

(Gen. 41/4, 8/21; Ex. 24/10). It is certain that the popular view in the eighth century was that sacrifice was a means of gaining Yahweh's favour and so making worshippers secure against their foes. The prophets set in opposition to this the demand for an intelligent obedience to Yahweh's righteous claims. He desires "mercy and not sacrifice." "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Yet the idea of sacrifice permeates all life; the captive in war and the criminal offender are slain in some sense as a sacrifice. The higher prophetic teaching turns away from the coarse ritual to the ordinary activities of life, which bring opportunities of real service. It was not directly concerned with theories as to which was the most effective form of material sacrifice. It was probably in the Exile, where men learned to keep alive a real religious life without material sacrifices, that they learned to think of penitence and obedience as the true sacrifice. There is a difference in the statement that obedience is *better* than sacrifice and that obedience *is* sacrifice (Ps. 40/6; cf. the use made of this passage by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (10/5), when he puts the words into the mouth of Christ and tells us that He abolishes the first and lower that He may establish the second and higher form of sacrifice, viz., that of the will). In the later ritual sacrifice was used for the expression of penitence and the taking away of sin, so it was not out of all relation to prophetic teaching. But even then the meaning depended upon the intelligence of the worshippers; some treated it as symbolic, and some were inclined to reject it. In any case confined to one central sanctuary, it left a large place to be filled by the more intellectual exercises of prayer, praise, and the reading of The Book.

The statement already made concerning the national character of Hebrew religion explains to some extent the fact that the doctrine of personal immortality does not gain a large place. The old view of the underworld was there as a background for popular beliefs and superstitions, and other Oriental religious made much of the influence of ghosts and spirits. But these things have not left a strong mark on OT teaching, which was concerned more with the pursuit of godliness here,