

Sacrifice.—Worship, in early times, took almost universally the form of sacrifice. Gifts of the flesh of animals, or the fruit of the fields, or of wine and oil, were brought to the altar. The fat portions of the meat, with fragrant gums or sweet cans, were burned, and the remainder was eaten by the worshipper and his household or invited friends. Various kinds of sacrifice are described fully in Leviticus (chs. 1-9).

The Sacred Year.—Three great annual feasts were observed. The feast of Passover, or unleavened bread, in the spring, corresponding to our Eastertide, marked the beginning of harvest and commemorated the departures from Egypt (Ex. chs. 12, 13). The feast of Pentecost, or of weeks, seven weeks later, marked the end of harvest. The feast of Tabernacles, in the fall, in September or October, after the ingathering of the fruits, commemorated also the living in tents in the wilderness. Just before came the great fast, the day of atonement. The old economic year began in the fall, in September or October, but the sacred year was made to begin in the spring, in March or April. The first day of the old year is still celebrated as the Jewish New Year by the feast of Trumpets. In the early spring the feast of Purim commemorated Queen Esther's deliverance of the Jews (Esth. 9: 22-26). Every seventh day the Sabbath was observed as a day of rest. The New Moon day, or first day of each month (that is, lunar month) was also a holy day (Num. 10: 10; 2 Kings 4: 23).

Prophecy.—The prophet was the messenger or spokesman of the God of Israel. The patriarchs and Moses are called prophets, because of their inspired utterances, but, strictly speaking, the great order of the prophets begins with Samuel. They sometimes gathered in companies or "schools," animated by religious enthusiasm. They became instructors of the people and counsellors of the kings. They were writers of the early history, to which they gave a strong religious coloring (1 Chron. 29: 29, etc.), and their books of prophetic discourse constitute a most significant part of the Old Testament scriptures.