

THE POETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649761593

The Poets of the Old Testament by Alex. R. Gordon

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ALEX. R. GORDON

**THE POETS OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT**

THE POETS OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT

By

ALEX. R. GORDON, D.LITT., D.D.

PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE,
PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, MONTREAL

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1912

To
MY PARENTS

PREFACE

A VAST amount of important work has recently been done on the poetry of the Old Testament. Thus far, however, no attempt has been made to bring home the results, as a unified whole, to the English reader. The present book seeks, within limits, to supply this want. A brief sketch is first offered of the general characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Then the growth of the literature itself is traced from its roots in the old folk-poetry of Israel to its full flower in the Psalter and Wisdom books like Proverbs and Job. The aim has been throughout to catch the heart and spirit of the poetry. Thus questions of Introduction are treated only incidentally, and by way of approach to the centre. Translations are also given of the most characteristic passages, as far as possible in the rhythm of the original.

The scope of the work might, indeed, have been wider. For much of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament is not merely charged with the true passion of poetry, but even falls into the

balanced movement and cadence of verse. But as the prophets were more than poets—men fired with a message from the living God, whose poetic rhythms were but the natural outflow of their enthusiasm—I have thought it better to leave them out of account in the present work. On the other hand, Ecclesiastes has been included among the poets. The bulk of that book is, no doubt, pure prose. But in its theme and spirit it belongs to the same category as the Book of Job and the more speculative parts of Proverbs. Thus it appears to fit well into the general purpose of the work. For the same reason, while no special place has been given to the Apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon, they have been frequently drawn into comparison with the other Wisdom books. The former has been rendered, where possible, according to the original Hebrew version; hence it is usually referred to under its Hebrew name of the Wisdom of Ben Sira.

In the poetical literature the text is peculiarly obscure, and often corrupt. The keen criticism of the past century has, however, helped largely to recover the original readings. The carefully sifted results of criticism are now available to the student in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*. As the present book appeals chiefly to English readers, I have not considered it advisable to load the pages with critical apparatus.

Where emendations have been tacitly accepted, therefore, the student is referred to Kittel's notes. In texts where I have followed an independent course, however, reasons have been invariably given.

For the cause just stated, Biblical verses are numbered as in the English version, while Hebrew words have been avoided in the page proper. The scheme of transliteration is that of Davidson's *Grammar*, which is so generally adopted in modern works. Perhaps the only difficulty emerges in the case of the Divine name, which is now usually transliterated as *Yahweh* or *Yahwe*. This, no doubt reproduces most nearly the original sound. To preserve harmony with names like Joshua, Jonathan, etc., which occur in other parts of the book, I have adhered to the older *Jahweh*. But no real difficulty will be felt if the reader bear in mind that the Hebrew *J*, like the German, has the same sound as our English *Y*.

The translations offered are all original. I must, however, acknowledge with gratitude the inspiration I have received from Principal George Adam Smith's renderings of Lamentations ii. and iv. in his *Jerusalem*, Vol. II, and certain other poetical passages in his *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, and articles in the *Expositor*. Many of Dr. Smith's cadences I have found it impossible either