

Studies of the Old Testament

Austin Phelps

882

יהוה

INSTITVTIO THEOLOGICA

ANDOVER FVNDATA MDCCCVII.



STUDIES
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT.

BY
AUSTIN PHELPS, D.D.,
PROFESSOR AT ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.
AUTHOR OF "THE STILL HOUR," ETC.

BOSTON:
CONGREGATIONAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY,
CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE,
BEACON STREET.
1879.

**COPYRIGHT, 1878, BY
CONGREGATIONAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY.**



30, 202

**STEREOTYPED BY
C. J. PETERS & SON,
75 FEDERAL STREET.**

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THESE studies of the Old Testament were originally published in one of our most widely-circulated religious papers. So many persons have expressed a wish for them in a more permanent form, that they are now gathered into this volume. Slight changes have been made, — a change in the order of topics, an occasional enlargement or alteration of paragraphs, and a few corrections. If the volume serves to illustrate, in any degree, how ancient and neglected Scriptures may be revived in the popular interest, and thus to show the perpetuity of the Old Testament as a *living* book for all ages, the object of this republication will be accomplished.

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER, MASS.

Oct. 1, 1878.

Studies of the Old Testament

In this course you will approach the Old Testament in a way that, according to the Introductory Note in the textbook, will "... illustrate... how ancient and neglected Scriptures may be revived in the popular interest, and thus to show the perpetuity of the Old Testament as a *living* book for all ages..." This will be accomplished through various studies of characters and precepts of the Old Testament.

- **METHOD OF STUDY:**

1. **BEGIN SIGN-IN** first for this course and mark the form "Begin" unless you have done so previously. You do not sign in when you finish each lesson. You only do so and mark the form "Finish" when you have completed the entire course and you are ready for the Final Test.

2. Download and print the **COURSE RECORD FORM** or keep an electronic copy of it on your computer. On it you will keep a record of your sign in "Begin" date because you will be required to enter it on the Sign In "Finish" form that you will submit at the end of the entire course. You will also keep other pertinent information on that form such as date and score for each test so that you will have that information at hand and it will help you keep track of your progress through the course.

Alternatively, you may keep your own type of Course Record form but it must contain ALL of the information found on the online Course Record form.

3. Student is required to read the text, "Studies of the Old Testament," by Austin Phelps, D.D. Student is also required to look up, in the King James Version of the Bible, all scripture references given in each lesson as you do that lesson.

- **NOTE:** Student **may not** complete more than one section in any one week.

Some sections will take several weeks to complete.

One week per lesson is the minimum allowed attendance.

Attendance for the entire course is 25 weeks minimum.

Although there are only 24 lessons in the book, one extra week is given for review before the Final Test.

- This course is worth 3 credits.

- There will be a Final Test at the end of the course. The Final Test will be closed book.

- **TESTING:** Make sure you read and submit the **testing instructions** form if you have not already done so. Only one such form is required for each student's file.

- **GRADING:** The following will be used to compute your final grade.

Your grade for the course will be a simple average of all test scores, including all lesson test scores and your Final Test score.

- **Read required text:** **Studies of the Old Testament** by Austin Phelps, D.D.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE PROPHET OF THE BROKEN HEART	7
II. GOD WORKS WITH MINORITIES WHO ARE WORK- ING FOR HIM	21
III. A MODEL OF PRAYER IN EMERGENCIES	33
IV. AN ANCIENT REVIVAL OF RELIGION	43
V. CHRISTIAN ALLIANCES WITH WICKED MEN	55
VI. HONORING GOD'S HOUSE	67
VII. PRESUMPTION IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD	79
VIII. FIDELITY TO THE RELIGION OF A GODLY ANCES- TRY	89
IX. THE LOST SON OF A GODLY FATHER	100
X. THE GODLY SON OF AN UNGODLY FATHER	111
XI. THE PRODIGAL SON OF GODLY PARENTS	124
XII. THE TWIN SERPENTS	137
XIII. AVOWED ENEMIES OF RELIGION	147
XIV. A TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT JOSIAH	161
XV. AN ANCIENT MODEL OF YOUTHFUL TEMPERANCE	174
XVI. THE LOST BIBLE	187
XVII. GOOD MEN WHO ARE NOT CHURCHMEN	201
XVIII. INTERTWINING OF GOD'S PLANS WITH THE PLANS OF MEN	215
XIX. THE KINGDOMS THAT DIE, AND THE KINGDOM THAT LIVES	230
XX. FRUITLESS CONVICTIONS OF SIN	244

	PAGE
XXI. THE MEN IN THE FIRE	261
XXII. THE MAN IN THE LIONS' DEN	277
XXIII. THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY IN THE CAREER OF CYRUS	296
XXIV. CHRIST THE CENTRE OF BIBLICAL THOUGHT	314

LESSON ONE

You are required to read the book of Jeremiah during the course of your study of this lesson. You will be asked if you read the book in its entirety before taking the test for this lesson.

STUDIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE PROPHET OF THE BROKEN HEART.

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! — JER. ix. 1.

THE “Weeping Prophet” is the title often given to Jeremiah. He is not a popular prophet. Unhappy men are not commonly popular men. Yet this one had ample reason for the depression under which he lived, and the minor key which runs through the strain of his writings. He was very far from being a morose man. He did not mourn over disappointed ambitions of his youth. He was not soured at the world’s injustice. He wasted no melodrama over the “cold, cold world.” He was the last man living to be a misanthrope.

It may help us to appreciate two of the most affecting and sublime books of the Bible, to inquire, What was it that made this very able and godly man so miserable? Why should he, more

than other men, be given over to lifelong sorrow? Why should he, more than other men, leave us a book of "Lamentations" as the most significant record of his life? Why should his name have coined a word, "jeremiad," expressive of the lugubrious and dismal in literature?

The answer is this. He had a most delicately sensitive nature, a most profound attachment to the cause of God, an intense patriotic love of his native land; yet it was his lot to live at an age when the people of God had fallen into most fearful apostasy, and the most terrific judgments were impending over them. It was given to him to see those judgments hurrying on apace. He heard angels of retribution on the wings of the wind. He saw their sabres flashing in the sun.

Moreover, it was his mission to tell the people of their sins, to rebuke the nobles for their oppression, the humbler orders for their vileness, the priesthood for their falseness, even his fellow-prophets for their infidelity to the living God. The whole nation, from prince to beggar, had reached the very bottom of national depravity; and this lone man was set to tell them of it, and to forewarn them of the frightful doom which was impending. He was the prophet of unwelcome truth. He had to face the facts of an age of retribution. He had to tear away the illusions with which people were deceiving themselves. They were bragging of the recovery of the Bible,

which Josiah had found in the rubbish of their desecrated temple. They claimed that that sacred treasure was going to make all things right with them. They treated it much as an African savage regards the fetich which he worships, or the amulet which he wears around his neck. The possession of the Sacred Book, they thought, would save them. This young prophet knew better, and he had to tell them so.

The recovered Bible had come too late to save them, just as Christianity now comes to some savage tribes too late to save them from extermination. The people did not want to hear his story. He was a croaker. They wanted to hear somebody who would give them a pleasanter discourse. People who are living in sin, and who know it, are sometimes very fond of "beautiful sermons." They will bear any thing better than the simple truth. Beauty is more popular than truth.

Besides, this unpopular preacher stood alone. Not another one of the prophetic order stood by him. The only friend he had was one Baruch, an obscure scribe; and even he got sadly frightened at the plain talk of his outspoken friend. The priests, too, hated him as a renegade. All classes — some for one reason, and some for another — agreed in their spite against this solitary truth-teller. Like Bunyan and many another unpalatable preacher, he got himself into prison for his

fidelity. For forty years it was his business to deliver his warnings and rebukes and threatenings, word for word, as God bade him, to nobles and priests and people who were bent on destruction, and determined not to be saved by God or man.

To him belongs the distinction of first suffering the burning of the word of God by the enraged king who would not listen to his reproofs. Many times after his day, faithful preachers and reformers saw the Bible burned in the market-place by royal and papal decree. But the first in the long line of such honored men was this despondent prophet of Judæa. On him Satan first wreaked that form of impotent revenge. As if a truth could be burned with a flaming scroll!

A singular fact also is it, that this solitary preacher, the butt of a nation's ridicule, does not seem to have been made for such work. Usually God fits the man to his life's work. If he is to have stern work to do, he is made of stern stuff. Luther, with much that was lovable in his nature, was, on the whole, a rough, stout man. That square face and thick neck, and those compact lips of his, indicate a man of will, who could bear rougher handling than other men. He was to contend with devils; and God gave him a nature which devils feared. Nobody ever called Luther the "weeping prophet." If he shed tears, it was on his knees before God only. He shed no tears

before the Diet of Worms. He was in no lachrymose mood when he had the pope's bull to deal with, outside the Elster Gate of Wittenberg.

The mourning prophet of Judæa does not seem to have been of that stern make. He had a delicate and retiring nature. Gentle and unselfish was he, like a loving woman. When the sombre truth first dawns upon his early manhood, and he sees the work he has to do, he breaks out with the despairing cry, "Ah, Lord! I cannot speak! I am but a child!" So overwhelmed is he by the sight of his country's shame, and the foresight of her doom, that he exclaims, "Oh that my head were waters, that I might weep day and night for the daughter of my people!" His writings show, by their chosen imagery, that he longs for solitude. He hungers to get away from the sins and sorrows of his time. Cowper's refrain, "Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness!" would have expressed the habit of his mind. He "sits alone, and keeps silence, crouching under his burden." We seem to hear him crying out in the bitterness of his spirit, —

"The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"

It is very significant of the despair of his soul, that he lives a celibate life. It is not for such a man as he to seek the dear delights of family and companionships of home. His great life's work is

too sad, too heart-breaking. He will not venture to lay the half of it on the heart of any woman. At times, when the solitude of it, and the blackness of it, and the funeral dirge of it, become intolerable, he heaps curses on the day of his birth. True to his Oriental instincts, he curses the very messenger who bore the glad news to his father that a boy was born to bear his name. Yes, he is the Prophet of the Broken Heart. The sins of his people are a lifelong grief to him. His own work, as their spiritual teacher, overwhelms him. The mystery of his life is, why he, of all men living, should have been called to such a mission, among such a people, on the eve of their destruction, too late to do them any good; when all that he can do is to proclaim to them the judgments with which they are soon to be overtaken.

When the late Rev. Charles Kingsley was in his last sickness, and very near his end, though he did not know it, but was waiting in anguish for the daily expected death of his wife, he said one day, as his biographer tells us, "It must be right; for it is so *strange* and yet so painful." The very mysteriousness of inexplicable trial is a token of the divine wisdom from which it comes. No other mind could contrive trial so profound. It must come from God, and "must be right." Such was the forlorn consolation of the stricken prophet, when overwhelmed, as he often was, by the lot which it had pleased God to send him. Even

God's veracity he questions: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived." Imprecations flow from his lips like household words.

To his own times and people he was the prophet of doom. So far as they were concerned, his work ended there. Not so in the fore-reaching design of God. Jeremiah "builded better than he knew." He did an unconscious work for coming ages. Imperfect man as he was, he was the forerunner of the *spiritual* disclosures of the new dispensation. The old dispensation was near its end. Its sun was going down in blood-red clouds. But the spiritual meaning of the ancient forms and rites was coming slowly to the light. To no other prophet of the olden time, unless it be Isaiah, do we turn for glimpses of it as we do to this despairing one. The very burden of his soul pressed it out of him. He was driven to fall back upon the spiritual truths and consolations which his own soul needed. His very sins made them a necessity to him. Nothing else could save him from mania or suicide. God thus *used* him, his sorrows, his self-conflicts, his errors, his sins.

Let us pass rapidly over a few suggestions drawn from this sketch of this remarkable man: —

1. Jeremiah *represents a class of good men and women* of whom some exist in every age. There are some good men of whom it must be conceded that they are not gay Christians. From their make, and from the disclosures of truth which

God gives them, they cannot be. They have a peculiarly sensitive and deep nature. They have profound intuitions. Their religion is proportionately deep and tender. In all this world's history, nothing else is so startling a *fact* to them as that this is a lost world, estranged from God, on its way, but for God's loving grace, to an eternal and awful doom.

These men and women are often blamed for being gloomy. In their hearts they answer, "How can we be hilarious when the imperilled souls of men, and our own too, rest as a burden upon us?" If the world were enveloped in one vast conflagration, should we naturally laugh and sing and dance our way through it? Yet a more fearful flame is ravaging it than that of the fires of Etna. A certain sobriety of deportment seems to such men becoming to life in such a world as this, and with such a future crowding on its destiny.

Christian ministers, whose work compels them to think much of these things, are apt to be so oppressed by them as to acquire a certain gravity of demeanor which the world laughs at. If you could look into their hearts, as you sometimes do in their memoirs, you would see that they bear the burden day and night of this *lost* world.

2. Christians of the broken heart, it must be confessed, *are not apt to be popular with the world.* Very hard things are said of them. Very unjust judgments they have to bear in silence. The world

cracks many a jest upon their long faces and their "vinegar" aspect. I have seen tears trembling in their eyes, as their only answer to the gibes of men for whose souls they went home to pray.

Yet have not you heard from such jesters the fling at our common faith, "If I believed what you believe, I should move heaven and earth to save souls: it seems to me I could never laugh again"? So said an estimable woman of the world to me last summer. It is hard to please men who do not feel the inner life which many humble Christians lead. Which shall we do, gentlemen and ladies, which shall we do?—hold on to, and try to act upon, the faith that gives us "long faces," or meet your charge of heartless inconsistency by living as if this were already a saved world, and our home were Eden?

3. The class of godly men and women of whom Jeremiah is the type *possess a very profound style of Christian character*. Not perfect, by any means. We all have an ideal of a certain robust and rounded Christian life superior to theirs. On the whole, St. Paul was a nobler character than Jeremiah. He ought to have been. He saw at its meridian the sun which the prophet only *foresaw* long before the dawn. Yet it is unjust not to give the Jeremiahs of our brotherhood the credit for ploughing deep in their sense of eternal things. They may not be as happy as their faith in Christ warrants them to be. Yet they do make a begin-

ning in the right direction. Theirs is a *struggle* to be and to do, of which they have no reason to be ashamed. They do not cover their eyes. They accept God's teachings courageously. Eternity will show to us all, that some of the world's *great souls* are among them. Multitudes who were more popular with their fellow-men here will there stand aside, and leave a clear space for those mourning ones to go up and hear God's message to them. Does anybody doubt what that will be?

4. Such Christians as the "weeping prophet" represents *are men and women of great spiritual power*. The world does not like them, but cannot help respecting them. "I keep clear of unhappy people," said one of the impatient ones: yet I observed that he chose for his pastor, and honored as a great man, one whose face was long, and whose look betokened secret tears. We love realities, after all. We feel the power of the man who knows the most of them, and feels them most profoundly. The man or woman who takes God's views of things, interprets human life as God interprets it, looks out on eternity as God reveals it, and whose visage bears the marks of inward struggles of soul with the facts of human destiny as God declares them, is a *power* with us all. If we come into deep waters, and the billows go over our heads, we look around gasping for the friendly word or look or hand of such to cheer us. The very men we have laughed at, or shrunk from,

because they were "unco' guid men," are those whose experience we want then.

Said one man of the world, whose misfortune it was to have a "gay parson" for his pastor, "Our pastor is a capital fellow, a born wit, a splendid mimic; he keeps the table in a roar; and in the pulpit he is not afraid to make us laugh." Said his friend, "Suppose that you had lost your only child, or that you were yourself about to die." — "Well," was the reply, "to tell you the truth, he is the last man I should want to see then. Still he is a capital fellow."

Somehow the "capital fellows," in the ministry or out of it, are a little limited in their range of usefulness. They do for picnics or the croquet-ground. When we come to those passages of life or death at which eternity looks in upon us, we turn to men and women of another make.

5. Who can help seeing that broken-hearted Christians *are in some respects very nearly akin to the Lord Jesus Christ?*

Does not their life, dropping its inconsistencies, strike us very much as his life does? He did not live a very hilarious life. Jests are not the chief thing we remember from his lips. His biographers do not say much of his "eyes sparkling with fun," and his "ringing laugh." He was never called a "capital fellow." Such clergymen as Matthew Byles and Sydney Smith, somehow, do not remind us very impressively of him. He attended a wed-

ding; but the chief thing he did there had more to do with eternity than with time, more to do with God than with man. Comic songs — But stop! Let us take off our shoes from our feet, for the ground whereon we stand is holy!

The sorrows of men had a strange attraction for him. He did not “keep clear of unhappy men.” The grave of Lazarus was the scene of one of the events most strikingly *like* him. The way he felt about Jerusalem seems very much like that of the weeping prophet. The nights he spent in prayer are a great comfort to these Christians of the broken heart. Of Gethsemane and Calvary what shall we say? May we reverently ask what class of Christians most nearly resemble him there? What kind of disciples did he long to see around him then? What is the meaning of that prophetic portrait of him which painters have never copied, “His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”?

6. Let us not be misunderstood. It is not that the example even of the “Man of Sorrows” forbids mirth, the laugh, the song, the jest. No: there is a time to laugh, and a time to dance. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee! Christ never by one word or look enjoined ascetic virtues. He lived so that bad men called him a glutton. Men who prayed in the streets with one eye open called him a wine-bibber. Men who cheated widows said he was a

sabbath-breaker. Adulterers charged him with unseemly acquaintance with outcast women. Murderers and blasphemers called him the devil. He was no saint according to the standard of such men. Nevertheless, the whole drift of his teachings and his life was towards a different *kind* of life from that which men call pleasure. Its joys lie deeper, and are built upon certain august and stern realities. And those realities it is which these Christians of the downcast eye are struggling with, some of them, day by day, all their lives long.

We do them a very mean injustice if we fail to give them credit for this. They are simply struggling, like drowning men, as for dear life, to be true to the faith they hold. With heavy hearts and swollen eyes, they are trying to *live* their faith. They are agonizing to get near to Christ, and to live there. Drowning men do not sing many comic songs. Ye cynical critics, think what you may of the rest of us: there *are* such men and women as these, of whom Christ is not ashamed. Oh, what poor fools we are if we profane their conflicts with a gibe!

7. These Christians of the broken heart *are sure of a very exalted rank in heaven*. I hear a voice from beyond the stars, saying, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. What are these that are

arrayed in white robes? Whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation: *therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Return to course main page and
take Test marked **Intro & 1.**