of prophecy, which was first given by Elijah, who condemned king Ahab for seizing the field of Naboth. Now Elijah was a man of the desert, who went unto mount Sinai, where the heseid of Jehovah was first shown unto Israel by

the tribe of the Kenites, who dwelt in the wilderness of Sinai. And Elijah found not Jehovah in the lightnings and thunders of the mount; but he found God in the still, small voice that spake within his own soul. And because Elijah was the first great prophet who began to teach Israel the higher meaning of the covenant with Jehovah, it is believed of him by the multitude of the people that he passed without death into the light of heaven. And therefore the scribes that are with me would establish the great book upon the teaching of Elijah and the prophets like unto him; and we believe that if it be devised according to any other manner, it will wholly fail."

Now when Baruch made an end of speaking, Adonijah rose up from among the wise men, and said, "Ye have heard the words of Baruch; and ye know that he formeth his thoughts upon the teachings of Jeremiah. But now we shall give ear unto one who speaketh on behalf of the other company of scribes, even Gemariah, who is in the office of his father Shaphan. So therefore, even though his thoughts be different from the thoughts of Baruch, let us give ear unto him, because it may be that God can use diverse teachings in the great book."

Then arose Gemariah the scribe, and spake, saying, "Ye know that I am a scribe in the temple, having the chamber of my office over the new gate of the temple. And though my heart inclineth greatly unto the words of Baruch, nevertheless, the doing of the work of my office in the temple bringeth before mine eyes many things whereunto Baruch hath no regard. For though much evil is found in the temple, as Baruch saith; yet of a certainty we know that the temple was cleansed

in the days of my father Shaphan, at which time the temple and the priesthood were used wherewith to turn the minds of men away from Baal unto Jehovah. And now that the people have been taught to look toward one sanctuary, to behold the altar of Jehovah, we can cleanse that sanctuary again and again, if need be, until at last the people worship in the beauty of holiness.

"Moreover, we who understand the customs and usages of the multitude believe that for many generations to come, the people will need ordinances of worship which can be seen by their eyes, and handled by their hands, under the ministry of righteous priests. For since times beyond the memory of man, all worship in all nations hath been by sacrifice; and therefore the worship of God without sacrifice will not be understood by the people.

"Therefore we believe that if we establish the great book only upon the testimony of Elijah and Amos and Jeremiah and other such prophets, we shall be as those who bring provender unto cattle in the stall, and put the food on high where it cannot be reached."

Now after Gemariah and Baruch, and the scribes in both their companies, had ended all their words, and found no more that they would say, then Adonijah rose up, and spake on behalf of the wise men, and said, "We who write not upon the great book, but who give counsel unto the scribes, do pronounce our judgment as followeth: We believe that good prophecy is found in the roll of Ezekiel, who is in Babylon; and his roll shall be made a part of the great book, not only because he foundeth his roll upon the testimony of the prophets like unto Jeremiah, but because he looketh forward

unto a time to come when there shall be law of sacrifice and burnt offering in the name of one God only. And this roll, which Ezekiel hath prepared, shall be placed after the roll of Jeremiah in the great book.

"Moreover, the scribes shall search out, and prepare, and make new rolls with many ordinances of sacrifice. And they shall take these rolls, together with the little book of king Josiah's law, and put them in the forefront of the great book."

Now when Adonijah spake thus, Baruch and the scribes of his company were heavy of heart. But Gemariah, and the scribes with him, were glad. Then Adonijah continued, and spake, saying, "Nevertheless, in the latter days, the remnant of our people shall no more need burnt offerings and sacrifices; and then shall the priesthood perish out of Judah. But Elijah, and Jeremiah, and the prophets like unto them shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament of heaven."

And when Adonijah spake these words, and foretold how sacrifices would endure only for a time, until the remnant of Judah were led upward from idolatry unto the One God, then did Baruch and the scribes that were on his part lift up their heads and rejoice. And Gemariah and the scribes of his company were pleased also. And thus all they that labored upon the making of the great book were gathered together again in spirit, and united in one band, as at the first; and they said, "God is with us, and hath wrought a mighty work among us to-day."

And after these things, Adonijah spake, saying, "The time is now come when I must make known certain things whereof Gedaliah writeth in the secret letter which he sent by the hand of Nathan. He now knoweth

of a surety that the king of Babylon is determined upon the destruction of Jerusalem, whereby the vengeance of God cometh swiftly upon the house of Israel, to whom God hath sent many prophets; but the people inclined not their ear, nor hearkened unto the word of Jehovah by the mouth of his prophets. And therefore the copies of the rolls of the great book shall be brought out from the places where they be hidden; and we shall take them with us, and go down unto Jericho, to the house of Ahikam which is in that city. And for this purpose, Obadiah, the chief ruler of Ahikam's palace in Jerusalem, is instructed to take servants, and go down before us unto Jericho, to make ready the house, and to prepare tents in the gardens round about the house."

Then answered Gemariah the son of Shaphan, saying, "Inasmuch as we that labor upon the great book have believed of long time that destruction cometh upon Jerusalem, we are not dismayed by these words; for we know that God will sustain us. Nevertheless, it is a thing of terror that a great city, wherein we have lived, should be destroyed by violence."

And when Gemariah spake thus, all the company of them that were gathered together upon the housetop were exceeding sorrowful; and in the imagination of their thoughts, they saw the king of Babylon and a mighty army, terrible with banners, and horses, and chariots, and engines of war, encamping against Jerusalem, to destroy their city. And they wept. But after a little, they were strengthened in God, and refrained themselves.

And in those days, while the wise men and scribes made ready to depart from Jerusalem, Obadiah and

Nathan took much goods and provisions in wagons drawn by asses, and went down with servants to Jericho, to the house of Ahikam which was in that city. And when the wise men and scribes, and their families, were come to Jericho, behold, all things were prepared.

And Nathan abode there with them in distress of heart concerning Miriam and in fear of all things that were coming to pass. And on a certain evening, he sat with Adonijah upon the housetop in Jericho; and at that time Adonijah privily made known to him yet more out of the letter of Gedaliah: how the king of Babylon was minded not to lay waste the land of Judah, but to destroy Jerusalem only, and to punish king Zedekiah and the nobles who oppressed the people; and how Nebuchadnezzar would apportion fields and vineyards among the poor and needy, and appoint Gedaliah to be governor over the land of Judah, to make trial of justice.

And Nathan was astonished greatly when he heard these things; and he asked Adonijah, saying, "What, then, will my brother have me to do, seeing that he is to be governor in the land of Judah?"

And Adonijah said, "Thy brother would have thee and all of us to abide here in Jericho until word cometh from him what we shall do."

But Nathan was troubled, and found not any comfort in the words of Adonijah. And on the morrow, while he pondered these things in his heart, behold, there was much running to and fro and shouting in the city because of a report, which was noised about, that the army of the Babylonians had encamped suddenly within the borders of the land of Israel, three days' journey from Jerusalem. And then were all the

thoughts of Nathan in confusion. And he remembered no more anything which he had been told about the great book, or the work of the house of Shaphan; but his desire was urgent within him that he return quickly unto Jerusalem for his horse, and ride thence unto Maon. And he tarried not to speak with any one; but scarce knowing what he did, he went forth secretly, and fled away from Jericho.

XV

And on the day when Nathan fled from Jericho, it came to pass that Jeremiah the prophet said in his heart, "Now of a certainty the king, and the nobles, and all the people will see that the word which the prophets of Baal have spoken is false. And therefore will I now go unto Jerusalem, and cry aloud in the ears of all the city, that they submit unto the king of Babylon, and save their lives while yet there is time; and it may be that they will hearken unto the word of Jehovah by my mouth."

So Jeremiah arose, and entered into the city, and went about in the streets; and at first no man laid hands upon him. And he spake, and cried aloud, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'Where now are the prophets who said the king of Babylon shall not bring his army against this city? But behold, the host of Nebuchadnezzar the king is already within the borders of Israel. Therefore, serve ye the king of Babylon, and resist him not; for why will ye fight against him, that he slay you and burn Jerusalem with fire?'"

Now while Jeremiah was prophesying, Nathan entered into the city. And behold, all Jerusalem was in an uproar, from one end unto another; and the heart of the people trembled, like as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. And when Nathan would have taken his horse to ride forth in haste, the

officer of the guard prevented him, that he should neither go forth upon horseback, nor yet pass out afoot.

And king Zedekiah, and the counselors, and the nobles would not give heed unto Jeremiah; for they said, "Though the Babylonians are within the borders of the land of Israel, they shall never destroy Jerusalem; because Jehovah will take our part, as in time past, and will bring our enemies to naught."

Then the army of the Babylonians waited no longer, but came swiftly upon Jerusalem, with horses, and chariots, and engines of war. And the gates of the city were closed, and stopped fast; so that none could go out nor come in. And king Zedekiah's men of war made ready to fight against the army of Nebuchadnezzar. And they took all the men of strength, who were able in any wise to do battle; and some they stationed upon the wall behind the parapets; and some they gave all manner of tasks in the city, to help the men of war. And when they found that Nathan could handle the bow, they made him to stand with the archers upon the wall. And he was in deep misery and bitterness of spirit.

And the Babylonians built forts and ramparts, to besiege the city round about. And they raised up towers overlooking the city, to shoot arrows therefrom. And they set up engines with springs of great power, to send forth iron darts. And the darts and arrows came down upon the houses, and upon the palaces, and upon the streets; and many of the people were slain thereby. And the Babylonians brought iron battering rams unto the north wall of the city, and began to batter against the wall, with a dreadful sound of

crashing, which ceased not, but went on by day and by night.

And the armed men of Jerusalem stood upon the walls of the city, with shields, and with bows, and with engines of war; and they shot arrows and iron darts upon their enemies. And when the Babylonians brought ladders, to scale the walls, the armed men of king Zedekiah cast down great stones and poured molten iron upon them.

Now Leah, the mother of Nathan, had left the palace of her husband, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and had gone unto the palace of Gideon the son of Shallum, to stay there with Tamar the daughter of Gideon. And on a certain day, these two women looked forth from a window which was nigh unto the wall. And a man of the Babylonians, in a siege-tower near-by, let go the spring of his engine suddenly at a venture, and shot many great darts, whereof one flew into the window of Gideon's palace, and pierced the body of Leah the wife of Ahikam, so that she fell down dead at the feet of Tamar.

And the terror and confusion went on, and increased; for the darts and arrows of the enemy fell in showers; and the sound of the battering rams never ceased; and the Babylonians piled much wood by the walls, to set the wood on fire, causing smoke to ascend, which blinded the eyes of them that watched upon the walls. And the men of Jerusalem could not quench the flames.

Then king Zedekiah sent messengers unto Jeremiah, saying, "Intercede for us with Jehovah; that peradventure he may deal kindly with his people, and cause the Babylonians to depart from us."

But when these men were come unto Jeremiah, he

spake, saying, "Tell the king, your master, thus saith Jehovah, 'Whosoever goeth forth from the city, and passeth over unto the Babylonians, and submitteth unto the king of Babylon, shall live. But he that remaineth in the city shall die by hunger, and by pestilence, and by the sword. And moreover, give justice quickly unto the poor and needy, and set at liberty all that are in bondage, that they may be free from the hand of the oppressor.'"

And when the messengers came back, and told the words of Jeremiah unto the king, he called the nobles and counselors unto the royal palace, and said, "Behold, the violence of the enemy increaseth more and more; and their darts and arrows fall as a cloud upon us; and the crashing of their battering rams against the wall is terrible, going on continually, by day and by night; and hunger groweth among the people; and there is terror on every side. So therefore, make ye an agreement and a covenant, that every master set free his bondmen and his bondwomen of the house of Israel, that none shall make slaves of them any more. And it may be that Jehovah will deal kindly with us, and cause the Babylonians to depart from us."

Then all the nobles and princes, who held any man, or any woman, or any child of the house of Israel in bondage, gave heed unto the king; and everyone set his bondmen and bondwomen free, that they should no more be slaves. But the king and his nobles observed to do only a part of the words of Jeremiah; for they submitted not unto the king of Babylon, to save life, and preserve the city from destruction, as Jeremiah said.

And after these things, behold, the army of Pharaoh

came up from the land of Egypt, to bring help unto king Zedekiah, and to fight against the army of Nebuchadnezzar. But ere the Egyptians drew nigh unto the city, the Babylonians brake up the siege, and went out against Pharaoh's army.

Thus it came to pass for a time that the sound of the battering rams was heard no more; and the darts and arrows fell not upon the houses and streets; and the smoke of burning ceased. Then the people of Jerusalem ascended upon the walls, and saw for a certainty that the host of Nebuchadnezzar was gone away. And thereupon the nobles of Jerusalem were puffed up; and they behaved themselves proudly; for they turned about, and brought back their slaves into subjection as before.

And when Jeremiah saw this, he lifted up his voice, and spake, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'Because ye have turned, and brought the poor and needy into bondage again, and ye have not proclaimed liberty unto the people in truth and faithfulness, therefore I proclaim unto you a liberty to the sword. And now behold, Pharaoh's army shall be vanquished, and shall go back into Egypt. And the host of the king of Babylon shall return to Jerusalem, and take it, and burn it with fire.' "

And at this time, when the siege was broken up certain days, and the men that were stationed upon the walls came down into the city, then did Nathan go unto his own home. And he came in unto Ahikam his father. Now the household of Ahikam had deceived their master, and had kept back many things from him by order of the physicians, because of his illness. And though he knew that Jerusalem was besieged; yet

could he learn nothing thereof; and he was told not regarding the death of Leah his wife. But Nathan, being sore distressed, showed all things unto his father. And when Ahikam found that his wife had been slain, and that Nathan was required to fight against Nebuchadnezzar, and that the king and the nobles had refused the counsel of Jeremiah, to submit unto the king of Babylon, then Ahikam gave up the ghost, and was gathered unto his fathers. And they buried him in the garden of his palace in Jerusalem.

Now while the Babylonians were gone away, certain gates of the city were opened, that provision might be brought in. But the officers of the king watched with exceeding care all who would come in, lest they be spies of the enemy, and all who would go out, lest they fall away unto the Babylonians, according to the counsel of Jeremiah, which he gave unto the king.

And in those days Nathan, having now inherited the possessions of his father Ahikam the son of Shaphan, sought to go forth unto Maon, that he might take Miriam to wife. But when he came to the gate upon his horse, the officers turned him back, saying, "If we let such as thee depart from the city, there will be none left to defend it." And Nathan said in his heart, "O that I had never fled away from Jericho."

And at that time Jeremiah made haste, that he might go unto the village of his nativity in the land of Benjamin, to receive provision from his field which he possessed near that village, and afterwards return again to Jerusalem. But when he sought to go forth by the gate, an officer laid hold upon him, and said, "Thou goest over unto the Babylonians." And Jeremiah answered, and said, "Thou speakest falsely; for

I am not going over unto the Babylonians." Nevertheless, the officer heeded him not, but laid fast hold on Jeremiah, and brought him unto the princes and the nobles.

Now these great men already had been shown how Jeremiah prophesied a liberty of the sword unto them because of the poor and needy which were brought back into bondage; and how he prophesied concerning the army of the Egyptians, that it should be subdued by the Babylonians, and should not help Jerusalem. And therefore the princes and nobles were full of wrath; and they commanded the officer to put Jeremiah in prison in the house of a certain man by the name of Jonathan. So Jeremiah was cast into prison in the house of Jonathan; and he remained there many days.

Then the host of the Babylonians returned unto Jerusalem, with noise of trumpets and shouting, so that the earth rang again; for they had vanquished the army of Pharaoh with a great slaughter, driving it back into the land of Egypt. So they returned unto Jerusalem, and continued the siege with yet more violence, insomuch that king Zedekiah, and the nobles, and all the multitude of the people were affrighted beyond measure, because the prophecy of Jeremiah was coming to pass.

Then king Zedekiah sent gibborim secretly by night, for fear of the nobles and counselors, that they should go unto the prison in the house of Jonathan, and bring Jeremiah to the king. And when Jeremiah was brought into the royal palace, the king asked him, saying, "Is there any word from Jehovah?"

And Jeremiah answered, and said, "There is. Thou

shalt be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar." And Jeremiah continued, and said, "What is my sin against thee, or against this nation, that I am cast thus into a vile prison? And now, I pray thee, let me not return unto the prison in the house of Jonathan, lest I die."

But though the king believed more and more in the word of Jeremiah, yet he dare not release him wholly from being in prison, because the king feared the power of the nobles greatly. And therefore Zedekiah commanded the gibborim not to take Jeremiah back unto the prison which was in the house of Jonathan, but to put him in a better place, even in the court of the guard, where Jeremiah should have daily a loaf of bread from the bakers' street. So Jeremiah abode certain days in the court of the guard.

But when the nobles heard that the king had spoken secretly with Jeremiah, and had removed him to a better prison, they were sore displeased; and they went in unto the king, and said, "This man Jeremiah doth weaken the hands of the men of war; that we cannot fight with all our strength against the Babylonians. So therefore, let him be put to death."

And when king Zedekiah heard these words, and beheld the countenances of the nobles, full of threatening and wrath, he answered, saying, "Who am I that I should do anything against you? And as for Jeremiah, behold, he is in your power."

Then the great men sent their servants to take Jeremiah. And they gave command that he be carried away from the court of the guard, and put into the terrible dungeon of Malkijah, which was far below the ground, and full of mire, and where, if a man be

imprisoned, he surely dieth. So the servants of the nobles went and took Jeremiah, and carried him unto the place of Malkijah; and they put cords under his arms, and let him down into the dungeon; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.

But now it came to pass that one who lived in the royal palace rose up unto the help of Jeremiah. And this man was not of the children of Israel; but he was a foreigner from the land of Ethiopia; and he was called Ebed-melek, which meaneth slave, or servant, of the king. And when Ebed-melek heard what the nobles had done with Jeremiah, he hasted, and went unto king Zedekiah, and spake, saying, "The princes have done great evil unto Jeremiah by casting him into the terrible dungeon of Malkijah; and if he be not removed out of that place, he will surely die."

Then king Zedekiah commanded Ebed-melek to take thirty gibborim, and go secretly, and raise Jeremiah up out of the dungeon. So Ebed-melek took the men; and they found old rags and cords, and went unto the mouth of the dungeon, and let the rags down by the cords. And Ebed-melek called unto Jeremiah, and told him to put the rags beneath his arms under the cords. And when Jeremiah did so, they drew him up out of the dungeon, and carried him back into the court of the guard; for the king dare not wholly release him. And because the hearts of the multitude and the favor of the king and his household inclined more and more unto Jeremiah, the nobles found nothing further which they could do.

And while these things came to pass, behold, the Babylonians brought up yet more battering rams against the north wall of Jerusalem; so that the sound

of crashing was now like to make the people mad. And all the city was filled with hunger, and pestilence, and death. But the nobles feared to let king Zedekiah submit unto Nebuchadnezzar; for they said, "The Babylonians have now had such exceeding great trouble and labor in fighting against our city, and also in subduing the Egyptians, that their anger increaseth day by day; and therefore it is better that we die within the city than fall into their hands."

And after a long time the battering rams, working day and night, brake wholly through the wall of Jerusalem. And when king Zedekiah saw this, he and his sons went quickly unto the south side of the city, and opened the gate, and sought to escape. But the Babylonians pursued after them, and caught them, and brought Zedekiah and his sons into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king of Babylon gave judgment; and the eyes of Zedekiah were put out; and his sons were slain; and he was bound in fetters, and sent away unto Babylon.

And the host of the Babylonians went into Jerusalem, and rescued Jeremiah out of the court of the guard, and looked well to his safety, according to the command of Nebuchadnezzar. And they took the nobles of Judah, who had oppressed the poor and needy, and slew them. And they laid hold upon the armed men of Jerusalem, who had fought against Nebuchadnezzar; and they bound them with chains, to send them into exile. And Nathan, being caught upon the wall in the midst of the armed men, was driven forth among them in fetters of iron.

And as Nathan went with a band of captives through the Damascus gate, behold, Baruch the scribe of Jere-

miah stood there to take note of all things; and he spied Nathan in chains. And Nathan lifted up his eyes, and looked upon Baruch, and called unto him; but in the noise of the tumult his voice was not heard. And Baruch would have come unto Nathan, to speak with him; but the guards of the Babylonians pushed him back violently, and made as if to smite him. And when Baruch looked all about, to find what he could do, behold, the band of captives, with Nathan in their midst, passed out through the gate; and yet other bands followed them.

And after the armed men of Nebuchadnezzar had gathered all that were for captivity, then they drave out the multitude of the people from the city upon the hills round about. And the people stood and looked back, to see what should happen unto Jerusalem. And the Babylonians destroyed the temple, and the palace of the king, and all the palaces of the nobles, and all the houses of the people; and they brake down the walls, and burned the whole city with fire, with a very great burning, from one end thereof unto another.

And the people beheld the smoke of the city rolling up in thick pillars of cloud ascending unto heaven. And there was bitter mourning, and lamentation, and woe; so much that the horror thereof could never be imagined; and the memory thereof could never perish.

XVI

Now about the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, it came to pass that Gedaliah the son of Ahikam journeyed from Babylon to the land of Israel with servants, and camels, and horses, and silver and gold. And he abode certain days in Jericho until he should be proclaimed governor. And there he found Adonijah and the other wise men, and the scribes, and Obadiah, who had been chief ruler in Ahikam's palace in Jerusalem. And when Gedaliah heard that Nathan his brother had fled away secretly, he was in great distress of mind, knowing not whither Nathan had gone, and finding nothing that he could do as yet.

And when the army of the Babylonians had finished the destruction of Jerusalem, the chief officer of king Nebuchadnezzar sent throughout all Judah, and took the fields and vineyards which had been seized by the nobles of Jerusalem who were slain; and he apportioned these lands among the poor and needy who possessed them in time past. But though many were helped in such wise, yet multitudes had nothing more than hitherto. And thus it came to pass that the people were stirred up to look for justice at the hand of the new rulers who put down the house of David; yet the officers of the king of Babylon had neither knowledge nor power to satisfy the nation which they were about to deliver into the hand of Gedaliah.

And after these things, the Babylonians prepared to

depart into their own country; and the chief captain of the host made proclamation in the name of Nebuchadnezzar that Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, was appointed to be governor over all the land of Judah. And Gedaliah arose, and taking with him Adonijah, and Obadiah, he went up from Jericho unto Mizpah in the hill country of Judah, to make that place the chief city of Judah, where he should rule over the people in justice and righteousness.

And when Jeremiah heard that Gedaliah was governor, he came unto him at Mizpah, to dwell with him there among the people. And Baruch the scribe went with Jeremiah, to write new portions for the roll of Jeremiah's book and for the roll of the book of the kings, telling how Jerusalem was besieged, and how Gedaliah was made governor.

And when Baruch saw Gedaliah, he told him how Nathan was carried away from Jerusalem in fetters amidst a band of captives. And Gedaliah wept when he heard this; but presently he wrote a message in the Babylonian language, and sent men on swift steeds to follow after the army of Nebuchadnezzar, and give word unto the officers of the king, that Nathan should be sought out and released, and that he be sent unto the house of Gedaliah in Babylon.

Now after this, a man whose name was Johanan, came and spake unto Gedaliah, saying, "Knowest thou not that the remnant of the house of David is very jealous of thy rule in Judah, seeing that thou, of the house of Shaphan, art exalted to be over the house of David? And hast thou not heard that a certain man, who was chief officer unto king Zedekiah, is determined to take thy life, even Ishmael of the seed royal?"

But Gedaliah believed not what Johanan told him; and he answered, saying, "Why should any of the house of David be desirous to slay me?"

And Johanan spake, and said, "They of the house of David say that the dominion over Judah belongeth unto them of right; and therefore thy rule is contrary to justice."

And Gedaliah answered Johanan, saying, "They that be left of the seed royal do know of a surety that Jeremiah and prophets like unto him have condemned the kings of the house of David (saving only king Josiah) because they failed in executing justice unto Israel. And moreover, the house of Shaphan would gladly have helped in maintaining the house of David upon the throne, even as we upheld Josiah, if the kings of that family were minded to do justice. But because the house of David followed after Baal, to deliver the government over into the power of wealthy oppressors, then Jehovah destroyed Jerusalem by the hand of the king of Babylon, and brought to an end the dominion of the house of David, even as Jeremiah foretold. And also king Nebuchadnezzar knew our family, of the house of Shaphan, that our hearts are inclined unto justice; and since Nebuchadnezzar is one who followeth after the ancient law of Hammurabi, to hold back the strong from oppressing the weak, he hath made me to be governor of Judah, though my pleasure would be to continue as I was, and undertake not the government. Nevertheless, I have obeyed the voice of the king, to become ruler over this people, because I love them, and would have them to turn with a whole heart unto one God of justice. For behold what God hath wrought concerning Israel: he raised

up a foreign tribe to show hatred unto our fathers in the wilderness, even the tribe of the Kenites. And in these latter days he hath caused a foreign people to chastise us for our sins. And because God speaketh unto us through strangers, therefore must all the house of Israel work together with God, not only for the sake of our nation, but for the sake of them who are not of our people. And therefore I will not believe thy words, that any of the seed royal would slay me. But I will go in and out among the people; and with love will I bind up their wounds, and wipe away their tears, and feed the hungry, and show kindness unto the widow and the orphan, and establish the government in justice and righteousness."

But Johanan said unto Gedaliah, "Thine heart is innocent, like unto the heart of a child. And thou thinkest that all men are as thyself; and therefore thine own goodness will be thy destruction."

So Johanan went away; and Gedaliah believed him not.

Now there were many of the house of Israel who had gone forth into Moab, and into Edom, and into Ammon, and into other countries. And when they heard of these things, and knew that Gedaliah was appointed to be governor, they rejoiced, and returned into the land of Judah. And so it came to pass that the land was built up not only by the people who remained in the villages after the destruction of Jerusalem, but also by them that returned out of other nations.

And in those days while Gedaliah went about diligently to gather food for the hungry, and to establish all things, he said in his heart, "I will now redeem

my word, which I gave unto Nathan my brother, and will send unto the maiden whom he loveth." And he called Obadiah, and said unto him, "Take servants and horses, and go unto Maon in the south country, and seek out there Miriam the daughter of Simeon, and also Joel her brother; and make known unto them how Nathan was driven away amidst a band of captives, and how I have sent unto the officers of the king of Babylon, to search him out. And if the maiden yet loveth him, and will go forth to find him, take thou her and her brother unto our house which is in Jericho; and presently I will come down, and send them unto Babylon."

Then Obadiah took servants and horses; and he went to Maon, and met there Joel, the son of Simeon, in the street of the village. And Joel knew him, and was glad, and brought him unto Miriam, in the house, and said, "This is he who took my message when I went unto the palace of Ahikam in Jerusalem."

And Miriam said unto Obadiah, "My brethren believed that Nathan was among the slain when Jerusalem was destroyed. But I have ever known that he liveth, and would come hither, or send unto me."

And Obadiah told them all things concerning Nathan, and how messengers were sent to search him out, and take him unto the house of Gedaliah in Babylon. And he said unto Joel, "If thou and thy sister will go with me, I will take you unto Jericho, to the house of Ahikam which is in that city. And afterwards Gedaliah the governor will come down from Mizpah, and will send you forth unto Babylon. For of a surety, the young man will be found; and God will bring the maiden unto him."

Then spake Miriam, saying, "I will go with thee; and I know that Joel my brother will not fail me." And she hasted, and began to make ready. And on the second day they rose up to depart very early in the morning. And all the village brought them forth, to set them on their journey, to go down unto Jericho by way of the wilderness of Judah.

Now at that time Gedaliah sat with Adonijah the wise man beneath a great oak tree in Mizpah. And the people came unto him from near and far, with many contentions; and they stood about Gedaliah from the morning unto the evening.

And certain men drew near, and said unto him, "The king of Babylon did naught for us when he apportioned fields and vineyards unto the poor and needy. Nevertheless, thou art appointed by the king to rule over Judah, and to do justice unto all."

Then Gedaliah answered, saying, "Whence come ye, and what would ye that I do for you?"

And they said, "We be poor men from Keilah, who have not enough land for ourselves and our families. But others have more than we. So therefore, command that we be given possessions, that we may have justice."

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "I will consider what can be done for you, that justice be executed among all the people." And after he had called a scribe, who wrote down these things, he sent the men away.

Then came others, who said, "We are wont to labor for hire; but the wages that are paid unto us do not suffice that we may live. And now, we pray thee, command that a greater wage be given unto us."

And when the scribe had made record of their petition, Gedaliah, sent them away likewise.

Then he turned, and would have spoken unto Adonijah; but certain ones drew near, who said, "We be men who hire servants to labor in our fields. But since the destruction of Jerusalem, our servants cry out that they must have double, or they work not. And therefore we would have thee to declare an ordinance that a certain wage be lawful."

And Gedaliah answered, saying, "I will hold a council to inquire into this matter; for I cannot decide it quickly."

And while yet others were desiring to be heard, Gedaliah spake unto Adonijah, and said, "I will now appoint judges who are righteous men, hating bribes, to go about on circuit and consider these causes."

And Adonijah made answer, saying, "That which hath come into thine heart to do is good. Nevertheless, thou wilt perceive more and more that justice between them that pay wages and them that receive wages, and between them that have much and them that have little, and between one nation and another nation, is not a thing speedily to be revealed and established in the eyes of all men. And though God hath his laws of justice, he leaveth us to search and find out what justice is. For verily clouds and darkness are round about God; but justice and righteousness are the habitation of his throne. And therefore doth Jeremiah say, in the roll of his book, that in the doing of justice we shall know God. And Isaiah speaketh well when he saith our knowledge cometh but slowly, here a little, and there a little, line by line, and precept upon precept. And all the wisdom of the prophets is

gathered up in the words of Hosea, who saith, 'Let us follow onward to know the Lord.' "

And Gedaliah said, "Shall I now send for Jeremiah the prophet, that he may counsel with us in these things?"

And Adonijah answered, saying, "Nay, call not upon Jeremiah to give counsel in thy work. For the office of a prophet is to stir men's hearts toward justice, and not to set up governments and make laws. Nevertheless, though we trouble him not in these things, I will now go unto him, and unto Baruch, that I may see what they do in making new portions of the roll of Jeremiah's book; because I would have all generations to know that if Jeremiah and prophets like unto him had failed to bear witness, the destruction of Jerusalem, with all the suffering thereof, would be of none effect, and would avail nothing. But through the work of these prophets, and more especially by the faithfulness of Jeremiah, who at this time hath carried the sins of the people in the anguish of his soul and in the suffering of his body, the house of Judah will turn toward the One God in days to come."

And after Adonijah went away, to go unto Jeremiah, behold, there came once more the man who already had warned the governor against the enmity of the house of David, even Johanan, who spake secretly unto Gedaliah, saying, "Ishmael, of the seed royal, hath certainly conspired to slay thee. But why should he take thy life, and cause the house of Judah, which is gathered unto thee, to be scattered abroad again? So now, I pray thee, let me go and kill Ishmael; and then shalt thou be saved."

But Gedaliah spake unto Johanan, saying, "Nay,

thou shalt not kill Ishmael; for thou speakest falsely of him; and he will not slay me."

Then went Gedaliah unto his own house, to eat bread; and while he was at the table, a servant came, saying, "Ishmael, of the seed royal, is here with ten men; and he would see thee upon a certain matter."

And Gedaliah answered, and said, "Let him come unto me. And bring thou more bread and wine that he may eat and drink with us."

Then Ishmael and his men came into the house. And Gedaliah greeted them kindly; and they did eat and drink together. But presently Ishmael arose, and the ten men that were with him; and they smote Gedaliah with the sword, and slew him. Thus did Ishmael, of the house of David, kill Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; that the house of Shaphan be not exalted over the house of David, to rule the land of Judah.

And when the people heard that Gedaliah was dead, they were grieved, and ran hither and thither in the streets, and would have naught to do with Ishmael of the seed royal. And the noise of the people came unto the ears of Adonijah; and when he knew the cause thereof, he spake unto Jeremiah, saying, "What shall be done for thee, now that the son of Ahikam is dead?"

And Jeremiah answered, saying, "O that mine head were as a fountain of tears; that I might weep for the slain of my people. I would abide here, and make lamentation over the ruins of Jerusalem."

Then Adonijah arose, and hasted, and went down to Jericho. And behold, Obadiah and Miriam and Joel were already come from Maon by way of the wilder-

ness of Judah; and they were abiding with the scribes and wise men in Jericho. And when Adonijah was come unto them, he spake, saying, "Gedaliah the governor, the son of Ahikam, hath been slain by the remnant of the house of David, which hath rebelled once more against king Nebuchadnezzar, to restore the worship of Baal, and to bring back the oppression of the poor and needy. But let no man say that the rule of Gedaliah was in vain; for he was an angel of light, whose feet are set in the pathway of eternity; and as touching him and his house, the purpose of God shall not fail. And now therefore, because of these things, let us make ready to depart in haste, that we go forth from the land of Judah unto Babylon."

And while they made preparation for the journey, a messenger came down from Mizpah, from Baruch the scribe, with writings to be added unto the roll of Jeremiah and the roll of the kings in the great book, telling how Jerusalem was besieged, and what Jeremiah did in the midst of the siege, and how Gedaliah was appointed to be governor, and was put to death.

And the messenger spake unto Adonijah, and said, "The people would have no dealings with Ishmael of the house of David, who slew Gedaliah. But they followed after Johanan, who did warn Gedaliah against Ishmael. And they were in terror, fearing what the king of Babylon would do when the tidings of Gedaliah's death should come unto his ears. And therefore a great multitude hath risen up, to go for safety unto Egypt."

Now after the messenger went away, they finished making ready to depart. And Adonijah said, "Up, and let us go forth upon our journey." But they tarried.

and stood yet by the camels, and wept, knowing that they should see the land of Israel no more.

Then spake Obadiah, who had been the chief steward in the palace of Ahikam in Jerusalem. And he said, "We did put our hope in Gedaliah; but he is no more; and the house of Israel is destroyed, and come to naught; and all the earth is in darkness. And therefore my heart fainteth, and my soul is distressed, that I should go forth forever into a strange land. So now, go ye on without me; for I would remain here in Jericho, to die in mine own country."

Then Adonijah answered him, saying, "Thou art a good man, Obadiah; and thou hast wrought well; but thy faith faileth. Yet if thine eyes could behold the time to come, thou wouldst know that this is not the end of all things. For of a certainty the great book will be finished by the waters of Babylon; and our people shall again be established in this land of Judah; and they shall remember and lay to heart the destruction of Jerusalem; and they shall no more bow down unto many gods; but they shall turn, and be converted, and worship one God of justice and righteousness. And then shall one arise whose word shall go forth into all the world. So come thou with us; and we will do thee good; for though we walk in darkness and in the shadow of death, we follow onward to know the Lord."

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