

**THE MINOR PROPHETS, WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND A
COMMENTARY, CRITICAL,
PHILOLOGICAL AND
EXEGETICAL, VOL. I**

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A. ELZAS

**THE MINOR PROPHETS, WITH AN
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THE
MINOR PROPHETS,

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW TEXT,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

AND A

COMMENTARY,

CRITICAL, PHILOLOGICAL, AND EXEGETICAL

BY

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PREFACE.

The principles on which the Author proceeded in preparing his commentary on Job and the Proverbs of Solomon have been followed also in the present work. He has laid under contribution all the means within his reach in order to ascertain the original state of the Hebrew text, and the true and unsophisticated meaning of that text. He has constantly had recourse to the collection of various readings made by Kennicott and De Rossi; he has compared the renderings of the lxx., the Targum, the Syriac, the Arabic, the Vulgate, and other ancient versions; he has consulted the best critical commentaries; he has availed himself of the results of modern philological researches; and he has conducted the whole under the influence of a disposition to place himself in the times of the sacred writers—surrounded by the scenery which they exhibit, and impressed by the different associations, both of a political and a spiritual character, which they embody. In all his investigations he has endeavoured to cherish a deep conviction of the inspired authority of the books which it has been his object to illustrate, and of the heavy responsibility which attaches to all who undertake the interpretation of the oracles of God.

A. E.

29, FRANCIS STREET, WEST,
January, 1873.

INTRODUCTION.

As the gift of prophecy was the greatest which God gave to men upon earth, so the Prophet, as being the immediate instrument of revealing the will of God to the people, was the greatest, the most important, the most august, venerable, and useful person in the land of Israel. The prophets were to the people the philosophers, the wise men, the divines, and the teachers of truth and godliness. By their intercourse with God, they were His mediators with the people; and their persons as well as their office, were considered as peculiarly sacred. They did not mix with the people, and only appeared in public when they came to announce the will of God.

Most of the ancient Prophets were extraordinary messengers. They were not bred up to the prophetic function: as the office was immediately from God, as well as the message they were to deliver to the people, so they had no previous education—in reference to such an office; for no man knew whom the God of Israel might please to call to announce His righteousness to the people. Several of them were taken out of the walks of *common life*. Jonah appears to have been a private person at Gath-Hepher in Galilee, before God called him to prophesy against Nineveh. Elisha was a ploughman at Abel-Meholah (I Kings xix, v. 16) when called to the prophetic function. Zechariah appears to have been a husbandman, and a keeper of cattle (ch. xiii, v. 5). Amos was a herdsman of Tekoa, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit (ch. i, v. 1; vii. vv. 14-15); and no doubt several others of the ancient Prophets had an equally mean origin; but the office and the calling dignified the man.

The Prophets were accustomed to go in mean clothing; either sack-cloth, hair-cloth, or coats of skin, appear to have been their ordinary clothing. They spoke against the pride and vain-glory of man; and their very garb and manner gave additional weight to the solemn words they delivered. They lived in a retired manner; and, when not sent on special errands, they employed their vacant time in the instruction of youth;—as this is probably what we are to understand by the *Schools of the Prophets*, such as those over which Elijah, Elisha, and Samuel presided; though no doubt there were some of their disciples that were made partakers of the prophetic gift.

The Prophets do not appear to have been called to a life of *celibacy*. The matrimonial state was not considered as disqualifying men from officiating in the most holy offices.

In ancient times those who were afterwards called Prophets were termed *Seers* (I Sam. ix, v. 9), “*ha-roah*,” the *seeing person*; he who.

perceives mentally what the design of God is. Sometimes called also "Chozeh," the man who has *visions*, or *supernatural revelations* (I Kings xxii, v. 17; II Kings xvii, v. 13). They were sometimes also called *men of God*, and *messengers of God*. They had all an extraordinary commission, and had their message given them by immediate inspiration.

In this the Heathen copied after the people of God. They also had their *Prophets* and *Seers*; and hence their *Augurs* and *Auguries*, their *Haruspices*, *Priests*, and *Priestesses*, and their *oracles*; all pretending to be divinely inspired, and to declare nothing but the *truth*; for what was *truth* and *fact* among the *former*, was *affected* and *pretended* among the *latter*.

Many Prophets and Seers are mentioned in the Sacred Writings; but *fragments* and *insulated prophecies* excepted, we have the works of only *sixteen*; four of whom are termed the *former* or *larger* Prophets, and twelve the *latter* or *minor* Prophets. They have these epithets not from *priority of time*, or from *minor importance*, but merely from the places they occupy in the present arrangement of the Books of the Bible, and from the relative *size* of their productions.

At an early period the twelve minor Prophets were regarded as forming one collective body of writings, for in the Talmud, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve, are styled the *four latter Prophets*.

The Books are not arranged in the same order in the Hebrew and Septuagint texts, and in neither is the chronology exactly observed, as may be seen from the following table:—

HEBREW.	SEPTUAGINT.	CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.
1. Hoshua.	1. Hoshua.	1. Joel.
2. Joel.	2. Amos.	2. Jonah.
3. Amos.	3. Micah.	3. Amos.
4. Obadiah.	4. Joel.	4. Hoshua.
5. Jonah.	5. Obadiah.	5. Micah.
6. Micah.	6. Jonah.	6. Nahum.
7. Nahum.	7. Nahum.	7. Zephaniah.
8. Habakkuk.	8. Habakkuk.	8. Habakkuk.
9. Zephaniah.	9. Zephaniah.	9. Obadiah.
10. Haggai.	10. Haggai.	10. Haggai.
11. Zechariah.	11. Zechariah.	11. Zechariah.
12. Malachi.	12. Malachi.	12. Malachi.

Newcome, Boothroyd, and some other translators, have adopted the order which appeared to them to be chronologically correct; but in the present work that is retained which is found in the Hebrew Bible, and followed in the Vulgate, in all the authorized European versions, and in those of Michaelis, Dathé, De Wette, and others, on the ground of the facility of reference, which the other arrangement does not afford, but which is practically of greater importance than any advantage derivable from the change.

The writings of the Prophets, the most sublime and beautiful in the world, lose much of that usefulness and effect which they are so well calculated to produce on the souls of men, from their not being more

generally understood. They are delivered in such lofty and figurative terms, and with such frequent allusions to the customs and manners of times and places the most remote, that ordinary readers cannot, without some help, be supposed capable of understanding them. It is therefore useful to make the language of prophecy as intelligible as may be, by explaining those images and figures of speech in which it most frequently abounds.

The obscurity which sometimes attends prophecy does not always proceed from the circumstances or subject; it frequently proceeds from the highly poetical and figurative style in which prophecy is, for the most part, conveyed, and of which it will be proper to give some account. To speak of *all* the rhetorical figures with which the Prophets adorn their style, would lead us into a field too wide, and would be more the province of the rhetorician than the commentator. It will be sufficient for our purpose to attend to the most common of them; consisting of

1. ALLEGORY,
2. PARABLE, and
3. METAPHOR;

and then to consider the *sources* from which the Prophets borrow their images in these figures, and the sense which they wish to convey by them.

By *Allegory*, the first of the figures mentioned, is meant that mode of speech in which the writer or speaker means to convey a different idea from what the words in their obvious and primary signification bear. Thus, Jer. iv., v. 3: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns," is to be understood not of *tillage*, but of *repentance*. And: "The rowers have brought thee in great waters, the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas" (Ezek. xxvii., v. 26), allude not to the fate of a *ship*, but of a *city*, &c.

To this figure the *Parable*, in which the Prophets frequently speak, is nearly allied. It consists in the application of some feigned narrative to some real truth, which might have been less striking, or more disagreeable, if expressed in plain terms. Such is the following one of Isaiah (v., 1-2):

- "My beloved had a vineyard,
 "On a very high and fruitful hill:
 "And he fenced it,
 "And cleared it of the stones,
 "And he planted it with the choicest vine;
 "And he built a tower in the midst of it,
 "And he hewed out also a lake therein:
 "And he expected that it would bring forth grapes;
 "But it brought forth poisonous berries."

The 7th verse tells us that the *vineyard* was the *house of Israel*, which had so ill requited the favour which God had shown it, &c.

But of all the figures used by the Prophets the most frequent is the *Metaphor*, by which words are transferred from their primitive and plain to a secondary and figurative meaning. This figure, common in all poetry, and in all languages, is of indispensable necessity in Scripture;

which, having occasion to speak of Divine and spiritual matters, could do it only by terms borrowed from sensible and material objects. Hence it is that the sentiments, actions, and corporeal parts, not only of man, but also of inferior creatures, are ascribed to God Himself; it being otherwise impossible for us to form any conceptions of His pure essence and incommunicable attributes. But though the Prophets partly from necessity, and partly from choice, are thus profuse in the use of *metaphors*, they do not appear, like other writers, to have the liberty of using them as fancy directed. The same set of images, however diversified in the manner of applying them, is always used, both in *allegory* and *metaphor*, to denote the same subjects, to which they are in a manner appropriated. This peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew poetry might perhaps be owing to some rules taught in the prophetic schools, which did not allow the same latitude in this respect as other poetry. Whatever it may be owing to, the uniform manner in which the Prophets apply these images, tends greatly to illustrate the prophetic style; and, therefore, it will be proper now to consider the *sources* from which these images are most frequently derived, and the *subjects* and *ideas* which they severally denote. These sources may be classed under four heads:

1. Natural.
2. Artificial.
3. Religious, and
4. Historical.

I. The first and most copious, as well as the most pleasing source of images in the prophetic writings, as in all other poetry, is *Nature*; and the principal images drawn from nature, together with their application, are the following:—

The *sun*, *moon*, and *stars*, the highest objects in the natural world, figuratively represent *kings*, *queens*, and *princes* or *rulers*; the highest in the world politic. "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed." "I will cover the heavens, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light."

Light and *darkness* are used figuratively for *joy* and *sorrow*, *prosperity* and *adversity*. "We look for *light*, but behold *darkness*; for *brightness*, but we walk in *obscurity*." (Isa. lix., v. 9.)

An uncommon degree of *light* denotes an uncommon degree of *joy* and *prosperity*, and *vice versa*. "The light of the *moon* shall be as the light of the *sun*, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold." (Isa. xxx., v. 26.)

Immoderate rains, *hail*, *floods*, *deep waters*, *torrents*, and *inundations* denote *judgments* and *destruction*. "I will rain upon him with an overflowing shower, and great hailstones" (Ezek. xxxviii., v. 22); "Waters are coming from the north, and shall become an overflowing torrent." (Jer. xlvii., v. 2.)

Fire also, and the *east wind*, parching and hurtful, frequently denote the same. "They shall cut down thy choice cedars, and shall cast them into the *fire*." (Jer. xxii., v. 7.) "He drove her forth with his rough blast on the *east wind's* day." (Isa. xxvii., v. 8.)

Wind in general is often taken in the same sense. (See Hosea viii., v. 7.)