

STUDY PACK 9

God and Justice in Human History

“To the prophets, man’s home _____, and their central concern is what is happening _____ . Both _____ and _____ are subject to _____ . Just as the word is the vessel for His revelation, history _____ and the material for man’s achievement.”

~~ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp.168-169 ~~

Much of the material for this lecture comes from Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, chapter 9, History.

I. MAN IS TEMPTED TO BELIEVE THAT MIGHT IS RIGHT

Heschel asks the question, “Why were so few voices raised in the ancient world in protest against the _____.”

- A. The Old Testament prophets condemned man’s use of _____ : Isa. 10:12, 14:4-6; Jer. 23:10; Hab. 1:11, 2:11-12; Micah 2:1-2.
- B. Historian George Contenau describes the wickedness of the Assyrians upon conquest:
- “...the king’s throne would be set up before the gates of the city and the prisoners would be paraded before him, led by the monarch of the captive town, _____, such as having his eye put out or confinement in a cage, until the king of Assyria set a term to his long drawn agony. Sargon had the defeated king of Damascus burned alive before his eyes. The wives and daughters of the captivated king were destined for the Assyrian harems and those who were not of noble blood were condemned to slavery. Meanwhile the soldiers had been massacring the population, and brought the heads of their victims into the king’s presence, where they were counted up by the scribes. Not all the male prisoners were put to death, for the boys and craftsmen were led into captivity, where they would be assigned the hardest tasks on the royal building projects, where the swamps which cover so much of Mesopotamia must have caused an enormously high rate of mortality. The remainder of the population were uprooted, _____, (*Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria*, p.148).
- C. God accepts the repentance of evil nations: Jonah 3; Jer. 18:7-8.
- D. Rather than being in awe at the wickedness of the Assyrians, the messengers of God _____.
1. The books of Jonah and Nahum are devoted to this condemnation.
 2. Isaiah condemns them, Isa. 14:4.
 3. God allows even the Assyrians to repent, Jonah 3.

I GOD USES THE WICKED NATIONS OF THE EARTH TO CARRY OUT HIS PURPOSE

- A. He calls Assyria “_____,” Isa. 10:5. See also Isa. 13:5, 15:26, 7:18, 8:7.
- B. He calls Nebuchadnezzar, “the king of Babylon, _____: Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10.
- C. These wicked rulers are not conscious that they _____.
- D. God also uses rulers who are not as characterized by wickedness like Cyrus, Isa. 44:28, 10:13, 23:9, 2:10-17; Micah 7:16.
- E. God will vindicate those that _____ in history: Psalm 20:7, 147:10-11; Isa. 66:2; 57:15, 1:27, See especially Isa. 13:11, 29:20.

III. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IS NOT ALWAYS _____ TO HUMANS IN THE MIDST OF HISTORY

“God’s power in history does not endure as a process; it occurs _____. There is a divine involvement and concern in what is done for that which is.” Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*, p.168.

- A. The Old Testament prophets are consistent in seeing the hand of God in history when it is not easily visible to man, Jer. 2:8; Amos 9:7; Isaiah 14:24-27.
- B. Isaiah addressed “_____ dwellers on the earth,” Isaiah 18:3. See also 33:13, 34:1.
- C. Jeremiah is the prophet _____, Jer. 1:5, 25:31, 25:17, 10:10.

IV. GOD REPEATEDLY PROMISES TO BRING JUSTICE TO THE WHOLE EARTH

See Isa. 26:8-9, 33:10, 9:2. This message is found extensively in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zechariah and Revelation. His promise is fulfilled in the Millennium.

V. GOD’S JUSTICE WILL BE FULFILLED EVEN WHEN MAN IS NOT EXPECTING IT

“The central message of the prophets is the insistence that the human situation can be understood only in conjunction with the divine situation. The absurdity of isolating the human situation and treating it in disregard of the divine involvement is exemplified by the self-defeating course of man made history,” Heschel, p.100.

“History is not a meaningless conglomeration of neutral facts, but a drama unfolding _____. The drama is staged in time and encompasses the wide _____. A battle is raging, man in his presumption undertakes to fashion history in disregard and defiance of God,” Heschel, p.190.