

Publishing Editor's column

THESE words are being written on the Queen's official golden jubilee day. Our local newspaper details many events which have been organised for the occasion, and so is the case all over Britain. I wondered how many of the people involved in these celebrations realise the Jewish origin of the term 'jubilee'. The word in the Bible is almost entirely restricted to Leviticus 25, and is derived from yobel, one of the Hebrew words for 'trumpet'. The jubilee related to the fiftieth year in the Hebrew calendar, when land reverted to its original owners, and the name comes from the fact that the year opened with the blowing of a trumpet.

A jubilee year today is not necessarily a fiftieth year; there were jubilee celebrations at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Queen's reign. In the present case, however, the celebrations do mark a fiftieth anniversary, and there has been much looking back over those fifty years, with comparisons being made between life then and life now. The great increase in overall material prosperity has been noted, along with the immense change in people's tastes, for example in the kinds of food eaten. On a more sombre note, the enormous increase in crime has been referred to, along with statistics such as the fact that the number of births outside marriage has increased tenfold from a very small percentage to nearly half the total. Increased material prosperity has led to greater immorality, a pattern that can be seen many times in history. Israel were warned about it by Moses, as recorded in, for example, Deuteronomy 8. What he warned against came to pass when wickedness became rife during the prosperity of the days of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, as recorded by prophets such as Amos and Hosea.

I could not but be struck by the fact that, as I write these words, a pop concert is taking place in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, with many of the most popular artists of the past fifty years taking part. It would not be unfair to say that most of those performing in front of the Queen and other members of the royal family have been noted for their flagrant disregard of Divinely laid down standards of behaviour. The Queen is the head of the Church of England, and therefore supposedly dedicated to the upholding and promoting of such standards. Yet such is the world in which we live that the Queen, however exemplary her own personal life, cannot but associate with the openly immoral. What a contrast with the beginning of her reign, when homosexuality was a criminal offence and the divorced were not considered to be suitable people to meet the Queen!

When Israel in the past went astray from God's laws they were eventually punished for it by God; the rich and wicked society denounced by prophets such as Amos and Hosea was destroyed by the Assyrians. Judgement is likewise coming on the present wicked world, and we look beyond this to the time when the world will have rulers who are truly upholders of Divine standards, and the openly immoral will have no place: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1).

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