

weeping of 31:15 refers to the Babylonian exiles. But the verses are quite general. They can be used of any tragedy. The memorial fountain dedicated to the victims of the holocaust which has been erected in S. W. Jerusalem has this verse inscribed on it -- and very appropriately. Matthew quotes it, not because a reader in Jeremiah's day would be expecting the slaughter of the innocents by Herod, but because the verse was so applicable to this new outburst of Satan's malignancy. It illustrates and epitomizes the sorrow of those unfortunate Bethlehem mothers.

Another such verse is in the near context, Matt 2:15 quoting Hos 11:1. The verse in Hosea seems not to predict Christ at all, much less the flight to Egypt of the holy family. The OT verse refers to the Exodus in Israel's antiquity, its childhood. It goes on to condemn Israel's apostasy, a thought most inapplicable to Jesus. How can Matthew seriously apply this reference concerning Israel's history to Jesus? He does not elaborate on it. Nor does he give an extensive context. He simply draws the parallel of Jesus' return from Egypt to the Israelites' return to the Promised Land. It is an interesting parallel. The one does not prove the other, but Israel's history in her early days is illustrative of her Savior's history in his childhood. This I would contend, is all that Matthew intended to say.

A problem will be noticed that both of the previous examples are introduced by the expression, ". . . was fulfilled." Does this not mean that the OT passages were cited (wrongly perhaps) as a prediction? Or did Matthew possibly adopt some (unacceptable) Jewish method of interpretation that applies all ancient events and predictions to the current situation? Actually, the problem is caused by our translation of πληρώω (*|play-ro'-o*) as "fulfill." That it can mean "fulfill" is clear. But that it always means "fulfill" is not so clear. James 2:23 says "the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" Here there is no prediction nor fulfilment. There is, however, a correlation. Abraham's faith was accepted by God because it worked and, James argues, our faith should work too (vv20-21). The word "fulfill" used here as a formula of citation rather than as a formula of fulfilled prediction. This broader usage of *|play-ro'-o* should be kept in mind in interpreting Matthew which, like James, reflects Jewish thinking and usage.

These principles will help with the interpretation of Matt 2:23. Here no one prophet is cited; there is no context of prediction of Jesus' name. But different designations of the coming One are given in Isa 11:1 and 10. He is called a "shoot" צֶמַח (*|choter*) and a Branch נֶצֶחַ (*|netser*) in v1 and a Root שֹׁרֶשׁ (*|shoresh*) in v10. Quite clearly the citation in Matthew is a play on the word *|netser*. It sounds like the name of Nazareth (though it may not be strictly the original element in that name). Such word plays are numerous in the OT. Compare only the nine cases in Mic 1:10-15. The Jews of Matthew's day would fully understand the reference Matthew makes to the Branch (*|netser*) only as an interesting parallel using a formula of citation, not of prediction.

We address next an old crux in Matthew, the reference to Jeremiah in Matt 27:9-10. The problem is that a part of the verse seems to refer to Zech 11:12-13, and a reference to Jeremiah is hard to find, Jer 18 refers to