

**HISTORY OF JUDAH AND  
ISRAEL FROM THE  
BIRTH OF SOLOMON  
TO THE REIGN OF AHAB**

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History of Judah and Israel from the birth of Solomon to the reign of Ahab by Alfred Edersheim

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**ALFRED EDERSHEIM**

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BIBLE HISTORY VOL. V.



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FROM THE  
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BY  
ALFRED EDERSHEIM, D.D., PH.D.,  
AUTHOR OF  
"THE TEMPLE: ITS MINISTRY AND SERVICES,"  
"SKETCHES OF JEWISH SOCIAL LIFE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST," ETC.



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## PREFACE.

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THE period of Israel's history treated in this Volume has a two-fold special interest : political and religious. Beginning with the later years of David's reign, when the consciousness and the consequences of the great sin of his life had, so to speak, paralysed the strong hand which held the reins of government, we are, first, led to see how, in the Providence of God, the possibility of a great military world-monarchy in Israel (comp. Ps. xviii. 43-45)—such as those of heathen antiquity—was for ever frustrated. Another era began with Solomon : that of peaceful development of the internal resources of the country ; of rapid increase of prosperity ; of spread of culture ; and, through friendly intercourse with other nations, of introduction of foreign ideas and foreign civilisation. When it is remembered that the building of the Temple preceded the legislation of Lycurgus in Sparta by about one hundred and twenty years ; that of Solon in Athens by more than four hundred years ; and the building of Rome by about two hundred and fifty years, it will be perceived that the kingdom of Solomon presented the dim possibility of the intellectual, if not the political Empire of the world. What Jerusalem was in the high-day of Solomon's glory is described in a chapter of this history. But, in the Providence of God, any such prospect passed away, when, after only eighty years' duration, the Davidic kingdom was rent into two rival and hostile states. Yet, although this catastrophe was intimated by prophecy, as Divine judgment upon Solomon's unfaithfulness, there was nothing either abrupt or out of the order of rational causation in its accomplishment. On the contrary, the causes of this separation lay far back in the tribal relations of Israel ; they manifested



themselves once and again in the history of the Judges and of Saul; made themselves felt in the time of David; appeared in that of Solomon; and only reached their final issue, when the difficult task of meeting them devolved upon the youthful inexperience and misguided folly of a Rehoboam. All this is fully explained in the course of this history. After their separation, the two kingdoms passed, in their relations, through three stages: the first one of hostility; the second one of alliance, which commenced with the reign of Jehoshaphat and of Abab, and ended with the slaughter of the kings of Judah and Israel by Jehu; and the third again one of estrangement and of hostility. Of these three periods the first is fully traced, and the beginning of the second marked in the present Volume.

From the political we turn to the religious aspect of this history. It was indeed true, that the empire of the world was to be connected with the Davidic kingdom (Ps. ii.)—but not in the sense of founding a great military monarchy, nor in that of attaining universal intellectual supremacy, least of all, by conformity to the ways and practices of heathen worship, magic, and theurgy. The exaltation of Zion above the hills, and the flowing of all nations unto it, was to be brought about by the going forth of the Law out of Zion, and of the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem (Is. ii. 2, 3). This—to confine ourselves to the present period of our history—had been distinctly implied in the great promise to David (2 Sam. vii.); it was first typically realised in the choice of Jerusalem as the City of God (Ps. xli. ; xlviii. ; lxxxvii.); and further presented in its aspect of peace, prosperity, and happiness in the reign of Solomon (Ps. lxxii.) to which the prophets ever afterwards pointed as the emblem of the higher blessings in the Kingdom of God (Mic. iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10, comp. with 1 Kings iv. 25). But the great work of that reign, alike in its national and typical importance, was the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. This also has been fully described in the following pages.

But already other elements were at work. The introduction of heathen worship commenced with the decline of Solomon's spiritual

life. After his death, the apostasy from God attained fearful proportions, partially and temporarily in Judah, but permanently in Israel. In the latter, from the commencement of its separate national existence under Jeroboam, the God-chosen Sanctuary at Jerusalem, and the God-appointed priesthood were discarded; the worship of Jehovah transformed; and by its side spurious rites and heathen idolatry introduced, till, under the reign of Ahab, the religion of Baal became that of the State. This marks the high-point of apostasy in Israel. The evolving of principles of contrariety to the Divine Covenant slowly but surely led up to the final destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth. But, side by side with it, God in great mercy placed an agency, the origin, character, and object of which have already been indicated in a previous Volume. The Prophetic Order may be regarded as an extraordinary agency, by the side of the ordinary economy of the Old Testament; and as intended, on the one hand, to complement its provisions, and, on the other, to supplement them, either in times of religious declension, or when, as in Israel, the people were withdrawn from their influences. Hence the great extension of the Prophetic Order in such periods, and especially in the kingdom of the ten tribes. But when, during the reign of Ahab, the religion of Jehovah was, so to speak, repudiated, and the worship of Baal and Astarte substituted in its place, something more than even the ordinary exercise of the Prophetic Office was required. For the prophet was no longer acknowledged, and the authority of the God, Whose Messenger he was, disowned. Both these had therefore to be vindicated, before the prophetic agency could serve its purpose. This was achieved through what must be regarded, not so much as a new phase, but as a further development of the agency already at work. We mark this chiefly in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, which was contemporary with the first open manifestation of Israel's national apostasy.

Even a superficial reader will observe in the ministry of these two prophets, as features distinguishing it from that of all other prophets—indeed, we might almost say, from the whole history

of the Old Testament—the *frequency* and the *peculiar character* of their miracles. Three points here stand out prominently: their *unwonted accumulation*; their seeming characteristic of *mere assertion of power*; and their apparent purpose of *vindication of the authority of the prophet*. The reason and object of these peculiarities have already been indicated in our foregoing remarks. But in reference to the characteristic of *power* as connected with these miracles, it may be remarked that its exhibition was not only necessary for the vindication of the authority of the prophet, or rather of Him in Whose Name he spake, but that they also do not present a mere display of power. For, it was always associated with an ultimate moral purpose: in regard to the Gentiles or to Israel—the believing or the unbelieving among them; and in all the leading instances (which must rule the rest) it was brought about not only in the Name of Jehovah, but by calling upon Him as the direct Agent in it (comp. for the present Volume 1 Kings xvii. 4, 9, 14, 20-22). Thus viewed, this extraordinary display of the miraculous appears, like that in the first proclamation of Christianity among the heathen, “for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1 Cor. xiv. 22)—as Bengel explains, in order that, drawn and held thereby, they might be made to listen.

But even so, some further remarks may here be allowed; not, indeed, in the way of attempted disquisition on what must always be a prime postulate in our faith, but as helps in our thinking. It seems to me, that miracles require for their (objective) possibility—that is, subjectively viewed for their credibility<sup>1</sup>—only one postulate: that of the True and the Living God. It is often asserted, that miracles are not the traversing of the established, but the outcome of a higher order of things. This, no doubt, must be metaphysically true; but practically it is only a hypothetical statement, since, admittedly, and, as the very idea of miracles implies, we know nothing of this higher nature or order of things. But may we not

<sup>1</sup> I do not mean for the credibility of one or another special miracle, but for that of miracles in general.