

Ephraim. Ch.17 is called the burden of Damascus from its introductory subject, although it soon turns its attention to Ephraim. The prophecy adds little however to what we have already noticed. Simile and metaphor are used with great effect to portray the utter devastation of those lands. It is to be noted that these prophecies are uttered early in Isaiah's ministry, although the section in which they occur ~~was~~ not completed until later. For instance ~~ix~~ 14:28 was in the year of the death of king Ahaz (726 B.C.), whereas Ahaz had gone to conquer Damascus in 732 B.C. to meet Tiglath-pileser. (II K.16:10). Gray (op.cit.p.297) allows that the poem was written between 732 and 726^(?) B.C. and mentions that Isaih's judgment overshot itself, for Damascus never was an uninhabited spot. It seems ~~that~~ however that Gray is pressing the language unduly. Damascus was laid waste. But if the language really means to prophecy that Damascus should be absolutely desolate, Isaiah could surely have edited these few words when he included it years later among these burdens. Or if the prophecy is wrong, why did the glossator whom Gray supposes to have rationalized Is.7:8b not bring this section also into conformity with the facts? No, we are rather to say that the language is plain prophetic hyperbole, indicating the devastation that actually took place. It says, "Damascus is taken away from being a city." 17:2. But the expression is the same as that used in 7:8, "Ephraim shall be broken in pieces so that it shall not be a people." Now Gray (vhd.sup.) admits that the latter statement is true-- so true he calls it history ex eventu. Yet Ephraim had many descendant for centuries, and there are some few even until today in Nablus. It follows that the same expression applied to Damascus is adequately explained by the Assyrian devastations.