

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

I have endeavoured in this paper to illustrate the general character of the Hagada. Want of space has, however, prevented me from speaking of those very striking Hagadôth which, to the uninitiated reader, appear to be most absurd, because they convey hidden meaning — *φωνάντα συνετίσιω* — not understood even by many of the Jews themselves, but devised with the express intention of concealing their significance from all except a few chosen scholars or the most eminent Rabbis who uttered them. Of these I hope hereafter to furnish one or two specimens.

F. W. FARRAR.

THE WATERS OF SHILOAH.

ISAIAH viii. 6.

THE very simplicity and pertinence of words addressed to one generation often render them obscure to the generations that come after, especially if they come long after and spring from a different stock. The more closely indeed that words fit into and express the experience of a by-gone generation, the more remote are they from us who have passed through a different experience and have been trained in a wholly dissimilar series of traditions. Before we can hope to understand them, we must study the conditions of that generation, the hopes and fears by which they were swayed, and look at them, in short, as far as possible from their point of view.

Thus, for example, to the Hebrews who lived during the reign of Remaliah's son, who feared king Rezin his ally, and who had often drunk of the softly-flowing stream of Shiloah, the reproach of

the Prophet would be full of significance ; while for us, though we can hardly fail to catch his tone of reproach, his meaning is wholly lost, or can only be painfully recovered. Its very allusions to Rezin, and Remaliah's son, and "Siloah's sacred flood," which would bring home the reproach to the men of that generation, and render it at once picturesque and forcible, obscure its meaning and pertinence for us. Before we can so much as apprehend in what direction it points, we must translate it into terms in modern use ; we must patiently trace out the purport of the historical allusions by which its meaning was conveyed to the Jews but is concealed from us.

"But shall we be repaid for our trouble if we enter on this tedious and difficult inquiry ?"

That will hardly be doubted when I so far anticipate the results of our inquiry as to say that, in their last resort, these words, so obscure and mysterious as yet, convey a rebuke to those who put their trust in the powers of this visible and passing world, instead of trusting in Christ, the Sent One of God, and the Saviour of the world.

Two facts we must bear well in mind from the very outset of our brief inquiry. The first is that the phrase—"the waters of Shiloah"—is simply an ancient and poetic name for that pool of Siloam in which our Lord bade the blind man wash in order that he might receive his sight.¹ The second is that the generation to whom this reproach was addressed lived long after the division of the holy nation into the rival kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Between these two kingdoms there was always a latent, and

¹ John ix. 7.

often an open, hostility. As the conflict between them passed into its more fatal and malignant phases, the neighbouring nations were drawn into it, and made their profit of it,—Syria being, for the most part, the ally of Israel, and Assyria the ally of Judah.

1. Now "Rezin" was the king of Syria at the time that "Remaliah's son," Pekah, was king of Israel. These two, Pekah and Rezin, had conspired against Judah. They had invaded it, and attempted to take Jérusalem by assault, although as yet they had not succeeded in the attempt. When tidings of this confederacy came to Ahaz, the king of Judah, his heart and the heart of his people were "moved as the trees of the wood are moved by the wind;"¹ they were agitated and bowed down with fear. The prophet Isaiah is sent to calm their fears, to stay and reassure their hearts. He comes with the gracious promise, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel.

"But that is a prophecy of Messiah's advent; and what has that to do with the fear of Ahaz and his people? They were foreboding the fatal issue of a present war, and they are told of the advent of a Redeemer who, some seven centuries afterward, is to come on a spiritual mission; of the advent of a Messiah who, long after they are gathered to their fathers, is to bring salvation to their remote descendants! What help or solace was that to them in their pressing and critical emergency?"

If the promise meant nothing more than this, if it spake only of the advent of a future Redeemer, it

¹ Isaiah vii. 2.

must be admitted that it would have been little adapted to the immediate and urgent wants of the moment, and would have carried little comfort to the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. But, besides its future prophetic meaning, the promise had a literal and immediate significance. The virgin prophetess, *Isaiah's bride*, was to conceive and bring forth a son. *His* name was to be Immanuel ("God with us"), to shew that God would be with his people in their present strait. Before *this* Immanuel—the living prophet's son—was old enough to discern between good and evil, both the kings whom Judah feared and abhorred—both "Rezin," king of Syria, and "Remaliah's son," king of Israel—were to be utterly destroyed and their land dispeopled. *This* was to be the stay and solace of the men of Judah, that, within a few years, the enemies who troubled and dismayed them were to be overthrown. The prophetic meaning of the promise, the coming of the true Immanuel, was for *our* teaching and comfort; the birth of the typical Immanuel, an event close at hand, was to be *their* comfort and support in their imminent distress and peril.

Even this promise, however, near as its fulfilment was, did not suffice to allay the storm of fear which swept through the heart of Judah as the wind rushes through the wood. So far from discerning the prophetic meaning of the promise, King Ahaz could not wait for its literal fulfilment, nay, could not trust it when it was fulfilled. In a few months the Prophetess brought forth a son, whom the Prophet, her husband, named Immanuel. To every faithful heart this boy was an express sign that God had not

abandoned them, that He was with them and would deliver them. But there were not many faithful hearts in Judah. It was not enough, whether for king or people, to have God with them : they must have man too. Heaven was a long way off ; Syria, close at hand. God might be able to deliver them ; but there could be little doubt that Syria was able to crush them. And there lay the Syrian host, a very present portent and dread, pressing in hard upon their metropolis, endangering the very Temple ; and yet God's arm was not stretched out to defend his own. It would be wise to appeal to the nearer, quicker, surer help of man ; to make or renew an alliance with the king of Assyria and to entreat immediate succour. These credulous sceptics, believing in " big battalions," but not in the circumambient host of God, had their will. The Assyrian monarch invaded, first, the kingdom of Syria. Rezin was called home to defend his own territory, and was slain in the siege of Damascus. Then the Assyrian invaded the kingdom of Israel, and took town after town, till at last his own servants conspired against the son of Remaliah, and slew him. *Thus* the promise of God was fulfilled despite the unbelief of the Jews, and both the kings who put Judah in fear were miserably destroyed.¹

Here, then, the lamp of history begins to shine on this obscure passage, and to make its meaning clear. " This people," we may say, " who rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son," were the people of Israel. Remaliah's son was their king. Rezin, king of Syria, was his faithful ally. They had conspired

¹ See 2 Kings xv. and 2 Chron. xxviii.

against Judah, and invaded it, destroying "a hundred and twenty thousand valiant men," and carrying off two hundred thousand captives, with an immense spoil. So great a victory, a campaign so fortunate, a booty so large, might well inflame the pride of their subjects. They grew boastful and exultant; they "rejoiced" or gloried in the two kings who had enriched them with plunder and led them to a triumph so complete.

2. But, again: the people who put their trust, who exulted, in the kings of Israel and Syria, also "refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly." What may *that* mean? what was this second offence against Heaven? For an answer to this question we must turn from the historical to the natural facts here alluded to. "The waters of Shiloah" took their rise on Mount Moriah, "the hill of the Lord," the hill on which the Temple was built. Indeed, the spring is said to have risen within the very precincts of the Temple, and to have supplied its courts and cisterns with the abundant water required for its innumerable washings and sacrifices. From the summit of the hill it now flows gently to its base, not along any external channel however, but through a secret tunnel which it seems to have worn for itself through the solid rock. Its waters, therefore, flow under ground, running far before they meet the light of day. And, when they re-emerge, they rise and flow without noise or turbulence. They form no brawling torrent, no swift and angry stream, sweeping away its banks and carrying havoc before it. Softly and gently they rise and fill the pool. Softly and gently they overflow into a placid stream, a

stream that does not fail even in times of drought ; a stream that quickens all it touches into life, and reveals its presence only by the beauty and fertility which mark its course. This is no imaginary description adapted to the requirements of the passage before us, but a description given by a traveller who stood on its margin and tracked its course only a few years since. And yet how admirably it illustrates the Prophet's words—"The waters of Shiloah that go *softly*;" or, as the Hebrew word also means, *secretly*. They *do* go both secretly and softly. They flow unseen for a while ; and when they emerge from their rocky tunnel, they do not rush and fret and whiten in their course, as most hill streams do, but lapse gently on, carrying with them a belt of verdure to the very margin of the Dead Sea. The words of Isaiah describe the waters of Shiloah as they remain to this day.

And now we may see, in part, the significance and force of the reproach, "This people *refuseth* the waters of Shiloah." For the stream of Siloam, which rose within the Temple precincts, is here used as a symbol of the Temple and of its worship. This worship the ten tribes of Israel had long since abandoned. They had turned aside to idols. They bowed before the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up, instead of bending before the mercy-seat of Jehovah. Nay, more and worse : in place of putting their trust in the invisible God, of whom even the golden calves were at first intended to be visible emblems, they were putting their trust in man, "rejoicing in Reziq and Remaliah's son," believing that these two kings, who had already gratified their lust for plunder and

victory, were better able to serve and succour them than the very gods they worshipped. Jehovah, indeed, had promised to be with them as He was with their fathers, to preserve them from their enemies, to bless them in their ways. But they could not see Him. His arm moved softly and secretly—noiselessly and without display. They craved, they preferred, a more palpable and obvious defence and support. The waters of Siloam ran too softly for them; the word and providence of God were too gentle and unobtrusive to command their confidence. Jehovah was far away, Rezin and Pekah close at hand. *He* moved toward his ends quietly, like the light which dawns gradually and noiselessly upon the world; *they*, suddenly and noisily, amid the confused tumults of battle, like the lightning which smites and scathes and stuns. And therefore the people of Israel refused the sacred but secret stream of Siloah, and rejoiced in their victorious monarch and his Syrian ally.

This, then, is the first and most obvious meaning of the passage, as it stands. The Israelites rejected the secret and invisible ministries of the Temple and of Him who dwelt in the Temple, and were glorying in human strength, human valour, human alliances.

3. But we may find another meaning in it, or another application of the same meaning; nay, we *must* find this other meaning in it if, as probably we ought to do, we translate the passage, with Hitzig, "This people *dreadeth* Rezin and Remaliah's son." For, in that case, it is the people of Judah, rather than the people of Israel, who are rebuked by the Prophet. *They* were putting their trust in men, in

princes. They dreaded the might of the two monarchs who had come up against them. They could not feel secure until they could pit the king of Assyria against the king of Syria, and go out to war with foreign allies as numerous and as powerful as those of Israel.

And *their* sin, the sin of a falsely-placed trust, was more heinous in them than in their brethren of Israel. For they still clung to the Temple, still worshipped the Jehovah of their fathers. By all the ties of habit and worship, by all the nobler traditions of their race and kingdom, they were bound to make *Him* their strength and stay. To quicken and deepen their reliance on Him, God had given them both a special word of promise, and in Immanuel, the son of the Prophet, a special and most gracious sign. The very name of this child was a new assurance that God was with them, that He had not forgotten to be gracious to them. But, like their kinsmen of Israel, "this people" of Judah refused the waters of Shiloah, because they ran softly. The Divine energy working invisibly through the events and changes of their daily life, working still more potently through the acts of worship in the Temple, and the gracious assurance latent in the word of promise and in Immanuel, the sign of the promise—these required a spiritual insight and affection of which they were destitute. It was easier for them to rest on outward forces, on the valour of captains and armies, on the might of great conquerors and monarchs; and therefore they betook themselves to the king of Assyria, and the vast hosts he could summon to his standard, and put their trust in these.

And verily they had their reward. The Assyrian listened to their urgent appeal. He came and destroyed their enemies, but he also "stretched out" his terrible wings over *them*. Judah, as well as Israel, was "brought very low." It was "stript naked." The ally whom they had called in "distressed them, but did not strengthen them."

4. There is still another, and a wider, meaning in these words. All the Hebrew prophets, and Isaiah among them, use the kingdoms of Syria and of Assyria as types of the great world-power, of those external forces of every kind in which it is our constant temptation to trust rather than in the Maker of heaven and earth. To the Jewish people, dwelling in their scattered village communities, with their self-elected judges and leaders—to this people, who were held together by religious rather than by political ties, the vast organized despotisms beyond their borders were a strangely impressive and terrible spectacle. It is impossible to read the inspired prophecies and chronicles without perceiving that the national imagination was dominated, that it was now attracted and now daunted, by the immense power of these great instruments of conquest and oppression; without perceiving that in the minds both of prophets and of the people these despotisms came to stand for all the hostile and seductive forces of that world which is without God and even opposes itself against Him.

It was in these vulgar, unspiritual, but tremendous forces, that the men both of Judah and of Israel were now trusting. Compared with the great despotisms of the East, and the men who wielded them, what

was the child Immanuel, although he was a sign of the Divine Presence, or what "the waters of Shiloah," although it too was the symbol of the Divine Presence and favour? We must not judge these men too harshly if the loud, near, and obvious forces of the great Eastern despotisms took greater bulk and weight in their minds than those Divine influences which ran softly and secretly among them, making neither show nor noise. Nor, on the other hand, must we fail to note that, in preferring the alliance of Syria and Assyria to the help of God, they were virtually renouncing their special prerogative, the peculiar hope and consolation of Israel. For just as those ancient despotisms were prophetic types of the forces of the outward world, so the son of Isaiah was a type of the true Immanuel, and the waters of Siloah a type of the quickening and cleansing ministry of Him who was sent of God to take away the sin of the world. To refuse the waters of Shiloah for the sake of Rezin and Remaliah's son, to pay so little heed to the promise and significance of the birth of Immanuel, was virtually therefore to reject the God whom they professed to worship, and to renounce the hope to which they had been called. It was to prefer man to God. It was to be conformed to the world, and alienated from the Christ.

Of course this identification of the pool of Siloam, of "the living water" of the ancient Temple, with the ministry and salvation of Christ, seems questionable and far-fetched until its Scriptural ground and authority be adduced. That ground and authority may be found in Chapter ix. of St. John's Gospel. In the earlier verses of that Chapter we read of a man

born blind to whom the Lord Jesus, as He passed from the Temple, gave sight. . Discussing the condition of this blind man with his disciples, our Lord affirms that *He* has come forth from the Father in order that "the works of God may be manifested;" and that, so long as it is day, He must "work the works of Him that *sent*" Him: that is to say, He virtually calls Himself, here as elsewhere, "*the Sent One* of God." Then, turning to the blind man, He anoints his eyes, and bids him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam; which"—Siloam, viz.—adds the Apostle in a parenthesis, "is by interpretation, *Sent*." The blind man had not far to go. From the Temple he would pass down the slope of the hill on which it stood, grope his way to the pool in the valley, wash in it, and return seeing.

But what we have specially to note is the parenthesis of St. John. No sooner has he told us that Jesus declared Himself to be "sent" of the Father, than he also tells us that Siloam means "sent;" the implication being that just as Christ was *sent*, so also the waters of Siloam were *sent* by God, and were his gift to the world. The Commentators are agreed that the Apostle adds this parenthesis in order to teach us that the cleansing healing spring, which gave sight to the blind and kept the Temple pure, was a symbol of the Messiah, and of his cleansing and enlightening ministry. He tells us that Siloam meant "Sent of God" in order that we may recognize in Christ the true Siloam—Him by whose virtue the sick are healed and the service of God is sanctified. So that, in fine, to refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and to dread or to

glory in Rezin and Remaliah's son, is, in the last resort, to put our trust in the forces of this visible and passing world, instead of trusting in Christ, the Sent One of God and the Saviour of the world.

5. A very beautiful and suggestive meaning is thus reached. For now the passage, so obscure at first, sets Christ before us as *the Sent One of God*, the true Siloam. He came forth from the Father, not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. And, therefore, we are not to conceive of Him as mitigating or placating the Father's anger, but as disclosing and expressing the Father's love. He is God's gift to us—his one all-including all-guaranteeing gift. He is the Fountain of Life in the spiritual Temple, a fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness; a fountain whose waters are of so sovereign a virtue that they avail to wash away even the foulest stains and to quicken all that were sometime dead. Coming to Him, we are made every whit clean, every whit whole. The Sent One is sent to and for all. The true Siloam is for the healing of all nations.

The passage sets Christ before us in *the might of his gentleness*. The waters of Shiloah go softly, secretly. They run underground for a while; and, when they emerge to sight, it is without rush or noise. Overflowing the basin of the Pool, they flow gently and shyly on their way, hiding themselves beneath the wealth of life and verdure they create. And, in like manner, Jesus did not strive, nor cry, nor make a noise in the streets. He sought no publicity, no fame. His mightiest works were done in secret, or in the presence of a few chosen witnesses. His most select and critical hours were spent in the

solitudes of the mountain, the garden, the desert—alone, yet not alone, because God was with Him. His course through life, like that of the sacred hill stream, was to be traced by the blessings He shed around Him, the added life and fruitfulness He carried to prepared and fertile hearts, the new life and fruitfulness He carried to barren hearts. Under the gentle, unobtrusive, yet irresistible influence of his grace, how many a solitary place has grown glad with flowers and fruit! how many a desert place has blossomed and rejoiced like the rose!

The passage sets Christ before us as *rejected by his own*. "His own received him not." They refused the waters of Shiloah—refused them precisely because they ran softly. Had they brawled down a rocky bed, fretting and whitening against every stone that opposed their progress, they might have proved attractive; they might have commanded attention. Had Jesus come to reveal his power instead of to display his mercy, blazing fierce wrath upon his enemies and smiting hostile nations to the earth, the Jews would probably have received Him and rejoiced in Him. But He came not with observation. One day He will come as the lightning which flashes from one end of heaven to the other: but of old He came in great humility. And the Jews, like their fathers, refused the Divine Gentleness that would have made them great, and relied on the human might which oppressed and enslaved them. Just as the fathers rejected Jehovah to put their trust in the kings of Syria and Assyria, so the children rejected Jesus and put their trust in Caiaphas and Pilate. And we are in danger of falling into their sin. It is

hard to hold fast our faith in God, and the invisible operations of his law, and the secret equity of his providence, when a slight exertion of our own craft, or a little help from our neighbours, seems all we need to secure our immediate and certain good. It is our constant temptation to put our trust in men—in our own cunning or our own might, or in our neighbours' might and cunning—instead of holding fast our confidence in God and in the blessedness of obedience to his law. And, therefore, we need to remember the doom of those who refused the softly-flowing waters of Shiloah, and rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son; that, warned by their doom, we may not share their sin. s. COX.

IV.

THAT CHRIST SPOKE GREEK.

I now proceed to a consideration of the objections which may be urged against the view that Greek was the dominant language of Palestine in the times of Christ and his apostles. Such objections are to be expected. For as there is no proposition which does not contain a contradiction in terms but may possibly be true, so there is no proposition which does not rest on mathematical evidence but will be found in some measure open to objections, and must, however certain in itself, be defended against them.

The first objection to be noticed is of a purely *a priori* character. It rests on the alleged tenacity of vernacular language, and is usually accompanied by