

CLASS NOTES FOR COURSE ON THE PROPHETS

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Introduction

Preliminary note: These class notes were originally written in Spanish, and although translated by the author himself, may at times reflect less than felicitous turns of phrase, a drawback inherent in all translations. Some corrections and small changes have been made to the original text.

Contents and aim of the course. This course deals with the prophets of Israel, primarily those who have books attributed to them in the Bible. We will begin with a brief discussion of the origins and nature of prophecy in Israel, and we shall take a look at the prophets Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha, of whom only Samuel has left us with a book attributed to him (or two, in the Christian Bible). Then we will examine those prophets with books, chronologically, beginning with Amos. Finally, we shall study Daniel, who, although he is not counted among the prophets in the Hebrew canon, he is in the Christian one. We shall see that, for Christians, Daniel is like the summit of prophecy, since for us Christians, eschatology, which takes on an ever more important role in late the late Second Temple period, is fulfilled in Christ. Daniel is the greatest prophet of apocalyptic, which deals with the stages of world history which culminate in the Kingdom of God. Then all dominion shall be given to one “like a son of man,” which means different things for Jews and Christians, but which has an important role in the first written gospel, Mark, followed by the other evangelists, and perhaps even with Jesus himself. Our perspective, then, will not avoid the fact that we are Christians, and that our canon differs from that of the Jews. Neither shall we ignore the original meaning of these texts, but we shall read them, after having understood them in their *Sitz im Leben* (the situation in which they were written), keeping very much in mind the use that has been made of them in the New Testament. The Hebrew Bible in large measures consists of rereadings of passages made by the Jews themselves, who continually reread, adapted and “updated” the sacred texts, always seeking ways that these writings could speak new things for new situations. This process continued into the first century of the Common

Era, Jesus' century. The Essenes or Qumranites thought that all the holy Scriptures referred to their own days, and were being fulfilled in their own lives. Paul, too, thought this (1 Cor 9:9-10; 10:11; Rom 15:4). And Jesus himself, according to Luke 4:21, said that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the "today" of his first discourse. In this course, therefore, we will have an earnest appreciation for the Jewish tradition, which if ignored impoverishes our understanding, but we will not have a false (and really, unsustainable) modesty regarding the Christian belief that if we have an "Old Testament," it is not truly understood without reference to Christ (2 Cor 3:14; *Dei Verbum* 16).

The origins of Israelite prophecy. In every society, there are individuals who possess special knowledge, almost always the combined result of talent and acquisition by experience, personal contacts or study. These persons are listened to with special care, and in times of crisis they are depended on for what they think and counsel. In ancient Israel, as in the Near East, the phenomenon which we call "prophecy" had much to do with the power of the word and with the belief that one could make contact with the world beyond. Despite its being a world of action, rather more than of mere sentiments—for example, to "hate" in the Bible is not merely to loathe, but to exclude, as in Isa 61:5—the "mere" human word possessed (or could possess) tremendous force. Thus, once Isaac has blessed Jacob instead of Esau his first-born, he cannot undo what he has said and correct his mistake and the fraud committed, Gen 27:32-38.¹ The first "prophets" were characterized by two related things: they became ecstatic and pronounced poetic words that were thought to communicate what they had heard or learned in their contact with the world beyond.² This is the case with Balaam in Num 22-24, who went into a trance when God came to him, 22:9, 20, or spoke through him, 22:38; 23:12, or "opened his eyes," 22:31, that is, taught him secret things, 24:3-4.³

¹ Really, or are there other factors at play (like Yhwh's plans)? Besides, if Yhwh is the one who commands one to curse, nothing can be done about it, 2 Sam 16:5-14.

² There was also a belief in necromancy, the conjuring up of the dead in order to obtain information. This is what king Saul does with the deceased Samuel in 1 Sam 28:3-19, reproved by the Deuteronomistic historian ("Dtr").

³ Literally, Num 24:3-4 says: "and he lifted his *mashal* (= proverb, parable, saying) and said, utterance of Bil'am son of Be'or, utterance of the he-man (*geber*) whose eye is opened (?). Utterance of the one who hears the sayings of Yhwh which is the vision of Shadday, falling he has a vision, and his eye is uncovered." The Hebrew verb translated here "is uncovered" is rendered by the LXX by *apokekalumménoi*, "has been uncovered," using the verb from which comes *apocalypsis*. From the Hebrew verb "lifted"

Balaam fell to the ground, fainted,⁴ when this occurred.⁵ What a prophet thus uttered in such a state was taken in all seriousness. That is why Balaq, the king of Moab, who had hired Balaam to curse Israel, became enraged when he saw that Balaam blessed Israel because that is what God had commanded him to do, Num 24:10.

Those who fainted and otherwise acted in an undignified manner were not just the pagan prophets. In Saul's time, the Spirit of God invaded the members of the prophetic guilds and these became "entranced," 1 Sam 10:10-13, and stripped, 19:20-24.⁶ They did not have a good reputation, so that the people were surprised that such a one as Saul, from a "good family," would mix with those types. The prophets of Ba'al "danced limping" and cut themselves "until blood flowed over them," 1 Kgs 18:26-29. The bad reputation of the "prophet," in Hebrew *naví*, would last until the late period of the Second Temple. Zech 13:2-6 (fourth century B.C.E. or later), speaking of "that day" (an expression we will discuss shortly) says that there shall be no prophets (plural *nevi'im*) then, placing them alongside idolatry and impurity; even the parents of the prophet—all prophets by then were considered false—will pierce him.⁷ They shall no longer wear the hairy mantle, which was like the prophet's uniform, worn by Elijah, and later by John the Baptist.⁸ They shall deny being a prophet and will give, according to Prof. Blenkinsopp, even the most shameful of explanations for their wounds: "I got them in the house of my friends" would be a reference to male prostitution.⁹ But already in the eighth century Amos denied both being a prophet and a member of the prophets' guild, Amos 7:14.¹⁰

The prophetic oracle. We have spoken of the power of the word in the biblical world. The "prophets" (this word comes from the Greek *prophétes*, "the one who speaks

comes *massá*, "thing which is lifted," translated "oracle" in the sections which begin with Zech 9:1; 12:1; Mal 1:1; cf. Jer 23:33-40.

⁴ Some translate "swooning."

⁵ Similarly to what befalls the *santeros* (Caribbean syncretists who combine West African [Yoruba region of Nigeria] religious ideas with Roman Catholicism) when the "saint" (syncretic deity) possesses them.

⁶ What is sometimes translated "fell into a prophetic frenzy" (*NRSV*) is the intense form (Hithpael) of the Hebrew verb "prophesy." Another verb that is used is, literally, "to drip, distill" = "preach," Mic 2:6; Amos 7:16; 9:13.

⁷ Same verb as in Zech 12:10.

⁸ 2 Kgs 1:8; Matt 3:4.

⁹ JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy in Israel. Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 235.

¹⁰ Although many doubt that this passage comes from Amos himself.

for another”)¹¹ were poets whose curses and blessings were effective (or thought to be). An important part of the books of the prophets are the “oracles against the nations,” as in Amos 1:3-2:3 (this prophet’s innovation is to include Judah and Israel among the nations he prophesies against!);¹² Is 13; 15-21; 23; Zeph 2:4-15; the whole booklet of Nah; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32. Many Bibles print the oracles of the prophets as if they were verse, that is, in “unjustified” paragraphs, and it usually is Hebrew poetry. When the presentation of the text returns to justified margins, we can assume that the poem has been finished or interrupted, and that we are now in prose writing. Other functions of the oracles of the prophets were linked to the Temple or other holy places, where someone — oftentimes a person who had been cursed or given the “evil eye”— went in order to be rid of the spell, seeking a “good word” from a representative of the deity. A possible example is Ps 109:17, 28. Sometimes a person would spend the night awaiting the response, like Habakkuk in Hab 2:1-4.¹³

Predicting the future. It is sometimes said that prophets did not predict the future, or that this was not their primary function. In reality every prophet predicted the future, and this was an important, if not the main, component of their job description. In the first place, kings hired professional prophets (what Amos denied being) to tell them if they would win or lose a war, or for advice regarding the divine will concerning a proposed future action. When the king of Israel proposed to the king of Judah that they go to war together, the latter, Jehoshaphat, asked the king of Israel to consult the prophets, 1 Kgs 22:1-6. David consults with Nathan regarding his proposal to build Yhwh a house, and Nathan receives Yhwh’s thoughts on this and communicates them to David, 2 Sam 7:1-17. Jeremiah predicts the death of the false prophet Hananiah within the year, a “prophecy” which is fulfilled, Jer 28:15-17. Isaiah predicts that Jerusalem will remain safe during the Syro-Ephraimite War, Isa 7:1-9.¹⁴ But much more important than these

¹¹ See Exod 7:1. It is thought that the Hebrew word *navi* may mean “one who has been named or called;” see *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (E. Jenni – C. Westermann, eds.; Peabody: Hendrikson, 1997), 697, but this is not certain.

¹² Again, one could debate whether these passages come from Amos himself or not (2:4-5 is considered Dtr).

¹³ This passage does not speak of spending the night, but incubation rituals were well-known in antiquity: one spent the night in a special place in order to receive a preternatural revelation; see Isa 65:4.

¹⁴ In his 1956 work, *Die politischen Voraussagen der Propheten* (“The political prophecies [or predictions] of the prophets”), Ernst Jenni gives a list of those which were fulfilled and those which were not; among

predictions of the more or less near future are the oracles regarding the eschatological future, a theme in many prophets which is of immense importance for Christianity, which is all based on this type of prophecy and is likewise oriented toward the future consummation. An example is the vision of eschatological peace in Isa 2:1-4|| Mic 4:1-3. We should note that what is frequently translated “in the future” or “in the time to come” is literally “at the end of the days.” The eschatological addition in Amos 9:11-15 uses another expression, “on that day,” *bayom hahú*, very frequent in the last parts of Zechariah, which culminates in his great eschatological vision, Zech 14, when Yhwh shall at last reign, there shall be no darkness, living waters shall come forth from Jerusalem, and the Gentiles will go up every year to Jerusalem to celebrate Succoth.

The true and false prophet. It was precisely in regards to this role as predictors of the future which Jeremiah gave his criterion for distinguishing false from true prophets. The false prophet prophesies for money,¹⁵ announcing good things (fake blessings): Jer 14:13-16; 27:9-10, 14-16; 28:1-4. Therefore Jeremiah says that if the prophecy of good things comes true, then it can be verified that that prophet was truly sent by Yhwh, Jer 28:9.¹⁶ The criterion is modified in Deut 18:21-22: if what the prophet says is fulfilled, then he is (or was) true. The problem is that a long period of time could transpire: what should one think of the prophet meanwhile?¹⁷

The “problem” of the prophets is dealt with by Dtr in Deut 18:9-22. Note that the passage begins with mention of pagan abominations which have to do with divination; the Land will not tolerate them. If Israel wants a prophet, he must be like Moses alone, the greatest of the prophets, 34:10. The reason for having an intermediary like him, —and not listen to Yhwh directly— is the fear of dying that the people had on Mount Sinai when they heard Yhwh himself, Exod 20:18-21. Moses remains, therefore, as a necessary

the fulfilled ones are Isa 7:7 and Jer 28:16, which we just referred to; listed among the unfulfilled are Isa 20:1-6 and Jer 43:8-13, but this latter was at least partially fulfilled.

¹⁵ Mic 3:11.

¹⁶ “To be sent” means to be genuinely commissioned by Yhwh as a prophet. This is Jeremiah’s defence in Jer 26:12 when they want to execute him for speaking against Jerusalem. The Hebrew verb “to send” in Greek is *apostellō*, whence comes “apostle,” in Hebrew *shaliah*. For Dtr, God sent his “servants the prophets” many times, but the people did not heed them, 2 Kgs 17:13-14; cf. Jer 7:24-26; Mark 12:2-5. Conversely, the accusation of not having been sent is the equivalent of being a false prophet, e.g., Neh 6:12; Jer 27:15; 28:15; Ezek 13:6.

¹⁷ Micah in the eighth century predicted the ruin of Jerusalem, which only took place in 587, Mic 3:12. Jeremiah was not killed through the intervention of the “elders of the land,” who remembered Micah’s case from almost two centuries before, Jer 26:17-24.

intermediary requested by the people themselves. Every true prophet is like Moses, or he is not true.¹⁸ For some scholars, at one stage of their movement, Dtr saw Jeremiah as the prophet of Deut 18:15, the last in a long line of servant-prophets sent by Yhwh to Israel to warn them of the consequences of their disobedience. Jeremiah would then be the last one within the Dtr history, which covers the period up to the Babylonian Exile (587, with an update regarding Joachim).¹⁹ Thus the Dtr editor of Jer patterns him according to Moses, giving him a forty year ministry (627-587) in the superscription of the book (Jer 1:2, “in the thirteenth year” of the reign of Josiah), and presenting him as timid regarding his prophetic calling (Jer 1:6; Exod 4:10), among other things.²⁰ Be it as it may, what is certain is that for Dtr, prophecy, which is inherently destabilizing of good order, must be subjected to the Law, that is, institutionalized, which is accomplished by including Moses’ legislation regarding prophecy in this part of Deut, after his legislation concerning kings and priests.²¹ This is reflected in Mal 3:22-23, at the end of the prophetic books, which places together the Law and the Prophets, and identifies Elijah as the “messenger” who is the forerunner of the coming of the Lord, “the angel of the covenant,” 3:1.²² This reflects both the two main parts of the Hebrew Scriptures as well

¹⁸ Cf. the note in the *Jerusalem Bible* to Deut 18:21.

¹⁹ With the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, there would have been a history of seven hundred years of sinning, from the Exodus (1250) until 550, when the Dtr history takes shape. See NORBERT LOHFINK, “The Theology of the Wilderness in the Book of Deuteronomy,” unpublished class notes for the course with the same title given at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Spring of 1999. According to Dtr, Israel in exile, “at the end of the days,” Deut 4:29-31, will turn (or return, convert) to the Lord and can return to the (“Promised”) Land, as if for the first time (at least as the true people of Yhwh), 29:12 [29:13], since by then Yhwh will have circumcised their hearts to make them obedient, 30:6-10. This is the future reality that Jer 30:1-3; 31:31-34 predicts (conversion — “I will make them *return* [to God], or “I will make the captives return,” or “I will make their fortune turn” — “I will make them *return* to the Land,” “I will cut a new covenant,” “I will put my *torah* within them and upon their hearts I will write it, and I shall be God to them and they shall be to me a people,” “because I will pardon their iniquity etc.”).

²⁰ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 135-139.

²¹ As examples of destabilizing prophecy, compare Isa 56:3-8, which admits foreigners and eunuchs to the cultic assembly, with Deut 23:2-7, which excludes them forever. Prof. Blenkinsopp described this in class (course on Isa 56-66, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Spring 1998) as prophetic partial abrogation of Torah. See his *A History of Prophecy*, 198-199, 216. The strict regulations regarding who could be a legitimate priest after the exile are disregarded in Isa 66:18-21, read without verse 20, which according to Blenkinsopp is the gloss of a “nervous editor” who corrects the astounding inclusiveness of this anonymous prophet.

²² In Hebrew as in Greek, “messenger” and “angel” is the same word. The verse reads “the Lord” (*ha-adon*), not “Yhwh.”

as the eschatological tradition which developed which awaited the return of Elijah, the prophet who was “assumed” into heaven, 2 Kgs 2:11.²³

Deut 18:15 gave place in the biblical tradition to the idea of the “eschatological prophet” who would come at the end of time. Mal 3:23; Sir 48:10 identify him as Elijah. In the Lucan opus, it is Jesus, Luke 16:16; Acts 3:22-24, about whom spoke “all the prophets.”²⁴ The Samaritans also expected such a prophet, as seen by John 4:19.²⁵

What, then, defines the authentic Yahwist prophet? The principal defining feature of the true prophet is his “vision” or direct experience of “the mind of God,” including, in a special way, God’s future plans.²⁶ The original appellation of the “prophets” seems to have been “seer,” as indicated by 1 Sam 9:9.²⁷ But the more intense word is “visionary,” *hozeh*, as Amos is addressed in Amos 7:12, 14.²⁸ In fact, several prophetic books are described as or entitled the “vision” of the prophet: Isa 1:1, “vision of Isaiah son of Amos which he beheld etc.,”²⁹ 2:1, “the word which Isaiah son of Amos beheld . . . and it shall be at the end of the days etc.,” Amos 1:1, “Words of Amos . . . which he beheld etc.,” Nah 1:1, “*massá* (“oracle”)³⁰ of Niniveh book of vision of Nahum etc.,” Obad 1:1, “Vision of Obadiah etc.,” Hab 1:1, “The *massá* which Habakkuk beheld etc.”³¹ Although this designation does not appear in other books, which rather speak of the word of Yhwh

²³ “Assumed” [taken up in to heaven, as is said of the Virgin Mary] reflects the LXX translation; cf. the same verb in Luke 9:51; Acts 1:11, applied to Jesus. Acts 3:21 also applies the concept of the universal restoration (Elijah’s task according to Mal 3:24; Sir 48:10; Luke 1:17) to Jesus. On the expectation of Elijah, see Mark 15:36 and parallels. In the Christian tradition, John the Baptist fulfills this Elijan role, Matt 17:9-13. See my article, “La huída de Elías al Horeb,” *AnáMnesis* 23 (enero-junio 2002), 5-15, also in an unpublished English version “Elijah’s Flight to Horeb.”

²⁴ See also Luke 24:27; Acts 3:18; 10:43.

²⁵ See the provocative but at times farfetched work of the great Dominican biblical scholar MARIE-ÉMILE BOISMARD, *Moses or Jesus. An Essay in Johannine Christology* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1993), 1-23.

²⁶ Cf. Ezek 12:27.

²⁷ “Seer” is the one “who sees,” in Hebrew *roeh*. See also 2 Sam 24:11. Other names for “prophets” are “man of God,” 1 Sam 2:27; 9:6; 1 Kgs 12:22; 13:1/18; 2 Kgs 1:9-13; “man of the Spirit,” Hos 9:7. In the Jewish tradition, Joshua is a prophet (Sir 46:1), and has the Spirit, Num 27:18; cf. Dan 5:11. In this tradition, the Torah (our Pentateuch) is followed by the Prophets, beginning with the “Former” (a designation dating to the Middle Ages, but see Zech 1:4), Josh, Judg, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs (viz., the Deuteronomic History), followed by what we call the prophets (for the Jews, “Latter” Prophets), with the exception of Dan, placed by the Jews among the “Writings.” The Former Prophets was considered the work of prophets such as Joshua, Samuel (held to be the author of Judg, Ruth and 1-2 Sam) and Jeremiah (said to have written 1-2 Kgs); see ROLF RENDTORFF, *The Old Testament. An Introduction* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1986), 164.

²⁸ See also 2 Kgs 17:13.

²⁹ “Beheld” is the translation of the verb which gives rise to “vision,” which is not the same as the verb “to see.”

³⁰ See footnote 3 above.

³¹ See also Isa 13:1, “*massá* of Babylon which Isaiah beheld etc.”

which “comes” to the prophet, I believe that this idea of the vision is key in order to define the true prophet of Yhwh. What the prophets beholds or sees is in the first place the heavenly court, where Yhwh takes counsel with his inner circle—in Hebrew, *sod*.³² This is what Ps 89:8 refers to. The idea of a supreme deity who deliberates with the members of his court is behind the plural pronoun “us” in Gen 1:26.³³ Job 1:6-12 tells us what occurred in one of those meetings between Yhwh, the “sons of God” (lesser deities later understood to be angels) and also the *satán*, the prosecutor. A similar scene is found in Zech 3:1-7 ([Yhwh] “made me see” etc.).³⁴ This is what Isaiah beheld in his vocation narrative, Isa 6:1-11.³⁵ Isaiah saw the Lord (*adonay*) seated in a very high throne, with the skirts of his robe filling the Temple.³⁶ Yhwh deliberates with his *sod* (although the word does not appear here), asking them about whom to send (that is, to commission as prophet). Isaiah is able to speak to them, and is sent (“go”).

The most illustrative text concerning the *sod* is 1 Kgs 22:1-38. The king of Israel wants to attack the king of Aram, and seeks the help of the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat. The latter asks him to first consult Yhwh, and the king of Israel summons his professional prophets. They are all optimistic, that is, they say what their king wants to hear. Jehoshaphat, more cautious, wants “a second opinion.” Only Micah the prophet is left, but the king of Israel hates him, because he always prophesied evil, not good. At Jehoshaphat’s request, however, they bring Micah; meanwhile, the other prophets are prophesying (“in a trance”). One of these performs a symbolic action—in effect, sympathetic magic—for which prophets were famous (see Jer 28:10-14). “All the prophets” agree that Yhwh will give the victory. Micah, however, will say what Yhwh will tell him, although at first he mimics the false prophets, 1 Kgs 22:14-16. When the

³² This word can mean a mere group, as in Jer 6:11; 15:17, but is primarily used to denote intimacy, as in Job 19:19; Ps 55:14; Prov 3:32. It indicates intimacy with God in Ps 25:14; Job 29:4; this is the sense in Job 15:8, referring to the divine mind. It means “secret plans” in Pss 64:3 (“hide me from the *sod* of the wicked”); 83:4; Prov 11:13; 20:19; 25:9. This last sense, in reference to the divine plan, is found in the Dtr passage Amos 3:7, which interrupts with its prose the poem in which it is inserted. Another word, *’etsa*, often translated “counsel, plan,” refers normally to humans, Deut 32:28; Judg 20:7; Ps 1:1 etc., but can refer to God, Job 12:12 etc.

³³ See the note thereto in the *Jerusalem Bible*.

³⁴ In this passage, the high priest also has access to the *sod*, which is unprecedented, according to PAUL D. HANSON, *The People Called. The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 265.

³⁵ The voices in Isa 40:3 are also those of the *sod*, urging the prophet to prophesy.

³⁶ See note thereto in the *Jerusalem Bible*. Unless otherwise stated, references are to the 1966 edition.

king compels him to say the truth, Micah relates what he has seen (we must suppose that Yhwh himself has shown it to him, as in Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1)³⁷ and heard: Israel dispersed, and Yhwh saying that “they have no lords (*adonim*),” 1 Kgs 22:17.³⁸ It is then that Micah proclaims to them the “word” of Yhwh: “I have seen Yhwh seated on his throne and all the host of heaven on foot waiting on him, to the right and to the left.” Micah, like Isaiah, has been present at the deliberations of the divine *sod*, and has listened to what they were discussing, 22:19-23. He has perceived that Yhwh has decreed evil for the king of Israel (now identified as Ahab), which will be accomplished through the deceit of the false prophets he employs. They beat and imprison Micah, but he invokes the same criterion as Deut 18:21-22 (recall that Kgs is part of the Dtr history), 1 Kgs 22:28.³⁹ Note that the divine will takes place even though Ahab is disguised, 22:30, and even though the archer has shot at random, 22:34.⁴⁰

Finally, the passage that clearly speaks of the *sod* as a requirement for authentic prophecy is Jer 23:18, 22. Note that 23:18 says “seen and heard his word.” Although certain passages speak only of the *word* of Yhwh which comes to the prophet,⁴¹ the “complete” prophetic experience, so to speak, includes the visual element, particularly that of the *sod*.⁴² A great prophet of the word received from Yhwh, Ezekiel, has the heavens opened for him and sees visions (*marot*) of Yhwh, Ezek 1:1.⁴³ Abraham was the first prophet, Gen 20:7, and he also received the divine word “in vision” (*mahazeh*), 15:1.⁴⁴

³⁷ See also Exod 33:18; 2 Kgs 8:13; Jer 24:1; 38:21; Ezek 11:25.

³⁸ That is, no suitable leaders. Cf. this verse with Mark 6:34.

³⁹ Moreover, the account also explains how it is that false prophets are deceived, and why they deceive (they thus fulfill God’s designs).

⁴⁰ See *Jerusalem Bible* note to 22:38 (n).

⁴¹ 1 Sam 15:10; 1 Kgs 18:1; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Hag 1:1.

⁴² See what Jer 23:25-31 says about the dreams of the false prophets.

⁴³ The vision which Ezekiel saw of Yhwh’s mysterious chariot, in Hebrew *merkabah*, is the object of study of Jewish mysticism and kabbalah.

⁴⁴ This word is used for Balaam’s visions concerning Israel in Num 24:4, 16.

Four noteworthy prophets

Samuel. We will speak only about this prophet's call. We know that when he was born, his mother Hannah consecrated him to Yhwh as a *nazir*, as she had vowed, 1 Sam 1:10-11, 27-28.⁴⁵ Samuel ministers to Eli in the sanctuary of Shiloh. Note that it is said that at that time "the word of Yhwh was rare and the vision did not break forth," 3:1. As do the servants of Yhwh, Samuel responds literally "behold me (here)."⁴⁶ He does not know that Yhwh is calling him, since the word of Yhwh had not yet been discovered (or revealed—the LXX uses the apocalypse verb here—to him, 3:7. Yhwh tells Samuel what he intends to do, which Samuel must announce. What took place is described in 3:15 as a vision (the same word is found in the plural in Ezek 1:1). From then on Yhwh was with Samuel and did not let even one of his words fall to the ground (that is, everything was fulfilled).⁴⁷

Nathan. He is the main prophet in David's court.⁴⁸ It is he who conveys to David the divine promise that his seed (descendants) shall always reign over Israel, 2 Sam 7:1-17.⁴⁹ This is the "messianic prophecy" par excellence: from hence derive all the expectations concerning the Messiah who was to come.⁵⁰ David, enjoying peace and well-being on all sides, consults Nathan on his plan to finally build a house (a temple) for Yhwh. Nathan does not object, but in the night, "the word of Yhwh comes to him," telling David that it is Yhwh who will build him a "house," that is, a dynasty, such that when David dies, only his descendants shall sit on Israel's throne, 7:12. 7:14 is an adoption formula: God will be a father to this descendant (Solomon is in mind), and the descendant will be a son to God.⁵¹ In 7:15-16 it is declared that Yhwh will never remove

⁴⁵ Cf. the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 1:11, which points out that it is not explicitly said that Samuel will be a *nazir*.

⁴⁶ The Hebrew *hinnei* can be exactly translated in Italian, *eccomi!*

⁴⁷ See the almost exact expression in Josh 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kgs 8:56, in the Dtr history.

⁴⁸ *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Bruce M. Metzger – Michael D. Coogan, eds.; New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 549.

⁴⁹ Note that what Nathan announces on Yhwh's behalf is said to be "all these words and all this vision." "Vision" is the equivalent of "divine revelation," very similar to the Pauline "mystery," as in 1 Cor 15:51; Rom 11:25, whose precursors are the Aramaic terms *hezū*, as in Dan 2:19, and *raz*, as in 2:30.

⁵⁰ Luke 1:32-33 is like a paraphrase of 2 Sam 7:16.

⁵¹ See Ps 2, a messianic psalm, where what Yhwh has decreed is declared, that the king (the anointed or "messiah" of 2:2) is the son of Yhwh. This psalm is applied to Jesus in Acts 4:25-27; Heb 1:5 (together with 2 Sam 7:14). It is behind Mark 1:11; 9:7 and the idea of Jesus as the Son of God. In the Jewish

his *hesed* from these messianic descendants: the Davidic dynasty will last forever. This promise is unconditional, since the descendant who behaves wickedly will merely be punished; the dynastic guarantee is not lost.⁵² But this had to be “reread,” updated according to new circumstances, specifically the disappearance of the “eternal” dynasty during the exile. Thus, Ps 132:12 makes the permanence of the Davidic throne dependent on observance of the covenant.⁵³ In the exile, Second Isaiah extended these promises made to David to the whole people, as an eternal covenant, Isa 55:3.

Without being able to devote more space to it, we must note that Nathan had sufficient courage and integrity—and enough confidence in David’s good heart—to reproach him for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah; 2 Sam 11-12.

Elijah. We go from the tenth to the ninth century. Something must be said about the great figure of this mysterious prophet,⁵⁴ who became the representative of all Israelite prophecy. Elijah, whose name means “(My) God is Yhwh,” is a passionate (“zealous”) Yahwist, 1 Kgs 19:9, 14, who confronts the followers of the Canaanite god Ba‘al in the northern kingdom of Israel. There, King Ahab had married a Sidonian woman, Jezebel of Sidon, who adored Ba‘al and promoted “devotion” to him among the Israelites. The struggle costs Elijah a great suicidal depression, 19:4, which ends, according to the Dtr historian, with a pilgrimage which requires a forty day march to Horeb, where Elijah receives a soft divine manifestation, which contrasts with what had occurred in Exod 19:16-19; Deut 5:10-11, 15. The word of Yhwh was “true” in the mouth of Elijah, 1 Kgs 17:24, but his struggles undermined him, and Yhwh relieves him, making him name Elisha (= “[my] God is salvation”) in his place, 19:15-16.⁵⁵

Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, without dying, 2 Kgs 2:11, as Enoch of old in Gen 5:24. This greatly contributed during the late Second Temple

tradition (the midrash), Ps 2 was linked to Ps 110 and Dan 7:13-14, as reflected in Mark 14:62. Jesus corrects the common interpretation of Ps 110 in Mark 12:35-37. See EMILIO G. CHÁVEZ, *The Theological Significance of Jesus’ Temple Action in Mark’s Gospel* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 98-99.

⁵² See also Ps 89:27-38.

⁵³ See also 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5 (Dtr texts).

⁵⁴ See CHÁVEZ, “La huída de Elías,” 5-15, or the English version “Elijah’s Flight to Horeb.”

⁵⁵ It is unlikely that Elisha was anointed as prophet, although the text can be thus understood. A metaphorical anointing (in Hebrew, this word involves oil, and was applied to kings and later to the high priest in the postexilic period, but cf. Exod 28:41 and *Jerusalem Bible* note h) by the Spirit of a prophet is that of Isa 61:1.

period⁵⁶ —already with Malachi in the fifth century— to the eschatological expectation of Elijah as the harbinger of the terrible Day of Yhwh, Mal 3:1, 23-24.⁵⁷ For Christians, this expectation was fulfilled in John the Baptist, Matt 17:10-13, who dressed as Elijah, 3:4; 2 Kgs 1:8 (although this had become the prophet’s “uniform,” Zech 13:4). It may be quite significant and evocative that John baptized (including Jesus) in the Jordan, but on the other side of the river, that is, outside of the Promised Land, John 1:28. The one repenting and turning to the Lord would cross the river and entered or returned to the Land thus prepared for the eschatological coming of the Lord, thus reproducing not just the first exodus from Egypt, but also the greater second Exodus from the Babylonian Exile of converted Israel, who thus entered into that other or new covenant, as we saw in the course on the Pentateuch.

Both Elijah and Elisha performed miracles, such as raising the only son of a widow (Elijah, 1 Kgs 17:17-24), “multiplying bread” (Elijah, 1 Kgs 17:7-16; Elisha, 2 Kgs 4:42-44) and healing a leper (Elisha, 2 Kgs 5), which provide a background for the ministry of Jesus, Luke 4:25-27; 7:11-16, although what Jesus does is presented as being on a much larger scale. According to John P. Meier, Jesus was foremost perceived as a prophet according to the Elijah model.⁵⁸

Elisha. In addition to what was said above, we must say that Elisha represents a type of “prophet” who became quite involved in the politics of his day, and even in warfare, in a way that is atypical of other prophets—who were rather antiestablishment,

⁵⁶ The “Second Temple period” runs from 520 B.C.E. (when was placed the first stone of the second Temple which replaced the one Solomon built and which was destroyed by the Chaldeans in 587 B.C.E.) to 70 C.E., the year in which the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans. These designations replace older ones such as “late Judaism” (which implied that as the emergence of Christianity was approaching the Jewish religion and people as such were doomed to obsolescence and replacement) and “B.C., A.D.,” (which more or less imposes a reference to Christ on those who do not accept him as such). The Jews are more neutral when they reckon historical time as stemming from the creation of the world, *Anno Mundi* (A.M.), at least for Western civilization (Hindus have a much vaster chronological perspective).

⁵⁷ Also Sir 48:10; Mark 15:35.

⁵⁸ *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Three. Companions and Competitors* (New York – London etc.: Doubleday, 2001), 47. See Mark 8:27-28. One may consult the somewhat adventuresome book of the Dominican (former professor at our St. Vincent de Paul Seminary) THOMAS L. BRODIE, *The Crucial Bridge. The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000). Brodie, it seems, exceeds himself, but this attempt to see the increasingly surprising interconnections between biblical passages is essentially the same as in my own approach. Moreover, viewed as a variation of the canonical approach or method, it is a new way of studying the Bible which promises to give great fruits. See the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), I.C.1.

such as Amos and Jeremiah, or isolationists, like Isaiah of Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Elisha counsels the king of Israel as a military strategist (like a national security advisor) in 2 Kgs 6:8-23.⁶⁰ He is implicated in the murder (or at least, euthanasia) of the king of Aram, 8:7-15.⁶¹ His most controversial role was in regards to the massacre perpetrated by Jehu, which finished off the Omride dynasty, that is, Ahab and all his descendants, 2 Kgs 9-10.⁶² Elisha, by divine mandate (1 Kgs 19:16-17), anointed Jehu, who also eliminated the leadership of Judah, 9:27. This occurred in Jezreel, 9:16; 10:11, the biblical place of battle which will figure prominently in apocalyptic literature.⁶³ Although the Dtr historian approves of these massacres because of his opposition to the Omrides (Omri was the founding king of this dynasty, 1 Kgs 16:16),⁶⁴ the prophet Hosea thought that Jehu went overboard, and condemns them, Hos 1:4-5.

Amos

Amos lifts his voice in the northern kingdom against the luxury of the rich who exploit the poor, and predicts the ruin of the kingdom, despite its grandiose religiosity.

*Historical situation.*⁶⁵ Chronologically, Amos is the first one with a book in the *corpus propheticum*, dated to 760. It is during the kingdom of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, the last great king there. Assyria had subjugated its neighbors to the north, the Arameans, but was at a weak moment, allowing Jeroboam II to extend his borders, as the Dtr

⁵⁹ Another political prophet, who supported a messianic pretender-insurrectionist, was Haggai. Elisha had at his disposal the “sons of the prophets,” an organization of “prophets” who depended on him, 2 Kgs 2:7, 15; 4:1; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1.

⁶⁰ CHRISTOPHER T. BEGG, “1-2 Kings,” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990) (“*NJBC*”), 177, says that “Elisha’s clairvoyant knowledge of events at a distance make him of great military intelligence value for Israel.”

⁶¹ This corresponds to his divine mandate in 1 Kgs 19:15-17. Additionally, Elisha was pretty intolerant of humor directed against him (see 2 Kgs 2:23-24).

⁶² BEGG, “1-2 Kgs,” 178, states that the true initiator of all that follows is Elisha, and not “one of the sons of the prophets.” Elisha’s flight after anointing the usurper king is to avoid arrest for rebellion. Beggs considers verses 2 Kgs 9:7-10^a to be a Dtr insertion giving divine legitimation to this coup d’etat against the Omride dynasty, hated by Dtr because of its idolatry (2 Kgs 9:22).

⁶³ See *Jerusalem Bible* note h to Hos 1:5.

⁶⁴ See *Jerusalem Bible* note b to 1 Kgs 16:23.

⁶⁵ For this part of these notes, especially until and including Isaiah of Jerusalem, I have consulted, and at times more or less closely followed, JAMES D. NEWSOME, JR.’s useful book, *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984). A great influence in general is BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*. I have also consulted WERNER H. SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction. Second Edition* (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), Part III. The Prophets, 171-295.

historian grudgingly notes, 2 Kgs 14:23-29.⁶⁶ Israel enjoyed the greatest prosperity in its history, but it was very badly distributed, such that economic levels were polarized, all in the midst of flaming religious activity. The rich saw no contradiction in taking as pledges the garments of their poor debtors, not returning them before nightfall in violation of the ethical practice prescribed in Exod 22:25; Deut 24:12, and on top of that using these garments in order to lie down next to the altars upon which they worshipped their gods, Amos 2:8!

The “prophet.” He never calls himself that, and denies being one, 7:14.⁶⁷ He had his employment and even a second job.⁶⁸ He was called by Yhwh to prophesy to the northern kingdom, although he was a southerner. He was a powerful poet, using many images of animals, 3:3-6, 8, and can be quite biting, 4:1-3 (the famous passage about the “cows of Bashan”).⁶⁹

His message. His message is that Israel has rejected Yhwh, despite her religiosity, because she has turned her back on “social” justice; therefore Israel shall go into exile.⁷⁰ The book (extensively edited by various hands, including Dtr) begins with the typical oracles against the nations, except that Amos makes a great innovation: he includes Israel in the blacklist!⁷¹ Although God chose Israel from among the other peoples, this implies a greater moral responsibility, 3:2.⁷² The patience of God has reached its end.⁷³ This can be seen in Amos’ visions in Amos 7-9. The first two are vivid images of natural disasters

⁶⁶ When the dominant empires, especially Assyria, were in a period of weakness, Israel and Judah had more wiggle-room to act in the political or religious arena (impossible to separate then). Such will be the case with Josiah’s reform. Inversely, when these empires were strong, they exerted great pressure on Israel to incorporate elements of their pagan religion, which led to syncretism, as, for example, was the case with Manasseh.

⁶⁷ He is called a “seer” in 7:12, although the verb “prophesy” is applied to him, 7:15.

⁶⁸ In 1:1, it is said that he was one of the “shepherds, or cattlemen;” in 7:14, that he was a “cattle herder and picker of sycamore figs” (scarring them to promote ripening).

⁶⁹ The countryside around Samaria was well-known for its fertility, hence its cattle were quite robust. See the “bulls of Bashan” in Ps 22:13.

⁷⁰ Amos correctly predicts something which will only occur forty years later, and in a time when the executor of this divine punishment is weak. Jesus also predicted the destruction of the Temple forty years before it occurred.

⁷¹ Going against the whole *raison d’être* of professional prophetism, which was to support national power. It is thought that a Dtr editor included Judah in 2:4-5. HANSON, *The People Called*, 318-319, quotes Amos 1-2 as being among the oracles against the nations which are pre-exilic in origin, although many of them are postexilic. He deems Jonah, which we shall see later, to give a theological twist to these oracles, placing them within God’s plan for the conversion of all nations.

⁷² The Jews are unique in including these great self-criticisms and demands in their sacred literature.

⁷³ The great Bible scholar Joachim Jeremias said that it is the books of Amos and Hosea together that show how God’s patience reaches its end.

(rain and harvests were vital for these peoples). Amos, as a good prophet, intercedes,⁷⁴ and Yhwh repents of the evil he had thought to do to Israel. With the third, Amos no longer intercedes,⁷⁵ and the fourth speaks of the end of Israel as if she were a basket of rotten fruit, using a play on words between *qayits* (“summer fruit, ripe”) and *haqets* (“the end”). The fifth vision is horrible: Amos sees Yhwh standing on the altar commanding that it be destroyed and that its thresholds be broken on top of all their heads; the ones remaining will be pursued by Yhwh himself, wherever they go, 9:1-4.

We must discuss the text typical of Amos, 5:21-25. With prophetic daring, Yhwh through his spokesman says that he hates the religious feasts, *haggim* (such as Passover, Pentecost, Booths), of the Israelites, and that he ignores their sacrifices and offerings: what he wants is *mishpat* (here, “social justice”) and *tsedaqah* (the salvific quality of the one who lives rightly before God). He even says that in the desert period of the exodus these sacrifices were not offered.⁷⁶ Amos 5:24 was quoted by Martin Luther King in his famous speech in the U.S. capital. What would P think —the author of texts like Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18, 25, 41 and so many similar ones in the Pentateuch— about Amos 5:21?⁷⁷ Some scholars think that Amos and Hosea both were against the cult (the sacrificial system) as such.⁷⁸ But texts like Prov 15:8; Ps 24:3-4 indicate that what is wrong is combining evil with “devotion,” as we shall see regarding Jer 7:5-7.

Social injustice and its punishment. The wealthy built summer and winter houses, 3:15, and planted vineyards to have a good time drinking, 4:1, but they will not enjoy them, 5:11. They corrupt the legal process, 5:7, 10, 12, and charge the poor excessive taxes, 5:11. Nevertheless, they eagerly await the “day of Yhwh,” some great religious festival, which the innovator Amos also changes: the desired day shall be dark, not bright, a mortal danger, 5:18-20. With this, Amos gives rise to the great tradition of the

⁷⁴ To pray and intercede is a prophetic more than priestly function in the Hebrew Bible, according to Blenkinsopp; see Jer 27:18, e.g. Jacob Milgrom says that priests intercede ritually, in silence. See Joel 2:17.

⁷⁵ The moment comes when intercession is useless; see Jer 7:16; cf. 1 John 5:16.

⁷⁶ Even more strongly said in Jer 7:22-23; cf. Lev 7:37-38.

⁷⁷ “Solemn assemblies” (*NRSV*), in Hebrew *’atsrot*, appears in the P texts Lev 23:36; Num 29:35, but is not P’s usual term, *mo’adim*, as in Gen 1:14; Lev 23:2, 4, 37, 44; Num 10:10; 15:29:39.

⁷⁸ See, for example, in regards to Hosea, the work of the Argentinian Jesuit HORACIO SIMIAN-YOFRE, *El desierto de los dioses. Teología e Historia en el libro de Oseas* (Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1992), 126-127. Jesus, as Mark presents him, replaces the sacrificial system of the Temple; this is the whole thesis expounded in CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance, passim*.

eschatological Day of judgment, punishment for the wicked, salvation for the just.⁷⁹ The destruction of Israel will be such that those who are saved shall be likened to the little paw of the animal that the shepherd snatches at the last minute from the lion's mouth to prove that the animal was killed (and that he did not steal and sell him), 3:12. We can here see the beginnings of the notion of a small remnant, but the idea is rather that of total destruction; it is thought that redactors who came later softened Amos' original message.

The most obvious addition to Amos's work is 9:11-15, a postexilic passage. It speaks of raising up the "hut" of David, that is, his house = dynasty, but using an image which is at once more humble and evocative of the huts of the feast of Booths, Sukkoth.⁸⁰ The mountains shall distill wine, and there shall be no hills;⁸¹ Yhwh "will make turn the captivity/shall restore the fortune of" his people, classic language of return from exile, as in Ps 126:1.⁸²

Amos' theology. Yhwh, the sovereign God who cannot be bribed, does not countenance injustice, to the point of finishing off a good portion of the tribes of Israel. There is no place where God's power cannot reach, Amos 9:2 (cf. Ps 139:7-12).

Hosea

Hosea sees in his marriage with a prostitute a reflection of Yhwh's relationship with Israel, who is unfaithful to her true husband in order to go after other spouses who ultimately will not be able to take care of her.

Historical situation. The ministries of Amos and Hosea partly coincide, but Hosea's is quite the longer. Both prophesied during part of the political stability and polarized well-being of the long reign of Jeroboam II (786-746), but while Amos' ministry was short, Hosea's extended to after the death of this king,⁸³ when a period of great instability and many political assassinations began, culminating with the very fall of the kingdom of Israel in 722.⁸⁴ During this period arises the dynamic Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, called Pul in the Hebrew Bible, 2 Kgs 15:29. The king of Israel,

⁷⁹ Also in the New Testament, 1 Thess 5:2-3; 2 Pet 3:10.

⁸⁰ See the interesting *peshet* (= interpretation) of the Qumranites (Essenes, the "monks" of the Dead Sea Scrolls) combining this passage with 2 Sam 7, in 4QFlorilegium (4Q174) Frag. 1-3 col.

⁸¹ That is, it shall be easy to make one's way; see Isa 40:4; Zech 14:10.

⁸² And with Dtr flavor, like the prose addition in 3:7 already mentioned on page 8 above.

⁸³ See *Jerusalem Bible* note a to Hos 1:1.

⁸⁴ See 2 Kgs 15:8-31; 17:1-6 (the dates of the *Jerusalem Bible* are different from those given here).

Pecah, became allied with the king of Aram (Damascus), and attacked the kingdom of Judah, seeking to draw it into their military coalition.⁸⁵ The king of Judah, Ahaz, asks Pul for help, and the latter conquered Aram and accepted (after the fact) a new king for Israel, imposing a great tribute obligation, as he also did with Judah.⁸⁶ There were deportations. The new king of Israel, Hoshea (not the prophet), took advantage of Pul's death in 727 to rebel, asking Egypt for help.⁸⁷ After arresting King Hoshea, Pul's successor, Shalmaneser V, besieged Samaria for three years, his son Sargon II finally capturing and destroying it in 722/721.⁸⁸ It was the end of the northern kingdom.⁸⁹

The prophet. The book begins with a divine mandate to Hosea that he marry a "woman of prostitutions,"⁹⁰ most probably, a devotee of the Ba'al fertility cult, if not an actual cultic prostitute.⁹¹ Taking all this at face value, we should say that God commands Hosea to perform a symbolic act (typical of the prophets) that is very personal, as is marrying and begetting children. The names which he gives his children represent what will happen: Yhwh at last will judge Jehu's dynasty, in the northern kingdom, for all the blood which it spilt "in Jezreel." The girl is named "Not-pitied," and, finally, the third child is called "Not-my-people," for Israel is no longer a people to God, who will not be *ehyeh* (= "I am," or better, "I will be [with x]) to Israel.⁹²

The northern kingdom had a tradition of cultic devotion to Ba'al at least since Ahab's marriage to the Sidonian Jezebel, who promoted her ancestral form of worship. Harvests, rains, the fertility of humans, animals and fields were of vital importance for Israel, as they were for her Canaanite neighbors. Yahwism proclaimed that Yhwh alone was Israel's God, Yhwh alone gave (or took away) well-being and sustenance (Hos 2:9^b-

⁸⁵ This is the Syro-Ephraimite War (Syria [Aram] joined with Israel [Ephraim was the territory to which the kingdom had been reduced]), which will figure in an important way in the ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem, ca. 735. See 2 Kgs 16:5-9.

⁸⁶ See J. MAXWELL MILLER – JOHN H. HAYES, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 332.

⁸⁷ See 2 Kgs 17:1-4.

⁸⁸ See 2 Kgs 17:5-6.

⁸⁹ See the Dtr reflections on this in 2 Kgs 17:7-18.

⁹⁰ Same root as in Num 14:33; in 2 Kgs 9:22, regarding the "idolatry" of Jezebel (well, she adored her own native ba'als), linked to sorcery. Interestingly, "Jezebel" may mean "Ba'al's wife," but this is uncertain; see *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (F. BROWN - S.R. DRIVER - C.A. BRIGGS, eds; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 33.

⁹¹ See Hos 4:10-14; see *NOAB* note.

⁹² Recall what was said about the name of God in the Pentateuch course.

11, 14).⁹³ “Ba‘al” means “lord, husband, owner,”⁹⁴ and therefore it is quite appropriate that the metaphors of adultery and prostitution are used in this book, since Israel must be faithful to her only, or first, husband, Yhwh.⁹⁵ Instead of engaging in sacred prostitution (to promote fertility through sympathetic magic), what Israel must do is *know* Yhwh, be intimate with her God (with sexual connotations, but only this). What Hosea seeks, what his mission is, is to make Israel *return* to Yhwh.⁹⁶ To this end, he resorts to the language of love: Yhwh will again woo his people, taking Israel to a place apart and speaking to her heart and giving her gifts, 2:16-17, in order to make her fall in love all over again. They shall be remarried in “justice” (*tsedaqah*) and “right” (*mishpat*), in “love” (*hesed*) and “compassion” (*rahamim*), and in “faithfulness” (*emunah*); thus will Israel “know” (= be in an intimate relationship with) Yhwh, 2:21-22.⁹⁷

The thought and message of Hosea. Hosea knows the traditions of Israel in a more primitive stage than what we find in the final form of the Pentateuch. He does not have a good opinion of Jacob, 12:3-5, or, at least, expresses himself thus in his polemic against Israel.⁹⁸ He knows of the Exodus, 2:17; 11:1; 12:14, and in fact predicts that Israel will return to Egypt, 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:5,⁹⁹ that is, will be banished and worse, because she has broken the covenant, and had rebelled against the *torah* of God, 8:1.¹⁰⁰ Hosea’s most ferocious polemic is against the priests of Israel (not those of Ba‘al), whom he calls assassins (6:9) who lead the people to idolatry, 4:4-10; 5:1-2. According to Simian-Yofre,¹⁰¹ they are also guilty of lust and drunkenness, 4:10-14; 7:3-7. In short, they make

⁹³ At this time there was no clear doctrine of monotheism, that is, of the existence of only one God, something which is clearly seen only with Second Isaiah (end of the exile). But certainly already in Hosea we see at least the intuition that the one who really provides for Israel is Yhwh alone.

⁹⁴ See *Jerusalem Bible* note n to 2:18.

⁹⁵ See 2:18.

⁹⁶ See 2:9; 6:1; 7:10; 12:7; 14:2 for instances of the verb *shuv* used in the sense of “repentance, return to Yhwh, conversion.” This verb will figure in an important way in Dtr. A clearly later text is 3:4-5, which speaks of a time in which Israel will have neither monarchy nor cult, until they return to Yhwh “at the end of the days.”

⁹⁷ See the magnificent *Biblia de Jerusalén* (1975) note to 2:21(a), which speaks of the above attributes as a dowry provided by God!

⁹⁸ See *Jerusalem Bible* notes g and k to 12:4 and 12:8 (note that verse numbers differ in different Bibles).

⁹⁹ In her restoration, Israel shall again leave Egypt, 11:11; 12:10; 13:4. Hosea has, like all the prophets, texts which were added which reflect later situations.

¹⁰⁰ I make no decision here as to the Hosean authenticity of these Dtr-like terms. According to Dtr, Israel must never return to “Egypt,” Deut 17:16; 28:68; cf. Exod 14:13.

¹⁰¹ Course on Amos and Hosea at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Spring 1997. See also “sacerdotes” in the index to his *El desierto de los dioses*.

the people go astray, as in Mal 2:1-9. Hosea lambasts the monarchy, to which he is opposed, saying that God began to hate his people when they asked for a king, 9:15 (Gilgal represents Saul, the first king of Israel).¹⁰² But the quarrel —the *rib*, lawsuit— is against the whole people also, primarily because of its idolatry, 2:4-15. They worship a calf in Samaria —recall the two golden calves of Exod 32; 1 Kgs 12:28-30— and they kiss it, Hos 13:2. It is not difficult to think that what originally was a doubtful representation of Yhwh’s footstool quickly became confused with the symbol of Ba’al, a strong bull.¹⁰³

The famous passage Hos 6:1-6, cited at times as referring to the resurrection, is in reality a reproach of the superficial and transitory nature of Israel’s repentance (although it was interpreted as referring to the resurrection in the Targum and early Christian tradition). Israel resolves, very ficklely, to return to Yhwh, confident that he, after having punished them, will after a brief period (“on the third day”) forgive and restore them, and everything will be okay. But this their resolution is like the dew which quickly evaporates.¹⁰⁴ What Yhwh wants (or prefers) is *hesed* and *da’at*, “love and knowledge” of God, rather than sacrifices.¹⁰⁵

Israel will be punished: God will have no compassion, 1:6; 13:14. There are even ecological consequences, 4:3; 14:15. Israel will be destroyed, 13:9-11; 14:1,¹⁰⁶ for Yhwh’s patience is at an end. But according to the editors of the book, who thus conclude each section, Israel will one day be restored: 3:4-5; 11:8-11; 14:2-9.¹⁰⁷

With Hosea ends the northern kingdom (Israel), and henceforth we will only be concerned with prophets who have to do directly with the southern kingdom, Judah.

¹⁰² 1 Sam 11:15; cf. 8:6. Hos 3:4-5 is a later messianic addition.

¹⁰³ A vigorous bull is the symbol of the stock market on Wall Street; see Col 3:5.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Mark 4:5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted twice by Matthew, 9:13; 12:7.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Amos 1:13; 2 Kgs 8:12; 15:16, for other instances when pregnant women’s wombs were ripped open.

¹⁰⁷ The expression in 14:3, literally “the bullocks of the lips,” means confession and praise of Yhwh in a time when there is no Temple sacrifice.

Isaiah of Jerusalem

Isaiah has a vision of the exalted King Yhwh of Hosts and realizes that he is the most holy and all-powerful Lord of history before whom one must remain quiet and trust.

The parts of the Book of Isaiah. It is common—and necessary in order to study it adequately—to divide this book into three parts. Chapters 1-39 correspond *grosso modo* to this eighth century prophet, with the following notable exceptions: Isa 24-27 is late, perhaps after the fifth century, and we will treat it later in the course, as we will Isa 34-35 which is also late. Finally, it should be noted that Isa 36-39 is in prose and corresponds to 2 Kgs 18-20; it is in fact a biographical supplement regarding the prophet which we will not deal with. The second part of Isa are chapters 40-55, the work of the anonymous prophet of the late exile (towards 540) known as Second Isaiah,¹⁰⁸ so important for Christians, and whom we will treat later, followed by Third Isaiah (Isa 56-66), of the early postexilic period.

Historical Situation. The title of the book indicates that Isaiah's "vision" occurs during several reigns in Judah, beginning with the end of Uzziah's (Isa 6:1, *ca.* 740); Jotham's is until 735, Ahaz's until 715 and Hezekiah's until 687, although Isaiah only prophesies until 701.

Isaiah's ministry begins at the end of the reign of King Uzziah, in a period when Assyria was weak, and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were optimistic as they strengthened themselves and expanded their borders. Things go the same way with Jotham, Uzziah's successor, but when Ahaz sits on Judah's throne, Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) has emerged in Assyria, menacing Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel). These two unite against Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite War, already mentioned, occasioning a famous intervention by Isaiah. The war was costly for Judah, which lost territory. Ahaz looked to Pul for help, which came, in exchange for Judah becoming his vassal. This caused Judah to fall into idolatry, as it was forced to worship Assyrian deities, as happened to vassal states.¹⁰⁹ Thus were prophets like Isaiah so opposed to military alliances with foreigners. The next king of Judah, Hezekiah, is one of the few kings praised by Dtr for his reform precisely against idolatry and syncretism (mix-up of

¹⁰⁸ "Deutero-Isaiah" is abbreviated Dt-Isa; Third Isaiah is "Trito-Isaiah," Tr-Isa.

¹⁰⁹ See 2 Kgs 16:10-18.

elements from different religions),¹¹⁰ but his reform was precarious (as would be Josiah's later). When Sennacherib ascended to the Assyrian throne in 705, there were disturbances in the Assyrian empire, of which Hezekiah took advantage, cooperating with the Neo-Babylonians (Chaldeans) who were already on the scene. One can see the pattern: weak foreign empire, Israelite reforms and optimism; strong foreign empire, vassalage after the defeat of any attempt at revolt, and great influence of the empire on the cult, payment of tribute, etc. In the end, Sennacherib subjugated Judah, and Hezekiah continued as a vassal.¹¹¹

Call of the prophet. Isa 6 is one of the most sublime chapters in the Bible. It narrates the vision that Isaiah had of the Lord (*adonay*, "my Lord") and his *sod*: he saw the Lord seated (as king) on a high and lofty throne (*NRSV*),¹¹² with the skirts of his robe overflowing down into the part of the Temple called *hekal*.¹¹³ Seraphim (fiery beings) were yelling to one another, *qadosh qadosh qadosh* ("holy holy holy") Yhwh *tsebaot*, the whole earth is full of his glory." It was a tremendous experience, and Isaiah was afraid he would be destroyed, for he was conscious of being too impure to behold King Yhwh of hosts, 6:5. A seraph (singular of seraphim) touches his lips and the (state of) sin(fulness) of Isaiah is expiated. He is ready for his mission (= prophetic "sending", in Greek, "apostolate"). The Lord asks his *sod* whom shall he send, and Isaiah, present in these deliberations, offers himself. He is given a arduous mission: to address a people who will not listen to him, who will not turn to the Lord.¹¹⁴ Isaiah's question, "until when?", receives a very hard reply. In 6:11, two Hebrew words are used (a verb and a noun which serves as an adjective) which will have terrible connotations; *tishsha'eh sh'e mamah* means, applied to the soil (or to the "field"), "horribly devastated." *tishsha'eh* is a verb from the root whence comes *shoah*, the Hebrew word which designates the Nazi Holocaust (classic passage: Zeph 1:15, "day of devastation and desolation," in Hebrew *yom shoah umshôah*). *sh'e mamah* is from the root whence will come the expression

¹¹⁰ See 2 Kgs 18:1-8; cf. what is said of Josiah in 23:25.

¹¹¹ One can read the history of these kings in 2 Kgs 15:1-7, 32-38; 16:1-17:6; 18:1-20:21.

¹¹² Same expression as in Isa 57:15^a

¹¹³ See *Jerusalem Bible* note d to Isa 6:1.

¹¹⁴ Hence this text is the one most quoted by the evangelists to explain the fact that most Jews did not accept the message and person of Jesus; see Mark 4:10-12 and parallels; John 12:39; also the end of the Lucan *opus*, Acts 28:26-27.

shiqtsim m^e shomem, “the abomination of the desolation,” Dan 9:27.¹¹⁵ What will be left will be only a stump,¹¹⁶ but this one will be a “holy seed (or descendants),”¹¹⁷ designating the holy Remnant.

Isaiah’s ministry. We can distinguish three periods, which we will now see.

First period: from his call to the Syro-Ephraimite War, 740-735. Jotham is king of Judah. The situation is similar to that of the north: political stability and badly-distributed wealth. Isaiah accuses the nation, especially the rich, whom he links with magic and soothsayers, and drunkenness.¹¹⁸ Yhwh does not accept their religious cult,¹¹⁹ and the enemy will punish them.¹²⁰ Only a remnant will be left.¹²¹ Isaiah favors the Davidic monarchy,¹²² but it must protect the poor.¹²³ From this period comes Isa 1-5, including the famous “Song of the Vineyard,” Isa 5:1-7.¹²⁴ It is a denunciation of the whole people,¹²⁵ from top to bottom: God had taken care of Israel, expecting good fruits, and only got instead rotten grapes. The ending is a good example of Hebrew poetry: Isa 5:7 says, “He expected *mishpat* (social justice), and, behold, *mispah* (violence), *tsedaqah* (right behavior), and, behold, *tse’aqah* (the poor’s cry for help).”¹²⁶

Second period: the Syro-Ephraimite War, ca. 735. From this period comes Isa 7:10-14, the famous Emmanuel passage.¹²⁷ The contexts reflects Isaiah’s position that

¹¹⁵ Similar expressions in Dan 8:13; 11:31; 12:11; used in Mark 13:14.

¹¹⁶ Different word than in 11:1.

¹¹⁷ The same expression (but with the article)

is found in Ezra 9:2, thus distinguishing the people (or race) who should not mix with other peoples or races. Paul will use the expression “holy root” in Rom 11:16, probably in reference to the Fathers (Patriarchs), who are the legitimate tree which sustains the branches, both the natural ones (the Jews who believe in Christ) and the wild ones (the Gentiles who believe in Christ).

¹¹⁸ See 3:14-15; 5:8-12, 20-23; 10:1-4. Note the similarities with Amos. Isaiah also satirically criticizes rich women.

¹¹⁹ See Isa 1:10-17, 21-23.

¹²⁰ See Isa 3:25-4:1; 5:25; 6:11-13; 10:28-34. Neither are oracles against the nations lacking in Isa, Isa 13; 15-23, with other oracles intermixed.

¹²¹ See Isa 10:20-23.

¹²² See Isa 9:6[7]; 16:5; 37:35; 38:5, without taking a position here as to the Isaian authenticity of all these passages.

¹²³ See Isa 3:14-15; 11:1-5.

¹²⁴ Isa 10:1-4 should follow next, followed in turn by Isa 5:8-30.

¹²⁵ See also 1:4-9, 21-23; 3:1-15; 29:1-12.

¹²⁶ Another good example is the important saying in 7:9, “if you do not stand firm, you will not stand,” *im lo ta’aminu, ki lo teamenu*, using different forms of the Hebrew verb *aman*, which in its different forms means “believe, trust, be firm, be constant, faithful.” From this verb or root comes “truth/fidelity” (it’s all the same in Hebrew), and “amen.”

¹²⁷ Most probably, the “sign” of the birth of the child (possibly Hezekiah, son of Ahaz) and his “diet” (see JOSÉ LUIS SICRE, *Profetismo en Israel* [Estella: Verbo Divino, 2000], 498) refer simply to a relatively short

Judah and its king must trust in Yhwh (“Emmanuel” is a divine sign) and not in military alliances, at a moment when Assyria was not so weak (in fact, Ahaz was looking to Pul for help).¹²⁸ Also from this period comes the announcement of the fall of the northern kingdom (Samaria), Isa 28:1-4. Ahaz did not heed Isaiah, and the prophet withdraws from public life for a time.¹²⁹ His ministry is continued by his disciples, 8:16.¹³⁰

Third period: return to public life under Hezekiah. Now Damascus (Syria) is not a problem, but Judah is a vassal of Assyria. Hezekiah wants to revolt, with the cooperation of the Neo-Babylonians (Egypt also seemed to be willing to help),¹³¹ against which Isaiah prophesies with a symbolic action: he walks around Jerusalem naked for three years as a sign of what will happen to Judah if it rebels, Isa 20.¹³² In 701, Sennacherib, the new Assyrian king, subjugates Judah again. The countryside was devastated.¹³³ From this last period comes, according to Sicre, Isa 2:1-4.¹³⁴

Two other important passages. Isa 11:1-9, the famous text which gave origin to the “seven gifts of the Holy Spirit,”¹³⁵ is postexilic, according to Sicre.¹³⁶ There is then no monarchy, and only a stump is left of Jesse,¹³⁷ David’s father, that is, the dynasty has been cut off and can only await a renewal which will have humble origins. The awaited messianic king will fulfill his duty to take care of the poor (Ps 72), protecting them from the wicked. On that future day, the peace of paradise will return: there shall be no violence on the Lord’s holy mountain, beasts until then ferocious will live together and even newborn babes will be safe, because the whole earth will be filled with knowledge (*da’at*, that word so dear and meaningful to Hosea) of Yhwh, that is, it will all be in intimate terms with God.

period of time that will transpire before the punishment comes (the partition of the land, see SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 215). Cf. Matt 1:22-23.

¹²⁸ See the *Biblia de Jerusalén* note to Isa 7:1 (b).

¹²⁹ See SICRE, *Profetismo*, 290, 293.

¹³⁰ Hence will come the great tradition of the disciple-followers of Isaiah (the “Servants”), both in the Babylonian Exile (Dt-Isa) and later (Tr-Isa). See Isa 54:17; 65:13-15; 66:14.

¹³¹ See Isa 30:1-7.

¹³² See JOSEPH JENSEN, “Isaiah 1-39,” *NJBC*, 242.

¹³³ See NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 67.

¹³⁴ *Profetismo*, 466, with due caution regarding the provenance of this most important eschatological passage and its parallel in Mic 4:1-3.

¹³⁵ The six attributes in the Hebrew text become seven in the LXX; see JENSEN, “Isaiah 1-39,” 238.

¹³⁶ *Profetismo*, 512-514.

¹³⁷ This can also be translated “shoot” or “scion” (descendant).

Isa 8:23^b-9:6 comes a bit after the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, and refers to the successor of Ahaz, Hezekiah, who was expected to liberate the northern tribes from Assyrian domination.¹³⁸ The “district of the Gentiles” is, in Hebrew, *gelil haggoyim*; from *gelil*, “circle, region,” comes “Galilee.”¹³⁹ Notice the “accolades” (marks of distinction) given to the child, with reference to the throne of David, 9:5-6.¹⁴⁰

Isaiah’s theology. The prophet’s inaugural vision profoundly shaped his way of seeing God and all things. Yhwh for Isaiah would henceforth be the “Holy One of Israel.” Inseparable from his holiness was “social justice” (*mishpat*), and *tsedaqah*, a term difficult to restrict to “righteousness” (as in Gen 15:6), because it is very related to the “sphere of salvation,” as in Isa 56:1; 59:17. We can say with Saint Augustine (in *De Trinitate*) that God is pure act and simplicity: his loving is not separate from his knowing, nor is his justice different than his salvation, etc.¹⁴¹ Sin —of which, as a result of his vision, Isaiah was acutely aware— is rebellion against Yhwh.¹⁴² Everything is dependent on King Yhwh, who is Lord of history: therefore to rely on military powers is to not trust Yhwh.¹⁴³ Judgment is a consequence of sin. As a son of his tribe, Isaiah upholds the dynastic promise to David, but believes that his successors (Ahaz and even Hezekiah) leave much to be desired.

¹³⁸ According to JENSEN, “Isaiah 1039,” 236; for NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 76, it could refer to Ahaz or Hezekiah. For SICRE, *Profetismo*, 512-514, it dates from a century later and refers to Josiah. BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, says that this type of anti-Assyrian rereading in the time of Josiah is “entirely plausible,” 102.

¹³⁹ This text is cited by Matt 4:13-16 as fulfilled by Jesus when he moved to Galilee with his parents after leaving Egypt.

¹⁴⁰ See Luke 2:14. Josiah was made king while still a boy, 2 Kgs 21:23-22:2.

¹⁴¹ In Augustinian language, the attributes of God are essential; God is incomposite Spirit; in the absolute simplicity of God being wise is (simply) *being*; God has no qualities or accidents, God is all that God is substantially.

¹⁴² The final editor of the book gave it coherence by way of a great *inclusio* using the words heaven, earth and rebellion, 1:2; 66:22, 24.

¹⁴³ The maxim in Isa 30:15, “in returning (“conversion”) and resting you will be saved, in quietness and trusting shall be your might,” forms part of the primitive rule of the Carmelites.

Micah

This leader of the agrarian nobility defends the rights and traditional values of “his people” in the countryside of Judah in the middle of the eighth century.

Who was Micah? This is not a pun on his name, which means “Who is like Yah(weh)?” We are trying to situate this figure in a social context. Here Prof. Blenkinsopp shines, opining that Micah was a provincial from the countryside (he was bitterly critical of capital cities, 1:5).¹⁴⁴ Let us quote the erudite Englishman:

Micah is a fierce defender of the rights of the small farmers whose ancestors in many cases had been working the same plot of land, guaranteed by ancient custom (2:5), for centuries. His indictment is therefore directed against the ruling classes in the capital who, in his view, were breaking up the old order and driving the independent farmer off his land. The ways of doing this are depressingly familiar: enclosure of fields (2:2, 4); foreclosure following on insolvency (2:2, 9)—literally stripping the clothes off their backs (2:8; cf. Amos 2:8); forced labor (3:10); the falsification of weights and measures (6:11); bribery and corruption of the judicial system (3:11), and so on. It must also be borne in mind that the strain of resentment expressed by Micah and others against the endless round of animal sacrifice (6:6) probably had less to do with liberal religious convictions, as assumed by so many scholars during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, than with the economic burden that the sacrificial system represented for the agrarian class. No one, in short, not even Amos, equals Micah in protesting the exploitation of the powerless:

You who hate good and love evil,
who tear the skin from off my people,
and their flesh from off their bones
who eat the flesh of my people,
and flay their skin off them,
break their bones to pieces,
chop them up like meat in a kettle,
like flesh in a cauldron . . .
(Micah 3:2-3)¹⁴⁵

Blenkinsopp notes how personally involved this prophet is who has just depicted the exploiters as cannibals. It is thought that Micah himself belonged to this class who was exploited and in danger of losing everything. Blenkinsopp believes that we can be even more specific, and place Micah among the “people of the land,” the *‘am ha-arets*,¹⁴⁶ “that is, independent landowners who actually worked the land rather than just living off

¹⁴⁴ See *A History of Prophecy*, 93.

¹⁴⁵ *A History of Prophecy*, 93-94.

¹⁴⁶ This expression has different meanings in the Bible and in the post-Biblical period.

it,¹⁴⁷ typical of this stratum everywhere, were socially and politically conservative, suspicious of civil and religious bureaucracies and attached to the native dynasty.”¹⁴⁸ Blenkinsopp cites the coups d’etat against idolaters and in favor of Davidites carried out by this “people of the land” in 2 Kgs 11:18-20; 14:21; 21:24. Significantly, it is the “elders of the land” in Jer 26:17-19 who remember, around 609, what our Micah had said more than a century before.¹⁴⁹ Blenkinsopp says that Micah represents the type of conservatism that nourished the Deuteronomistic reform movement.¹⁵⁰ However, he was not against the monarchy as such, only against its abuses.¹⁵¹

Micah’s message. Besides the denunciation of socio-economic abuses which we have seen, Micah also lambasts political and religious leaders (priests and prophets), motivated as they are by money, Mic 3. He predicts the total ruin of Jerusalem, 3:12, which will not take place until more than a century later. He announces the destruction of Samaria, 6:16, and exile, 1:16, as punishments. Later hands speak of the restoration of Zion, 4:6-7, now in terms of the Remnant and the kingship of Yhwh (also in 2:12-13). The messianic prophecy par excellence is found in 5:1-3; this is what gives rise to the expectation that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, which Jesus fulfills in Matt 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-7.¹⁵² Finally, among the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture is Mic 6:8, “he has made known to you, Adam, what is good, and what Yhwh seeks from you, only that you do *mishpat* and love *hesed*, and solicitous/carefully walk with your God.”

Three seventh-century prophets

Zephaniah: “I will let remain (hisharti) in your midst a people humble and poor, and they will take refuge in the name of Yhwh, the Remnant (sh^cerit) of Israel.” From 700 on, when Sennacherib ascended to the throne, Assyria increased its power and influence.

¹⁴⁷ Absentee landlords were likewise hated in the time of Jesus.

¹⁴⁸ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 94. The first one to have this intuition was the German Hans Walter Wolff, *ibid.*, 96.

¹⁴⁹ Micah is more or less a contemporary of Isaiah of Jerusalem (*ca.* 740). The “elders of the land” would be the leaders of the “people of the land.” Jer 26:17 is thus accurately translated in the *NRSV* and most English versions, except the *Jerusalem Bible* old or new, and its Spanish versions.

¹⁵⁰ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 95.

¹⁵¹ That is to say, he is in favor of a constitutional monarchy, where the king is under the law, not above it, as reflected in Deut 17:14-20.

¹⁵² This tradition regarding where Jesus was born is either unknown or omitted for theological reasons in Mark. Cf. John 7:41-42.

A little before the “people of the land” placed the child Josiah on the throne of Judah, kings Manasseh and Amon had undone Hezekiah’s reform (he died in 687).¹⁵³ Zephaniah was active in the days of Josiah before his reform (that is, between 640 and 622), when Assyrian influence over Judah’s elites was great. What Zephaniah most criticizes is the arrogance of these people, while the key word in order to understand his vision is “humility,” from the Hebrew verb ‘*anah*, “to afflict, humiliate,” whence comes ‘*anawim*, “the humbled or afflicted ones.”¹⁵⁴ Zephaniah harshly chastises the rich, 1:18, oppressors, 3:1-4, the “proudly exultant ones” (3:11, *RSV*), as also arrogant nations, 2:10. The leaders of Israel, 1:8-9, including idolatrous priests, 1:4-6, are condemned for their syncretism and foreign customs. They love banquets, and Yhwh has a tremendous banquet prepared for them for the day of Yhwh: except that they are the main course (i.e., the sacrificial victims)!¹⁵⁵

Zephaniah develops the description of the Day of Yhwh as no other in 1:14-23,¹⁵⁶ which is the basis for the medieval hymn *Dies irae* (= day of wrath, taken from 1:15).¹⁵⁷ It is one of the passages in the Bible which speaks of uncreation, the return to the chaotic stage which existed before creation. As we have seen, from hence comes the expression for the Nazi Holocaust, *ha-shoah*, “the devastation.” This says it all. According to certain authors, this marks the transition to apocalyptic.

The final section of Zeph is a postexilic addition which is very important because of the theological development it reflects. It is an “eschatological” passage in that it announces a time (3:9, 11, 16, 19, 20) in which all peoples, cleansed of sin (the pure lips

¹⁵³ 2 Kgs 21.

¹⁵⁴ Not exactly “poor,” for which there are other Hebrew words, one found in Zeph 3:12, *dal*, the “average” poor person, not as wretched as the *ebyon*. Hence the ‘*anaw*, singular of ‘*anawim*, may be behind the happy “poor of spirit” of Matt 5:3. In the Judaism of the Second Temple period this verb ‘*anah* came to be synonymous with fasting, that is, doing penance (“afflicting oneself”), something which became very important and which shaped the spirituality of the Jew, who saw himself as, and often in fact was, poor. Some versions of the Bible (such as the [*New*] *Jerusalem Bible*), translate this verb in Lev 16:29 as “fasting.” The Greek word for “humiliating oneself” (“humble” comes from the Latin *humilis*, “low,” from *humus*, the “ground,” which corresponds well with the verb ‘*anah*, which means firstly “oppressed, bent down, bowed down”), *tapeinoō*, or the adjective or noun, is found in Matt 11:29 (“*tapeinós* of heart”); Luke 1:48 (“he has looked upon the *tapeinōsin* of his slave”), 52 (“he lifts up the *tapeinōús*”); Phil 2:8 (“*etapéinosen* himself”). This spirituality of poverty characterizes the Letter of James.

¹⁵⁵ See also 1:12-13.

¹⁵⁶ SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 228, puts him among the “great” prophets.

¹⁵⁷ Parts of this terrible poem are used in the Mass for the dead.

of 3:9 remind one of Isa 6:5-6) will praise Yhwh and worship him,¹⁵⁸ and Israel will return from captivity, will be gathered and the Diaspora will end, 3:10, 20.¹⁵⁹ We see a good example of what is known as “Zion restoration theology” in 3:14-18: Yhwh reigns in the midst of Jerusalem.¹⁶⁰ The Chosen People will no longer be confounded nor depressed, they will be saved by their God from all their oppressors, but this salvation is of a purified, corrected people become humble, docile and righteous, 3:11-13. This is expressed in terms of lame and stray sheep, 3:19, which recall Ezek 34:16, a passage which is in the background to scenes like that in Mark 2:15-17.

Nahum. The name of the prophet of this oracle (*massá*) and vision is significant: it means “comfort.” The date of his prophecy is uncertain, but not the date in which what he announced occurred, the destruction of Niniveh, the capital of Assyria, by the new Babylonian empire in 612.¹⁶¹ This whole booklet is about the end of Israel’s great enemy, who had destroyed the northern kingdom. That is what the “applause” of 3:19 is all about,¹⁶² a sign of triumphal mockery.¹⁶³ The theological message of Nahum is that God judges and destroys the wicked.

Habakkuk. Most probably, his period is just after the death of Josiah in 609,¹⁶⁴ which represented a very serious problem for theodicy (the justification of God in the face of evil which seems to prevail).¹⁶⁵ The Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians) defeated the

¹⁵⁸ See *Jerusalem Bible* e note to 3:10.

¹⁵⁹ This is a great eschatological hope, the reason why Jesus symbolizes it by choosing twelve disciples; see also Matt 10:6; 15:24.

¹⁶⁰ Passages which speak of Yhwh as king are important for the concept of “kingdom of God.” These verses are the basis of the beautiful Spanish song which says “Hija de Sión, alégrate, porque el Señor está en ti, salvador y rey” (“Daughter of Zion, rejoice, because the Lord is in you, savior and king.” See also Isa 60, where the glorious presence of Yhwh within the Holy City makes it shine.

¹⁶¹ Some place the date of Nahum just before, others (SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 225) a few decades before, when this empire was still strong. It is not before 663, the date of the destruction of Thebes, the Egyptian capital, presupposed in 3:8.

¹⁶² “Applause” comes from the Latin *applausus*, “noise which occurs when something is struck, clashing noise.”

¹⁶³ As in Ezek 21:14, 22; 25:6; it signifies lament in Ezek 6:11; gladness and praise in Ps 47:1; 98:8; Lam 2:15; Isa 55:12.

¹⁶⁴ But before 598/597, since there is no hint of the first conquest of Jerusalem on that date; SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 226.

¹⁶⁵ Josiah, we remember, was the great king-reformer of the Dtr movement in the seventh century. According to this theology, things should have gone very well for him, but he went forth to battle the king of Egypt and was killed, 2 Kgs 23:29, bringing down his reform. That is why —although the Dtr historian in 2 Kgs 23:25 praises him more than any other king— he could not bring himself to say, as he did regarding Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18:5-7, that Josiah was successful in all his undertakings. The Hebrew verb “to have success, prosper,” *sakal*, is used in Deut 29:8; Josh 1:7-8; 1 Sam 18:14; 1 Kgs 2:3. It will later be

Egyptians (the other empire about which Judah had to be concerned at this time) in Carchemish in 605, and imposed on Judah the payment of tribute. A good man who had sought to follow Yhwh alongside his people had died: there were a few questions to be asked of God, 1:2-4, 13.¹⁶⁶ The first divine response is that God is going to launch the Chaldeans in order to execute his judgment against the Assyrians, 1:5-11. But then the prophet asks: what if the Chaldeans go too far?¹⁶⁷ Habakkuk sits in his watchpost atop the city wall,¹⁶⁸ awaiting the divine oracle. Finally, Yhwh replies with a vision, 2:2, which the prophet must write in letters large enough so that even a runner passing by can read it.¹⁶⁹ Although it may delay in being fulfilled, one must await it, for it has a date and will not disappoint: “he who (is puffed up?) does not have his soul right,¹⁷⁰ but the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.”¹⁷¹ It means that there will be a blessed ending, which will be verified in a future that is not indefinite. This is an example of those oracles or divine responses which were awaited in the Temple, at times spending the night there.

Hab 3, part of which is recited in Lauds Fridays of the second week of the Liturgy of the Hours (and also on Good Friday), is titled “prayer” (*tefillah*), and is a beautiful

applied to the Servant of Yhwh, Isa 52:13, and taken from here and made into a plural participle (noun), it will become the name *maskilim*, which designates those who urge the Jewish people to remain faithful to the God of Israel in Dan 11:33, 35; 12:3 (not very well translated as “doctos” in Spanish, and “wise teachers” in some English versions).

¹⁶⁶ The Jew has always (cf. Abraham bargaining with Yhwh in Gen 18:16-33) had great familiarity and intimacy of conversation with his God. Jewish folklore tells of a saintly Jewish grandfather who was so saddened by the sufferings of the Jews and the injustices of the world that he decided to put God on trial. He named nine friends as judges, who together with himself constituted the required *minyan* (quorum), and they summoned the Almighty to appear. They put God on trial for three days and nights, presenting charges, coming up with defences, pondering, fasting, praying, consulting the Torah and the Talmud. Finally, in solemn consensus, they gave their verdict: God was guilty on two counts: he had created the evil spirit, whom he had let loose among people who were innocent and pliable, and he clearly did not provide widows and orphans with food and decent housing; taken from LEO ROSTEN, *The Joys of Yiddish* (New York: Pocket Books, 1968), 5.

¹⁶⁷ We find in the Prophets instances where the nation being used as the instrument of punishment by God goes overboard, for which it in turn must be punished. This is seen in the woes of Hab 2:6^b-19. See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 126; SICRE, *Profetismo*, 469.

¹⁶⁸ We find a like image in Isa 62:6-7; *hammazkirim* (“those who remind [Yhwh]”) fulfill one of the typical functions of a prophet, intercession.

¹⁶⁹ The Qumranites, in the *peshet* (interpretation) of Hab, 1QPeshet Habakkuk (1QPHab), col. VII:3, have an interesting way of understanding this: “So that /may run/ the one who reads it’;” from *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition. Vol. One 1Q1-4Q273* (FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ – EIBERT J.C. TIGCHELAAR, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK, 1997), 17.

¹⁷⁰ Literally, “behold, puffed up, not right, is his soul in him;” ANTHONY R. CERESKO, “Habakkuk,” *NJBC*, 262.

¹⁷¹ A very important verse for Paul, Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11. Recall the meanings of the verb *aman*, footnote 126 above.

hymn about the theophany of Yhwh as a divine warrior, in archaic style.¹⁷² The holy God comes from Teman, from Mount Paran, that is, Edom (from the south).¹⁷³ From his hand come forth horns or rays, 3:4;¹⁷⁴ Ba'al, the Canaanite god of tempest and thunder, was represented by lightning coming out of one hand, and a mace, or war-club, in the other.¹⁷⁵ It is a daunting spectacle, and Habakkuk trembles, but he will calmly await the day of anguish which will come upon the people who will attack "us," 3:16. Although there is scarcity of everything, Habakkuk shall leap for joy in his savior Yhwh, who is his strength and who gives him feet like a deer and enables him to walk on high places.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah announces the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple by the (Neo-)Babylonians, due to Judah's disobedience. But days will come in which Yhwh will make a new covenant with Israel, written in her heart and which they *will* keep, and their sin will be forgiven and they will return to their Land.

Situation and dates of the prophet; ties to Dtr. This is the book in which Dtr editorial work is most clearly to be seen, beginning with the title, which speaks not of "vision," but of *words* (frequent in Deut), and which, by giving the date for the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry as the thirteenth year of King Josiah (627), wants to indicate that Jeremiah's ministry lasted forty years (until 587), like Moses'. This leads us to think that the Deuteronomists may have wanted to depict Jeremiah as the 'prophet like Moses' announced in Deut 18:15, whom the people must heed. Jeremiah would then be, according to Dtr, the last in a series of prophets sent by God to warn the people that they were sinning and would incur the curses of the covenant.¹⁷⁶ With the end of Jeremiah's ministry comes the Babylonian Exile as punishment for breaking the covenant, but also the announcement of a new covenant which Israel *would* keep, in order to be able to

¹⁷² That is, it imitates the ancient style. It may be an addition (it is unknown to the Qumranites; cf. note b to 3:1 in the *Jerusalem Bible*). Other late passages on Yhwh as warrior are found in Isa 63 and Zech 14.

¹⁷³ In Job 37:22, God comes from the north.

¹⁷⁴ From the ambivalence (multiple values or meanings) of this Hebrew verb in Exod 34:29 comes the depiction of Moses with horns. See *Jerusalem Bible* note i to 3:4.

¹⁷⁵ See the *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 70, and *Jerusalem Bible* note j to 3:5.

¹⁷⁶ See 2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezek 38:17; Zech 1:16; BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 135-140.

return to their Land.¹⁷⁷ With this hope of “conversion,” of a change of fortune, end of captivity and *return* to the Land (all of which is signified by the Hebrew verb *shuv*, “turn, make return,” etc., in its various forms, a verb of capital importance for Dtr), the Deuteronomists would consider their work finished, at least as far as one of its principal stages.¹⁷⁸

Josiah instituted the Dtr reform in 622/621, 2 Kgs 22:3. Jeremiah, if he began preaching in 627, must have lived through the whole reform. But he says nothing about it, and seems to be against a class of persons who rose up as a result of this reform, the bureaucracy made up of scribes expert in law, “perhaps connected with the Temple.”¹⁷⁹ About Josiah, there is only an indirect allusion, in Jer 22:15-16 (without naming him, but comparing him favorably to Jehoiakim). It is therefore more likely that Jeremiah began his ministry after the death of Josiah in 609, when the reform collapsed; Jeremiah would then be basically in agreement with the reform, without supporting all its elements or ramifications.¹⁸⁰ Jeremiah would then have begun his ministry with his famous discourse in the Temple, Jer 7,¹⁸¹ which is a good summary of his primary message, the imminent punishment of Judah. A passage with a clearly Dtr tone which is said to contain a kernel of the authentic words of Jeremiah is Jer 11:1-8, with the expression “hear the words of this covenant,” 11:2;¹⁸² “whoever does not listen to the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers etc.,” 11:3-4;¹⁸³ “iron furnace,” 11:4;¹⁸⁴ “as (at) this day,”

¹⁷⁷ See Jer 31:31-34, a passage which begins in 30:1-3, according to NORBERT LOHFINK, *The Covenant Never Revoked. Biblical Reflections on Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (New York – Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), 49. Cf. Deut 28:69 [29:1] and see the Appendix, “Parallel Passages in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy.”

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, the use of the verb *shuv* in its various meanings (compare different Bible translations, especially in English), in Deut 4:30; 30:2-3, 8, 10; Jer 12:15; 16:15; 24:6; 29:14; 30:3 (a classic *locus* in Jer); 32:37; 33:7, 11; 34:22; Joel 4:1; Amos 9:14; Ps 126:1; Job 42:10; applied to other nations, Jer 48:47; 49:6, 39; Ezek 16:53; 29:14.

¹⁷⁹ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 139, citing Jer 2:8 and 8:8-9.

¹⁸⁰ For example, its nationalism (we shall see that Jeremiah will be accused of being a traitor and a demoralizer of the troops, Jer 38:4), or attachment to the Temple (Jeremiah announces its destruction, 7:14, for which he is put on trial, 26:1-15). Josiah’s centralization of the cult paved the way for the overvaluing of the significance of the now sole Temple.

¹⁸¹ The 609 date is supported by Jer 26:1, which indicates the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim. See Dtr’s judgment of him in 2 Kgs 23:36-37. Contrary to Josiah, Jehoiakim liked luxury and did not protect purity of cult.

¹⁸² Cf. Deut 29:8 [9], 18 [19]; 2 Kgs 23:3.

¹⁸³ Cf. Judg 2:20.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Deut 4:20; 1 Kgs 8:51.

11:5;¹⁸⁵ “land flowing (with) milk and honey,” 11:5; 32:22;¹⁸⁶ “stubbornness of their evil heart,” 11:8; 16:12 etc.,¹⁸⁷ all of these Dtr phraseology.

When Josiah died, he was briefly succeeded by Jehoahaz, who was deposed by Pharaoh Neco, who put another king in his place, Jehoiakim, after changing his name (as a sign of vassalage).¹⁸⁸ Nebuchadrezzar reigned in Babylon, and subjugated Jehoakim for three years, stifling his rebellions; not even Egypt “came out of his land again,” 2 Kgs 24:1-7. Then Jehoiachin ascended the throne; he surrendered to Nebuchadrezzar, and was deported to Babylon along with his family and “all the chiefs and notables,” in the first deportation of 597.¹⁸⁹ Nebuchadrezzar then placed Zedekiah as king, after changing his name; Zedekiah, against Jeremiah’s advice, rebelled against the Neo-Babylonian empire.¹⁹⁰ Jerusalem was besieged for a year and a half, during which time there was great hunger, for there was no bread, since the fields had not been worked, 2 Kgs 25:1-3. Finally, the Chaldeans captured the city, burning it and taking everyone except the very poor to exile, in the second deportation, the big one of 587, 2 Kgs 25:8-12. Zedekiah was made to see the death of his children before having his eyes plucked out, 25:7 || Jer 39. The Babylonians named a Judahite governor, Gedaliah, of the pro-Babylonian party (friends and defenders of Jeremiah).¹⁹¹ But a Davidic pretender, Ishmael, assassinated Gedaliah, and fled with his group to Egypt, taking along Jeremiah.¹⁹² This is the last we know of the prophet. Let us now look at some passages from this complex book.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Deut 2:30; 4:20, 38; 8:18; 10:15.

¹⁸⁶ Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:9; 27:3; Josh 5:6.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Deut 29:18 [19].

¹⁸⁸ See 2 Kgs 23:31-35.

¹⁸⁹ 2 Kgs 24:8-16.

¹⁹⁰ Jeremiah counseled Zedekiah, according to Yhwh’s word, to surrender to the Babylonians; see Jer 21:1-7; 27:12; 34:1-7; 38:3-10, 14-28. Advisers of the anti-Babylonian party, looking at times to Egypt for help, counseled the opposite.

¹⁹¹ It is interesting to note who supported Jeremiah. In the trial against him for prophesying against the Temple, when the priests and prophets want him killed, 26:11, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, saves him, 26:24. As *Jerusalem Bible* f note here informs us, this family had supported the Dtr reform, 2 Kgs 22. Shaphan’s grandson was Gedaliah the governor. Shaphan had been “secretary” of the king; in other words, prominent and influential people (“the powerful Shaphanite clan,” BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 141) supported Jeremiah. See also Jer 29:3; 36:14; 40:5; 42:1. But even one of them fell into idolatry, Ezek 8:11.

¹⁹² 2 Kgs 25:22-26; Jer 43:6-7.

¹⁹³ The fact that the LXX is one third shorter indicates how much this book has been reworked, aside from the fact that beginning with Jer 26, the order of the chapters in the Hebrew text differs from that of the LXX. Baruch, the prophet’s secretary, certainly had a role in the preservation and transmission of the words of Jeremiah. Jer 36-45 has been called the biography of Jeremiah written by Baruch. Jer 45:5 scolds the arrogance of Baruch, who was also taken with the prophet to Egypt, 43:4-7.

Jeremiah's vocation. Jer 1:1 indicates that he was from a priestly family, but not a priest, unlike Ezekiel.¹⁹⁴ Many have thought that his call, Jer 1:4-9, like his “confessions,” have been “stylized,” that is, made to conform to the typical style of these kinds of narratives. Principally, his vocation is assimilated to Moses’: he does not know how to speak, Exod 4:10, but Yahweh will put his words in his mouth, Deut 18:18, and his mouth is touched like in Isa 6:6-7. Like the Servant of Yhwh in Isa 49:1, 5, he was destined from his mother’s womb for his mission (he is *sent*, Jer 1:7), to be prophet of or to the nations, the *goyim*, 1:5, 10.¹⁹⁵ This expression is interesting, because it suggests an interest in the nations which perhaps goes beyond mere oracles against them, although there are these, Jer 46-51.¹⁹⁶ Jeremiah will take a position towards Babylon which is too favorable for the nationalists of Judah, who will accuse him of treason, 38:1-6; Jeremiah even calls Nebuchadrezzar “servant” (of Yhwh), 25:9. Second Isaiah will go even further, calling Cyrus the Persian “messiah,” Isa 45:1. Perhaps the term “prophet of or for the nations” should be interpreted along these lines; it’s as if globalization had begun.

Suffering of the prophet. Jeremiah, the last prophet of the Dtr history (although he is strangely not mentioned),¹⁹⁷ was the prototypical persecuted and suffering prophet, who gave rise to the model with which we are familiar.¹⁹⁸ According to Blenkinsopp, with Jeremiah the message is the person as much as his words.

What seems to be happening is that the basic prophetic idea of instrumentality, being called and used for a transcendent purpose, is becoming increasingly a matter not just of speaking but of a service tending toward a total life investment. While we do not detect a straight trajectory toward this point, the increased emphasis in Jeremiah on prayer, lamentation, suffering, interiority, identification with the grief and anger of God, are indicative in this sense and suggest a notable broadening in the way the prophetic function is perceived.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 239. The priests of Anathoth had been banished there after the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh, 1 Kgs 2:26-27, mentioned by Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Paul will see his own mission as foreshadowed by Jeremiah’s, Gal 1:15-16; cf. Jer 1:10; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10.

¹⁹⁶ Jeremiah’s mission may have been seen in international terms, which can include both destruction and construction, Jer 1:10; 18:7-8 (the *Jerusalem Bible* makes reference to Ezek 18:21-24; Jonah 3:10, regarding the conversion of the wicked, including foreign ones). See HANSON, *The People Called*, 318-319, and footnote 71 above. Undoubtedly, the mission of the Servant in Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6, is more clearly positive with respect to Gentiles.

¹⁹⁷ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 136-137.

¹⁹⁸ See, just in the New Testament, Mark 12:1-8 (the servants who are repeatedly sent represent the prophets in the history of Israel); Matt 23:34-35; Luke 13:33; Acts 7:52.

¹⁹⁹ *A History of Prophecy*, 146.

The mission and message of Jeremiah in his time and place turned him into a real oddball who did not fit in well into his society.²⁰⁰ In Jer 16:1-13, it is said that it was the word of Yhwh which commanded the prophet not to marry or have children (as other prophets),²⁰¹ nor to participate in the most basic activities of his people, for all that is about to disappear when destruction and exile come. See the Dtr language in the questions/answers in 16:10-13; cf. Deut 29:21-27. Jer 16:16-18, a passage which comes just after the announcement of a new exodus superior to the first (as in Second Isaiah), is interesting for two reasons: first, the mention of fishermen in a negative sense contrasts with its positive sense in the call of the disciples in the synoptic gospels. Secondly, the threat that Yhwh will pay (or charge) double for the guilt of Israel will be fulfilled in Isa 40:1-2, where this late-exilic prophet declares that the people have paid double for their guilt (there is yet a third rereading in Zech 9:12; cf. Rev 18:6).

The speech against the Temple. This speech is a good example of the prophet's preaching, of which we can only look at certain aspects. It was probably his inaugural speech in 609. With a Dtr tone, Jeremiah exhorts the people to turn from their evil ways, and to not trust in the fact that they have a Temple in their midst. Like with Dtr, it is only the Name of God, and not his glorious presence (as in the Priestly tradition), which dwells in the Temple (at times called "Place," as in Deut 12:5, 11, 21 etc.). There must be justice for the resident alien, the orphan and the widow (as in Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11 etc.), and innocent blood must not be shed in the Temple (!), nor should they "go after other gods" (typical Dtr phrase), allowing themselves to be deceived by false words (of the false prophets; see Jer 6:13; 8:10, or also of priests, 14:18; see Jer 28 etc.).²⁰² Or is it the case that they think that the House which is called by God's Name has become a cave of bandits?²⁰³ The one Temple can suffer the same fate as that of Shiloh: destruction.

At some early time, Jeremiah may have thought about the possibility of the people's conversion: see Jer 36:3. But afterwards God tells the prophet not to engage in a fundamental function of a prophet, intercession, 7:16. What follows is one of the most

²⁰⁰ See Jer 15:17.

²⁰¹ But cf. Elisha in 1 Kgs 19:19-21.

²⁰² Jeremiah's prediction that the prophet Hananiah would die that same year was fulfilled two months later, Jer 28:16-17.

²⁰³ This expression of Jer 7:11 is quoted by Jesus in his action against the Temple in Mark 11:17.

graphic depictions of the idolatry into which Judah fell. They made cakes for the Queen of Heaven, the great Ishtar (whence comes “Esther”), also known as Aphrodite/Venus, goddess of passion, war and love, with a widely spread cult.²⁰⁴ Jeremiah criticizes the sacrificial cult in terms similar to Amos’, cf. Jer 7:21-28; Amos 5:21-27. In Jer 7:30, the prophet says that the children of Judah have placed their “abominations” in the Temple; this word will be joined to the idea of “desolation” in 7:34 to form the phrase “the abomination of the desolation” in Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.²⁰⁵ Moreover, they have built “high places” (where idolatry was practised) in order to burn their children to the god Molech,²⁰⁶ in the “valley of the son of Hinnom,” in Hebrew *gey ben-hinnom*, whence “Gehenna” comes from.²⁰⁷ Therefore God will lay waste that whole land, Jer 7:20, 32-34.²⁰⁸

The persecution of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was arrested after giving this speech, and some want to kill him, Jer 26:7-11. He defends himself alleging that he has been *sent* by Yhwh, and opens up a “window of opportunity” so that the evil that he announces not take place: if the people turn from their wicked ways, 26:12-15. Jeremiah is defended from the priests and prophets by some “leaders” of the people,²⁰⁹ citing the precedent of Micah, who had been defended by the “elders of the land,” thus being saved from death over 130 years previously.²¹⁰ Thanks to the influence of the Shaphan family, Jeremiah, too, is saved, 26:24. But this was not the only problem of this type which our prophet had. In 20:1-2, the priest Pashhur gives him a beating and puts him in a dungeon; in 38:6,

²⁰⁴ The Queen of the Heavens is a syncretistic mix of several goddesses; *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 64. See also Jer 44:15-19. Cf. Ezek 8:3 and *Jerusalem Bible* note e. WILFRID J. HARRINGTON, *Revelation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 128 fn. 1, says that Rev 12:1 “may be suggesting that the Woman here [sun-robed, with moon under her feet, and star-crowned] may be the true Queen of Heaven.”

²⁰⁵ Cf. Jer 22:5; 25:11; 44:6, 22. The “desolation” in Dan is a different verb in Hebrew than in Jer 7:34, but in Greek (the LXX) it is the same verb; see also 1 Macc 1:54; Mark 13:14.

²⁰⁶ See the *Biblia de Jerusalén* note to Jer 7:31, with reference to Jer 32:35.

²⁰⁷ See the interesting information in the *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 243.

²⁰⁸ Including the “voice of the bridegroom and of the bride” etc. (also in 16:9; 25:10; in 33:11, with the change of fortune). This phrase was used by a Jew named Jesus ben Hananiah with regard to the destruction of the Temple four years before the war of 66-70 (or 73/74) C.E. (JOSEPHUS, *War*, 6.5.3 §§ 300-309).

²⁰⁹ The LXX translates “false prophets,” and some scholars have seen this version as being behind the account of those who testified falsely against Jesus in Mark 14:56-57.

²¹⁰ These elders could well be the leaders of the “people of the land” who put Josiah on the throne in order to make the Dtr reform; 2 Kgs 21:24; 22:1-13. The family of Shaphan was connected to this reform, and defended Jeremiah.

he is put in a dry cistern; in 18:18, there is a conspiracy against him; he himself speaks of slander in 20:10; they want to kill him in his birthplace, Anathoth, 11:18-23.²¹¹

All this did not leave the prophet unaffected. He feels that Yhwh has seduced him (same verb as used for this crime, really the rape of a virgin, in Exod 22:16), Jer 20:7, that he has been deceived as if by a mirage, 15:18. He regrets having been born, 15:10; and wants vengeance, 15:15; 18:20-21;²¹² he remembers the time in which he had enthusiasm for Yhwh's words, 15:16. Thus he, too, must return, and Yhwh promises him that if he returns (converts), speaking worthwhile things instead of vile ones, he will be like the mouth of God, and triumph, instead of the people triumphing over him, 15:19-20. And thus it was.

Jeremiah's message of hope. Jeremiah has a message of hope for the people after their misfortune.²¹³ We will begin with passages which are "*included*" (= "enclosed") by references to David: after an invective against bad shepherds which reminds us of Ezek 34, Jer 23:5 announces days that are coming in which Yhwh will make rise for David a "righteous sprout,"²¹⁴ a king who will act "prudently"²¹⁵ and who will do justice in its social and religious aspects (*mishpat* and *tsedaqah*), that is, totally.²¹⁶ The giving of new names (Jer 23:6) is characteristic of eschatology (Isa 61:6; 62:2-4). Note also the New Exodus theme, Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8, as in Second Isaiah, Isa 40:3; 43:16-21; 48:20-21; 52:7-12 (being able to leave without haste surpasses the first exodus, Exod 12:39). In Jer 33:14-26, we have a very interesting passage which begins speaking a "good word" (= "promise," as in Josh 21:45; 23:14) made to both parts of Israel (north and south). What follows promises that both Davidic kings and "priest Levites" will enjoy the benefits of

²¹¹ This may have given rise to the saying that no prophet is honored in his home town, Luke 4:24; John 4:44.

²¹² Jesus is different, Luke 23:34, as is Stephen (who is modeled after Jesus), Acts 7:60.

²¹³ We are not here concerned to always distinguish between what is authentically Jeremiah's and what is not. Clearly there is a good dose of Deuteronomism in the passages which we will see, which cannot come from the prophet himself.

²¹⁴ This "sprout" refers to the salvation awaited in late passages (exilic or postexilic) such as Ezek 29:21 (cf. Luke 1:69, "horn of salvation"); Isa 4:2 (with a messianic tone); 45:8; 58:8; 61:11, and with clear messianic references, Zech 3:8; 6:12.

²¹⁵ What is translated "prudently" is a form of the verb *sakal*, applied to the Servant in Isa 52:13 ("shall prosper"), and from which is formed the name of the "wise" (*maskilim*) in Dan 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10.

²¹⁶ The same idea is found in Ezek 34:23-25; 37:24-28, except that Ezek avoids speaking of a "king," preferring to call him a "prince," with the possible exception of 37:24. Cf. Jer 30:9, 21.

an unbreakable covenant, likened to the one made with Abraham in Gen.²¹⁷ The “two families” (or “clans”) of Jer 33:24 seem to refer to two entities which have received unbreakable promises from God: the people of Israel (“Jacob”) and the Davidic dynasty. But they also seem to foreshadow the two components of Israel in Zech 4:14, the two “sons of oil” (= anointed ones), represented on the one hand by the civil authority and on the other by the religious authority.²¹⁸ The Qumranites expected two messiahs, the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.²¹⁹

Jer 24, dated by some to 597 (we would then be in the time of Ezekiel), is the famous passage about the “good figs” (the Judean exiles) and the “bad figs,” the poor who remained on the Land. It is the good figs, the Jews, who will receive a heart to know Yhwh, 24:7 (a Dtr formula, Deut 29:3[4]), and who will be the people of God and Yhwh will be their God (P formula), for they will (re)turn to Yhwh with *their whole heart* (Dtr formula, Deut 30:2, 10; cf. 4:29-30).

Jer 25:9 is noteworthy, since it calls Nebuchadrezzar “servant” of Yhwh, somewhat like Second Isaiah calls Cyrus “messiah,” Isa 45:1. That is to say, both the Chaldean and the Persian are mere instruments of the Lord of creation and history, in order to bring against Israel the curses of the covenant, Jer 25:13. The prophecy in 7:34 will be fulfilled, and the Israelites will serve the king of Babylon seventy years, 25:10-11, after which it will then be the Babylonians’ turn to be punished!²²⁰

²¹⁷ “Priest Levites” is a Dtr expression.

²¹⁸ At one stage of Zech, two specific individuals held these powers, the messianic pretender Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua; Zech 3:1-8; 6:12. “Branch” (*NRSV*) is the same Hebrew word as in Jer 23:5; 33:15. See the note to Jer 33:14-26 in *The Catholic Study Bible* (Donald Senior, gen. ed.; New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 992. Jer 33:14-26 is missing in the LXX, where Jer is one third shorter than the Hebrew text which traditionally has come down to us (the “Masoretic” text, “MT”). This indicates that the LXX translators had before them a shorter Hebrew text, that is, without the additions that made their way into the MT. Furthermore, the oracles against the nations in the MT are at the end, while in the LXX they are in the middle. That is why the enumeration of the chapters beginning with Jer 26 are different in the MT and the LXX.

²¹⁹ See, e.g., 1QRule of the Community (1QS), col. IX:11, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition. Vol. One*, 93.

²²⁰ These “seventy years,” which originally designated a rather lengthy period of time, would come to preoccupy Daniel’s apocalyptic mind. He wants to know when the *true exile* of his people will finally be at an end, that is, the period of their most horrible suffering, under the persecution of Antiochus IV “Epiphanes” over 400 years after the time of Jeremiah. See Dan 9:2. The solution is given by angelic revelation: Jeremiah must be read as meaning “seventy weeks of years,” 9:24. In 2 Chr 36:21, this type of interpretation is based on the fact that the Land must fulfill or pay (or enjoy, the Hebrew word can mean all these) its Sabbaths, that is, all those sabbatical years in which it could not rest because the Israelites did not allow it to; cf. Lev 26:34-35.

In Jer 29 we have the prophet's letter to the deportees, which contains the famous injunction to "build houses and dwell in them etc.," and to pray for the good of the place where they are, for the good of the one will be that of the other, 29:4-7. This will be the medieval motto for the attitude which the "poor banished children of Eve" should have in this world, and it will also be the attitude of the Jewish people, who lived in exile until 1948. In Jer 29:13-14, we again see the Dtr exhortation/promise; note the promise of the *ingathering* of the dispersed of Israel from all the nations and their return to the Land. "My servants the prophets whom I sent persistently" (NRSV) and whom the Israelites did not heed (29:19) is pure Dtr language.

Jer 30-31, which we should see as a unit, is in the same line of thought. It is important for Christians, because it almost ends with the very famous passage about the New Covenant, 31:31-34. But let us note that in its original sense, the text refers to the "conversion" (*return*) of Israel which God will perform (according to Dtr theology), and jointly and inseparably, to the *return* (also worked by God) to the Land which God swore to the Fathers. Note all the restoration language in Jer 30:12-18, and the repetition of the P formula, "you will be my people and I will be your God." Jer 30:24 literally says "at the end of the days you will understand this;" it is an expression which points towards eschatology, as does Deut 4:30, that is, to a definitive state where one is with God wholeheartedly. In Jer 31, there is a return to the notion of the grace or favor which Israel found in the primitive days of the desert period; the love of Yhwh for his people is *'olam*, "eternal" (but also, "from of old, from always"), 31:2-3. God will again gather Israel, along with the lame and the blind, 31:8 (cf. Isa 35:5-6, a late passage, from the exile or after). "There is hope for your future," 31:17, "you disciplined (or corrected) me and I was corrected" . . . "make me return and I will return," 31:18.²²¹ Another Jeremian topic (1:10, "root out and destroy etc.") is taken up again in 31:27-28, now in the sense of restoration in the future. This is an example of the continuous rereading of texts which accounts for such an important part of the Bible, including the New Testament. See also 31:29-30, which follows Ezek 18.²²²

²²¹ Recall that "to (re)turn" = "conversion." Cf. Jer 15:19.

²²² See also 2 Kgs 14:6; Deut 24:16; cf. Exod 34:6-7.

And thus we come to our great passage of the New Covenant. It will be different than the one made at Horeb, which the Israelites *broke* (that is, this was not the everlasting covenant of Noah or Abraham).²²³ The new covenant will consist in God putting his Torah within Israel and Judah, writing it in their hearts, “and I will be their God and they will be my people.” There shall be no further need of *instruction* (the meaning of *torah*) given by others, for all shall *know* (be in an intimate relationship of love and obedience with) God, because God will have forgiven their sin and will remember their guilt no more, 31:31-34.²²⁴ The text continues with another passage regarding the restoration of Jerusalem, and then, in Jer 32, with the narrative about Jeremiah’s purchase of a field as a sign of confidence in the return to the Land. In Jer 32:36, after another passage about the ingathering of the dispersed people and return to the Land, we again have a text concerning a (LXX “another”) heart and (LXX “another”) way (= way of behaving), and then mention of the *everlasting covenant*, incorporating into Jer this concept from P, Ezek and Second Isaiah. Jer 33 follows with more on the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah, lest we forget the hopes of the people who have given us these Scriptures.

Just two words on Jer 34-35. A bit before the conquest of 587, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians, King Zedekiah, trying to ingratiate himself with the poor people, decreed a *deror*, the manumission (“liberty”) of Lev 25 (regarding the Jubilee year), freeing all the slaves. Except that the princes and the people had second thoughts, Jer 34:8-16, and cancelled the manumission.²²⁵ Logically, the passage on the Rechabites follows, Jer 35, who drank no wine and did not dwell in houses and possessed little, but lived in tents as the *gerim* (“strangers, pilgrims, resident aliens, guest workers,

²²³ Jer 31:32^d (MT: “and I was their lord/husband,” LXX “and I disregarded/rejected them”) is a difficult text; the Spanish *Jerusalem Bible* (1975) emended the text from *ba’alti to bala’ti*, “y yo hice estrago en ellos” (“and I ravaged them”). The critical apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), indicates *ga’alti*, corresponding to the LXX *ēmélēsa* (“rejected”). *bala’ti* comes from the Hebrew verb “to devour, destroy,” as in the expression “sons of Belial,” e.g., in 1 Kgs 21:10, later “Beliar,” the devil, in Qumran and 2 Cor 6:15 etc.

²²⁴ We are here in the theology and language of the circumcised heart, Jer 4:4; Deut 10:16; 30:6. Also of the “word” (Torah) which is not far away, but rather in the heart, Deut 30:10, 14, and of that other covenant *separate* from the one made at Horeb, 28:69 [29:1], which Israel had not been able to fulfill “until this day,” 29:3[4]. It will be on that day “at the end of the days” that Israel will finally be able to really be the people of God, 29:12; see LOHFINK, “Theology of the Wilderness,” 47, 52, 54.

²²⁵ Cf. Neh 5 for an example of pardon of debts at a time of great economic hardship.

braceros”) that they were.²²⁶ Yhwh praises their obedience and contrasts it to the disobedience of the people towards his servants the prophets whom Yhwh has sent to them, 35:13-16. And with this we have finished our look at Jeremiah.

Ezekiel

“And my people they shall teach (to distinguish) between sacred and profane and (the difference) between impure and pure they shall know.” Ezek 44:23

Ezekiel’s situation and vision. Ezekiel, a priest, goes to Babylon with the upper classes in the first deportation of 597.²²⁷ He (was) settled in Tel Aviv with the other exiles, by the River Chebar, Ezek 3:15.²²⁸ There, around 593/592, Ezekiel had his famous vision of God, Ezek 1, that is, of a mysterious chariot (called *merkabah*, “war-chariot,” in the Jewish tradition) that could move in all four cardinal points “without turning” (NRSV).²²⁹ There is lightning and wind everywhere, as in the Sinai theophany, Exod 19:16, and much noise and radiance. God calls the prophet in Ezek 2 and *sends* him (as prophet) to the rebellious nation of Israel.²³⁰ The Spirit invades him, and he hears what the vision tells him, 2:2. We can note many “commonplaces” (typical ideas or expressions) of Sacred Scripture in this passage: “do not fear them,” Ezek 2:6; cf. Jer 1:17, “I have made your face hard,” Ezek 3:8; cf. Isa 50:7; Luke 9:51.²³¹ Many have

²²⁶ The Fathers (“Patriarchs”) were all *gerim*; Gen 23:4; 47:9; Exod 2:22; 6:2-3; Heb 11:13. See my article “Welcoming the Foreigner: A Biblical Theology View,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 11.2 (2004), 226-234.

²²⁷ See 2 Kgs 24:10-16.

²²⁸ Tel Aviv is the name of what is today the capital of the State of Israel. It means “the hill of the ear (of corn).” Aviv (or Abib, but the pronunciation is labio-dental, with a v, as also occurs with “*shub*”), was the ancient Hebrew name for the first month, later called Nisan; cf. Exod 23:15; 34:18; Esth 3:7.

²²⁹ This mysterious divine vehicle, which had at its center “like a form of four beings,” whose faces were, depending on which side, the faces of a human, a lion, a bull and an eagle, constitutes for Jewish mysticism the highest object of contemplation. From the four faces come the Four Living Beings of Rev 4:6-7, and the symbols of the gospels: Matt = a man (because of Matt 9:9); Mark = lion (because of the beasts in Mark 1:13); Luke = a bull (because of the sacrifices of the priest Zechariah in Luke 1:5, 8); John = an eagle, because of his lofty theology.

²³⁰ God calls him *ben-adam*, = “son of man,” = “human being,” which emphasizes the distance between God and mankind, according to the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 2:1. The phrase will become a title in intertestamental Judaism (the “apocrypha” of the “Old Testament,” now more commonly the “pseudepigrapha”) and of the New Testament stemming from its use in Dan 7:13.

²³¹ The Greek text of Luke says “he made his face firm to go to Jerusalem.”

speculated about Ezekiel's mental condition, and have proposed that he hallucinated and even suffered from catatonic states (Ezek 3:15).²³²

Ezekiel's first period: having the people become aware of their sin. The principal metaphor for Ezekiel's ministry is that of the watchman or sentinel, a word linked to prophecy in Hos 9:8. Ezekiel's mission is to warn the people of their evil so that they may "return;" for this he is responsible with his life, 3:16-21. Note the frequent symbolic actions in this book, 3:25-26; 4:1-5:4, to the extreme of being told to cook with human excrement.²³³ The intent is that the Israelites may be stunned and consumed by their guilt, 4:17. Israel has defiled Yhwh's sanctuary, and Yhwh is going to punish them without mercy, 5:11.²³⁴ In 6:9-10, there is mention of the "escapees" ("survivors") of those who were "dispersed" (the "Dispersion," or Diaspora, is the main element in the punishment; hence, the "in-gathering" in the End will be a preeminent description of salvation). God will break (or smash) their adulterous heart, so that they will loathe (or be horrified) of themselves, "and they shall know that I (am) Yhwh etc." (a typical P "acknowledgement formula," as in Exod 7:5).

The depth of the sinfulness, of the offense against God, has to be well known. Ezekiel gets a visual (or virtual) tour of the "abominations" perpetrated *in the Temple*, Ezek 8. First, in the "entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north" (NRSV), where a "passionate" idol was placed,²³⁵ probably an image of the goddess Asherah-Astarte (or Ashtoreth).²³⁶ These abominations that Israel commits will make Yhwh leave his Temple, 8:6, what priests most want to avoid in order to prevent chaos. The visions of the abominations continue; we can suppose that Ezekiel in exile is seeing or imagining what is still happening in Jerusalem before its destruction in 587. More abominations: women are ritually-mourning for Tammuz-Adonis, 8:14, and then, the worst, now close to Yhwh's altar: worshippers of the sun (*shemesh*, what the P author of Gen 1:16 dared

²³² See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 167, citing an article of the philosopher Karl Jaspers, who suggested that this prophet was schizophrenic.

²³³ Something terribly impure for a priest; cf. Mal 2:1-3.

²³⁴ Let us note at once the priestly concern for purity, especially as regards the Temple, as we see in Lev, a P work.

²³⁵ "Passion" (linked to lust) is better than the NRSV's "jealousy," another meaning of the verbal root.

²³⁶ See page 35 and footnote 204 above. "That the Canaanite Ashtart ["Astarte," NRSV] was, like Ishtar and Innana, a Venus deity, as the Greek tradition reflects, is likely;" *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (D.N. Freedman, ed.; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2000), 114. She was the goddess of love and war.

not name).²³⁷ As a consequence, the “glory of God” —the Priestly way of conceiving and referring to Yhwh, who is really present in the midst of his people— leaves the Temple by grades, beginning in Ezek 9:3.²³⁸ Israel’s guilt is immense, and even they know that God has abandoned the Land, although they misinterpret the consequences, 9:9. The Glory continues to withdraw, 10:3-4, 18. Ezekiel, who continues to fathom Israel’s sin, fears that his people may be totally destroyed, 11:13.²³⁹ Finally, Yhwh stops atop the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem, 11:23; that is, he is going in the direction of Babylon to accompany the exiles.²⁴⁰

Several passages in Ezek are among the most shocking in the whole Bible for their crudity and merciless criticism of his own people. This book was one that had some difficulty entering the Hebrew canon, and the fact that it did is like a monument to the amazing Jewish capacity for self-criticism. Let us look at Ezek 16, one of the prophet’s historical sweeps in order to humiliate Israel. In 16:3, 45, he says that her origin was Canaanite, with an Amorite father and a Hittite mother; she was repugnant when born, and no one took care of her, 16:4-5. Only Yhwh did, and married her, 16:6-8. But Israel prostituted herself vilely, 16:15. Here begin passages which Prof. Blenkinsopp has described as pornographic: Israel made for herself “male images,” 16:17, for her prostitution; some have interpreted this as a reference to phallic representations. But most

²³⁷ See the interesting observations in LAWRENCE BOADT, “Ezekiel,” *NJBC*, 314, who suggests that the twenty-five men may represent the twenty-four priestly courses together with the high priest, that is, all the priests, who must turn their back on Yhwh to worship the sun! There is no more graphic example of what it means to have to *turn* = “convert”!

²³⁸ Concerning the cross in the forehead which protects those marked with it, see *Jerusalem Bible* note c to 9:4.

²³⁹ “Pelatiah” means “Yhwh frees,” a name formed from the Hebrew verb “to escape,” and could be symbolic, given the frequency of this verb in Ezek; see the noun and the verb in 7:16; cf. 24:26-27. This is one of the Hebrew verbs that can also be translated by “save.” An “escapee” is the one who informs Ezekiel of the taking of Jerusalem in 587, 33:21-22. Already in 11:17-20 we find Dtr-type language regarding the return to the Land after getting a new heart (of flesh, typical expression of this prophet; see Ezek 36:26). We also find in Ezek 44:7, 9 the idea of the circumcised heart, or rather, uncircumcised, applied to foreigners almost as a refrain, especially in Ezek 32; cf. 6:8-10. Note from this passages how circumcision is the sign *par excellence* of the exiled Jew.

²⁴⁰ The real presence of Yhwh will be with the exiles. This idea is found in Ezek 11:14-16 as an answer to those who remained on the Land and think that it now belongs to them, because the exiles, who are now “far from Yhwh,” have forfeited their rights. The exiles’ real estate claims are legitimized by stating that Yhwh was *with them* in Babylon. See my little unpublished article “Parallels Between Two Experiences of Exile: That of the Cubans and that of the Jews in Babylon.” Ezek 11:23 gave rise to the Jewish tradition of the eschatological importance of the Mount of Olives (on it Jesus will speak about the End, Mark 13:3; Matt 24:3). It is the place where Jews expect that the Messiah will appear. God’s return from there (“from the east”) is told in Ezek 43:2.

degrading is that, contrary to normal prostitutes, Israel the prostitute was the one who paid, 16:34! The covenant has been broken, 16:59 (cf. Lev 26:15), although immediately there is mention of the first covenant (in Sinai) and of the eternal covenant which Yhwh will make with Israel, once she is ashamed and is forgiven, 16:60-63. It should be added here that Gentile use of these passages to chastise the Jews is an abuse which demonstrates great ingratitude and blindness.

Ezek 20 is dated to 591 (Jerusalem has yet to fall). We see here a scene from the early exile: the elders, leaders of the people, come to consult the prophet. What he must do is to make them know “the abominations of their ancestors,” 20:1-4. What is being elaborated is Israel’s coming to awareness (in Spanish, *toma de conciencia*) of its history of infidelity. God made known his “statutes and decrees” by which human beings live if they do them,²⁴¹ including the Sabbath as a sign, 20:11-12, 20.²⁴² God often wanted to “pour out my wrath upon them and use up my anger against them,” but he restrained himself, 20:8, 13, 21-22, (only) for the sake of his holy Name, so that the (pagan) nations would not profane it.²⁴³ Israel has wanted to be like the (other) nations, 20:32, rejecting the kingship of Yhwh (1 Sam 8:4-7), but Yhwh will nevertheless impose his kingship on them, Ezek 20:33; he will free them again in a new exodus and will return them to the Land, and will again accept their sacrifices as a “soothing odor,” 20:34-41.²⁴⁴ It is then that Israel will have true remorse for all the sin she committed, and will loathe herself, and will truly know who Yhwh is, 20:42-44.

Ezek denounces social sins: bloodshed, not honoring one’s parents, oppressing the resident alien, the orphan and the widow, 22:1-13. The leaders have violated rights and failed in their duties, but the people have also sinned, 22:25-31. The prophet conveys the “fire of the fury” of Lord Yhwh with an attack on the prostitute capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem, depicting with graphic sexual terminology their alliances with foreign powers (Ezek 23). These sisters began to prostitute themselves in Egypt, and became “hopelessly in love” with the Assyrians, “all of them young ‘studs’,” on whom she “bestowed her

²⁴¹ On 20:25, see Scott Hahn and John Bergsma, “What Laws Were ‘Not Good’? A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25-26,” *JBL* 123 (2004) 201-218; the verse would refer to the Deuteronomic sacrificial system, considered defective by Ezekiel and the P school.

²⁴² The same word for “sign” describes circumcision in Gen 17:11.

²⁴³ See Ezek 36:21-23. Cf. Exod 32:12; Num 14:13-17; Deut 9:28-29; 32:27-30.

²⁴⁴ The “soothing odor” of the burnt-offerings is a Priestly expression; Gen 8:20-21; Lev 1:9 etc.

favors.” The Egyptians ‘quenched their lust’ with her. Oholibah fell in love with the Chaldeans just by looking at pictures of them on the wall, and sent messengers to them, and went to bed with them. Using horse imagery for the prostitutions of this sister when she was young in Egypt (the Egyptians were known for their horses, 1 Kgs 10:28; Isa 31:1; Ezek 17:15), Ezek 23:20 satirizes thus: “she lusted after their prostitutes whose flesh (*NRSV*: “members”) was flesh of donkeys and their emissions horse emissions.”²⁴⁵

Personal moral responsibility. Without getting into chronological issues, we can take the thematic step in tracing Ezekiel’s message of hope by saying something about Ezek 18, the great chapter on each person’s individual responsibility for his or her own sin. The saying “the fathers ate the hard (unripe) grapes, and the children’s teeth are worn out” was already known (e.g., Jer 31:20), and the ancient formula about Yhwh, Exod 34:6-7, extended his love more than his punishment, but the latter reached unto the third and fourth generation. Now, in the exile (although the reference is to the Land in Ezek 18:2-3), Ezekiel declares that each shall pay for his or her own guilt, and makes it clear that turning from evil leads to life, and that this is what Yhwh most desires, 18:20-23, 27-32.²⁴⁶ And the righteous cannot rest on his or her laurels if he or she turns to evil, 18:24-26. This message prevents any fatalism that the exiles may have; their sin in fact had been made so patent to them that they despaired of living, 33:10; 37:11.

The bad shepherds and the good Shepherd. Ezek 34 is one of the most important passages in the Old Testament in order to understand Jesus of Nazareth’s ministry (and eschatological mission). Ezekiel prophesies against Israel’s leaders, metaphorically called “shepherds;” their subjects are “sheep.” The relationship should be one of solicitous care, but the shepherds have pastured themselves, taking advantage of the flock in order to feed and dress themselves at its expense, 34:2-3.²⁴⁷ They have neglected the weak and sickly sheep, they have not healed them,²⁴⁸ nor have they *caused to turn* the stray and lost

²⁴⁵ The LXX, done in Egypt (Alexandria), makes this verse refer to the Chaldeans, not the Egyptians.

²⁴⁶ See also Deut 24:16.

²⁴⁷ Jesus accused the scribes, the religious leaders of his day, of going about “with much clothing” and “devouring the houses of widows,” Mark 12:38-40. “To eat, drink and dress” were technical Rabbinic terms for abuses committed by the administrators of the property of widows and others who entrusted their assets to them; see J.D.M. DERRETT, “‘Eating Up the Houses of Widows’: Jesus’s Comment on lawyers?,” *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972), 4.

²⁴⁸ Jesus says in Mark 2:17 that it is the sick (“sinners”), not those who are well (the “righteous”), who need a physician. “To heal” is synonymous with “being forgiven after repentance,” as we see by comparing

(or excommunicated, for this is what the verb *nadah* means in Mishnaic Hebrew).²⁴⁹ The sheep have gone astray as if they had no shepherd.²⁵⁰ Therefore Yhwh will take away the flock from these corrupt shepherds, 34:7-10.²⁵¹ Yhwh himself will take care of the flock, will seek the stray and the lost, will gather them, will give them rest, that is, will make them lie down to eat, 34:14-16.²⁵² Ezek 34:16 literally says “make *turn* the expelled (or excommunicated) one.” This describes the ministry of Jesus.

But there is more. Yhwh will confront the bad shepherds, and will judge between sheep and he-goats, 34:17-22.²⁵³ He will *save* his flock (the “flock” includes the small cattle, sheep, rams and goats). He will raise up one sole Davidic shepherd, his servant, as one “lifted up” (“prince”) in their midst, 34:23-24.²⁵⁴ He will not be a king, but something like a *primus inter pares*, the first among equals.²⁵⁵ God will make a covenant of peace, so that there will be no more war, nor “beasts,” a reference to the pagan nations who always oppressed Israel (cf. 2 Sam 7:10-11), and nature will respond propitiously, Ezek 34:25-30.²⁵⁶ This “covenant of peace” is another way of speaking of the everlasting covenant (Ezek 16:60; 37:26), the covenant-Promise not to ever destroy again made with Noah in Gen 9, as we can tell from its use in Isa 54:9-10.²⁵⁷

The new heart and the revivification of Israel. Ezek 36 begins with a prophecy for the mountains and Land of Israel, the object of the coveting and ridicule of the nations, especially Edom, the archenemy of Israel, 36:5.²⁵⁸ Some have seen a link between Ezek

Mark 4:12 with Isa 6:10 (Mark here follows the Targum’s [Aramaic translation of the Hebrew]interpretation, and not the LXX, which is the same as the MT).

²⁴⁹ Cf. Isa 66:5. Jesus came to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt 10:6; 15:24. See Luke 15:4-7.

²⁵⁰ See Mark 6:34.

²⁵¹ Cf. Mark 12:9, 12.

²⁵² In Mark 2:15, Jesus’ first meal with sinners and publicans, we twice find the Greek verb for reclining or lying down (leaning on one’s left elbow) to eat; this was the custom in Jewish festive meals.

²⁵³ See Matt 25:31-46.

²⁵⁴ Of the Servant of Yhwh in Isa 52:13 it is said that he shall be “lifted up.” On Zerubbabel as servant (Hag 2:23; Zech 3:8), see BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 155, 191, who states that Dtr uses the term “servant” for rulers and prophets, putting the emphasis on service and instrumentality. Cf. Mark 10:35-45.

²⁵⁵ Ezek avoids speaking of a human king, with the possible exception of Ezek 37:24. This notion of humility, given that Yhwh alone is king, gave rise to the fact that in the Judaism of the late Second Temple period, no one should declare himself “messiah,” since it would be God who revealed this by making the pretender (or candidate) successful; see CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 23, footnote 53.

²⁵⁶ Evil has effects on nature; see Hos 4:3, since God is the one who “lays waste,” 2:8-14, and the one who restores, 2:23-24.

²⁵⁷ See also Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 33:20-21. Cf. Num 25:12; Job 5:23; Sir 17:12.

²⁵⁸ Recall that Edom descends from Esau, Jacob’s brother. On Edom, see NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 180-181; Ps 137:7. Obadiah’s booklet is all of it dedicated to the ruin of Edom. Ironically, Herod the

36:3, “the slander of the people,” which consists in saying that the Land “devours human beings,” 36:13, and Num 13:22; 14:36, the defamatory report of the scouts of the Land; this may perhaps be related to the resistance of many exiles to returning once Cyrus gave them permission.²⁵⁹ The restoration of Israel and the punishment of the nations who were the instrument of the divine fury begins to be announced.²⁶⁰ In Ezek 36:16-19, the reason for the exile is given, with a Priestly savor: Israel defiled the Land with her sins; her impurity was like that of a menstruating woman before Yhwh. That is why God dispersed them. But, for the sake of his holy Name —so that the nations will not say that Yhwh cannot enable them to live on the Land, but rather, so that they see that “I (am) Yhwh”— Yhwh will let the nations know who he is, thus sanctifying his great Name (the opposite of what the Israelites did in Num 20:12). God will gather them and make them return to their Land, splashing pure water upon them and cleansing them of their impurity (note the priestly language).²⁶¹ Yhwh will give them a new heart and a new spirit: it is a new creation,²⁶² born out of the *turning* with one’s whole heart to Yhwh, and which leads, as in Jer 30-31, to the *return* to the Land, to the end of captivity and a complete change of fortunes, that is, to *salvation*, Ezek 36:26-29.²⁶³ Nature itself will change, and Israel will loathe (“be grossed out by”) her former conduct, 36:30-32. It will be a return to the paradisiacal state of Eden, 36:33-35.²⁶⁴ The abundant multiplication (same verb as in Gen 1:28) of the people goes along with the “solemn festivals” (same word as in Gen 1:14, in the P creation narrative); Ezek 36:37-38.

Great’s family, were Idumeans (descendants of the Edomites), and would rule a good portion of Palestine until almost the end of the first century C.E.; see *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 584.

²⁵⁹ Thus, a rather skeptical critic, Niels Peter Lemche, has described Second Isaiah as a ‘propagandist’ for the trip, so that the exodus from Babylon would be massive.

²⁶⁰ Ezek also has oracles against the nations, Ezek 25-32. The oracle against Tyre (to the north of Palestine), 28:1-19, is interesting for its mention of Eden, the primordial garden, together with the rebellion of a perfect creature who thinks he is God, which makes of this king a type of Lucifer, besides calling to mind Adam and Eve’s “original sin.” There is also mention of a “cherub protector” together with fire (cf. Gen 3:24), etc. See also Isa 14:11-15.

²⁶¹ The Hebrew verb here translated by “splash” is different from the one translated “sprinkle” which is used in Lev 16:14 and Isa 52:15.

²⁶² In Gen 2:7, Yhwh God blew breath (*nishmah*, not *ruah* as in Ezek 36:26). Cf. Ezek 11:19-20; Ps 51:12; 1 Cor 15:45.

²⁶³ We have more than once mentioned the polyvalence of the Hebrew verb *shuv*, clearly demonstrated by the different translations of Ps 126:1.

²⁶⁴ We have here perhaps the dawn of eschatological thought, in which the salvific end corresponds to the primeval intention of the creator. There is a certain parallelism between Ezek 36:36 and Jer 1:10.

To a post-catastrophe people, who considers itself as dead as bones which are completely dry, without hope of returning to life, who said “we are finished,” Ezek 37:11, Ezek tells his vision of the valley full of very dry bones, but which the Lord Yhwh can make relive through his Spirit (“of life,” says the LXX in 37:5). And it is the prophet himself who commands the Spirit in the name of the Lord Yhwh, “prophesying,” and the Spirit enters into those dead beings, who came back to life, getting up on their feet like a force (or army), very, very large, 37:9-10.²⁶⁵ Israel will know that “I (am) Yhwh” when Yhwh opens her tombs and revives them and settles them on their Land, 37:13-14.²⁶⁶

What follows is the reunification of the two kingdoms of Israel, represented by the two sticks. This will be the ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel, which will become a great eschatological expectation (hence, Jesus chooses the Twelve).²⁶⁷ It will be a converted (reformed, repentant) Israel, with one sole king. The king is probably Yhwh, and his servant David God’s prince-lieutenant, although in 37:24 the MT reads “king” (the verb could be read instead of the noun, as the *Jerusalem Bible* does; the LXX has “prince or leader”). Then Israel will indeed dwell in the Land forever, like her Fathers,²⁶⁸ with David as prince, pursuant to a covenant of peace which is eternal, and God will multiply them, remembering the covenant with all flesh after the flood, Gen 9:1, 7, 9, 9-10, 16-17. Except that now —truly— Yhwh’s Dwelling will be in their midst, and Yhwh will be their God and they will be Yhwh’s people, forever, such that the nations will know that Yhwh is the one who sanctifies Israel, Ezek 37:25-28.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ It is probably the first biblical passage which points to the future belief in the resurrection. Jesus “raises” (etymologically, the verb means to “get up again or awaken”) Jairus’ daughter, telling her to get up, Mark 5:41. See the play on words in the Greek text of Acts 3:22, 26 between “raise up” and “resurrect.” By the way, “talitha” = “little lamb,” is the Aramaic version of the “little lambs” in Isa 40:11, whom Yhwh will gather in his arms.

²⁶⁶ What we translate as “settle” really means “let rest or repose;” hence the noun *menuhah*, Dtr term in Num 10:33. Cf. Deut 12:9, which combines this important term with another one, *nahala*, “possession, inheritance.”

²⁶⁷ Cf. Ezek 48:31; Rev 21:12-14. Note the many parallels between these two books, e.g., Ezek 40:2; Rev 21:10 (see the margin references in the *Jerusalem Bible*).

²⁶⁸ See my article “Welcoming the Foreigner.” One dwells in the Land only by permission (tenancy at sufferance), Lev 25:23. In Ezek 37:25, the verb “dwell” is *yashav*, from which derives the noun “tenant” (NRSV) found in Lev 25:23. The Fathers are thus described in Gen 23:4; 47:9. But Ezekiel’s eschatological vision may change this; in Ezek 47:22-23, the “(resident) aliens” (this is the other word in Lev 25:23) will be incorporated into the tribes and will have a share in the inheritance (*nahalah*) of Israel, with equal rights.

²⁶⁹ We here have another interesting divine reversal. Although human beings should sanctify the name of Yhwh, Num 20:12-13; Ezek 36:21-23, they do not do this, so that the one who must do it is Yhwh himself. So also when David wants to build Yhwh a house, it is Yhwh who builds David a house, 2 Sam 7. In the Lord’s Prayer, “hallowed be thy name” is a “theological passive,” that is, the one who hallows (sanctifies)

Eschatology. With the mysterious passage about Gog, Ezek 38-39, we witness a firm step taken towards apocalyptic. According to one author, the exiles feared that the prophecies we have just seen would not be fulfilled, and “As Ezekiel and his disciples continued to read these prophecies, they increasingly began to see them being fulfilled only at the end of time as part of a great cosmic act of divine salvation.”²⁷⁰ And thus we arrive at the final part of this book, Ezek 40-48, frankly eschatological. We can only see a few interesting things. The first topic of treatment is the new Temple; note the exact date P-style in 40:1. The prophet is shown the blueprints, but there is no command to build the Temple, as in Exod 25:8.²⁷¹ The eschatological tradition in Qumran, for example, sees in this Temple the Temple not made by human hands, but by God (Exod 15:17).²⁷² Yhwh (that is, his Glory, Ezek 43:2) then is seen to return to his Temple, to dwell therein forever, for the Israelites will never again profane his holy Name. In this addition to Ezek the Zadokite priesthood is established as the only legitimate one that can officiate at the altar, 40:46; 43:19, for it is said that the Levites, demoted to “altar boys,” apostatized, 44:10 (cf. 44:15; 48:11).²⁷³ The priests will then truly teach the people to distinguish between sacred and profane, and the difference between pure and impure, 44:23.²⁷⁴ It is definitely an exclusivist, anti-foreign program, 44:7, 9. The “prince” has special access to what seems to be a cultic meal, 40:3; might this “lifted-up one, exalted one” be the high priest, the leader of Israel in the Persian period?²⁷⁵ The Land will be distributed, and the people shall be free of taxes, 45:9 (a universal wish!). The feasts shall again be celebrated, and the jubilee, 46:17. There will be abundant water, which is related, as the

is God the Father. Cf. John 17:1-6, 17, and the parallels with the Lord’s Prayer (e.g., 17:15) which are found there.

²⁷⁰ ROBERT R. WILSON, “Ezekiel,” in the *HarperCollins Bible Commentary* (J.L. Mays, gen. ed., with the Society of Biblical Literature; New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 621.

²⁷¹ Ezek 43:12 calls the plans the “Torah of the House.”

²⁷² See CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 110-111.

²⁷³ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 179-180, who points out that Ezekiel criticizes the priests (Ezek 7:26; 22:26). *The Jewish Study Bible* (A. Berlin – M.Z. Brettler, eds.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1128, suggests that “inappropriate Levitical service” in the high places mentioned throughout Kings, as indicated by 1 Sam 2, may be presupposed by Ezek 44:10. Zadok is the faithful priest of 1 Sam 2:35.

²⁷⁴ See 43:11-12; 44:5, 24; recall 22:26. The *Jerusalem Bible* calls this eschatological part of Ezek (40-48) the “Torah of Ezekiel;” we may see a fulfillment of this “torah,” that is to say, priestly “teaching,” in Jesus’ “new teaching according to ‘authority’,” *didachē kainē kat’ exousia*, Mark 1:27, and a specific application of it in his distinction between pure and impure in 7:15. For more particulars, see my *Theological Significance*, 35-62 (chapter two on pure and impure in Mark).

²⁷⁵ Cf. Zech 3:1-7.

Jerusalem Bible notes to Ezek 47 indicate, to the blessing which God's presence brings in Ezek 43.²⁷⁶ This water will make grow many trees, 47:7, and "heals" the Dead Sea, 47:8.²⁷⁷ Fish abound, and there shall be trees that give fruit every month, and whose leaves are medicinal, 47:9-12.²⁷⁸ Ezek ends with an appendix, again concerning the Land, 47:13-48:35. The last words are stupendous: the Jebusite name of *yerushalam* ("Jerusalem," according to 2 Sam 5:6) will be changed to *yahweh-sham*, "Yhwh (is) there."²⁷⁹ Nothing can better express eschatological rebirth than a new name.

Second Isaiah

"Get up on a high mountain, go, Zion herald-of-good-news, raise your voice with strength, Jerusalem herald-of-good-news, raise (it), do not fear, say to the cities of Judah, 'Look at your God'." Isa 40:9.

The situation of this anonymous prophet. Babylon has yet to be captured by the Persians—it is a bit before 539, when Babylon will fall without "a shot being fired"—but this prophet of the "consolation of Israel," as this section of the book is titled (Isa 40-55), already sees what is occurring on the world stage, and he announces the end of the exile. The situation is obviously very different from that of Isaiah of Jerusalem, but this second part of the book (called Second or Deutero- Isaiah, Dt-Isa), has a certain thematic continuity with the eighth century prophet, who left a school behind (see Isa 8:16), and the various editors of the book have tried to give it a certain unity (something which is being given increasing attention). Some distinguish between a first part, optimistic and turned outwards, Isa 40-48, and a second part, gloomy and turned towards internal problems, in which we see that this prophet's message was not well-received, and he himself was persecuted and died, as it appears.²⁸⁰ The *inclusiones* (bracketing or closing

²⁷⁶ Cf. Ezek 43:2; Num 14:21; Isa 6:3; 11:9 (|| Hab 2:14); 40:5; Jer 31:33-34.

²⁷⁷ Called the Sea of Salt in Gen 14:3.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Rev 22:1-3, at the end of the revelation (*apocalipsis*) of the prophet John. The abundant and purifying water figures also in the last part of Zech, 13:1; 14:8-9, 16-17 (Succoth, Booths), which is reflected in John 7:2, 37-39. Note the relationship between water and Spirit (life).

²⁷⁹ See *Jerusalem Bible* note d to 48:35. Yhwh's presence is everything for P theology, very related to Ezek. The change of names, as we have seen, is typical of eschatology.

²⁸⁰ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 185-186. CARROLL STUHLMULLER, "Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah," *NJBC*, 330, says that: "Because there is a dramatic shift between chaps. 41-48 and 49-54, both in mood and in important themes, chaps. 49-54 represent the prophet's profound disappointment with those who dominated the first return to Palestine in 537 and his eventual rejection by them. The four major songs of the Suffering Servant derive from the repudiation of Dt-Isa by the returnees. Led by Hag and

in the beginning and end of a biblical passage or section) of the “Book of the Consolation of Israel” (as Isa 40-55 is known) are given by the themes of the Word of God and the return.

The consoling message of Second Isaiah. The book begins with the command to console the people, “very loudly” proclaiming to the heart of Jerusalem that she has now completed her “military service,” she has paid double for her guilt.²⁸¹ Thus does God identify himself in 51:12-15, as the Consoler. The prophet is present before the divine council, as Isaiah had been. He sees and hears in heaven the outcome of what is happening on earth. God’s way must be prepared: God is about to lead Israel’s return to her Land, and will thus reveal his Glory.²⁸² The prophet joins in the colloquy, and is told to cry out that “flesh” (the mere human being) before God and his Word is nothing (as Isaiah had experienced in 6:5). The word often translated twice in 40:9 as “herald of good tidings” actually means one who brings good news; in Greek, one could say “evangelizer.” This concept, so important in Jesus’ preaching, comes from Dt-Isa: 41:27; 52:7; also in 60:6; 61:1.

Second Isaiah’s message is that Yhwh is the Creator of the universe, the only God (we here have explicit monotheism) who is in charge of history. What has happened to Israel was not due to God’s lack of power,²⁸³ but rather his righteousness and holiness required that the rebellious people be punished. But now that they have paid as Yhwh had threatened, Yhwh is on the verge of recreating his people with a new exodus more glorious than the first;²⁸⁴ Israel must no longer look back. And the new act of creation will redound to the benefit of all nations.

Zech, the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel, they preferred the theology of the other prophet of the exile, Ezek. Tr-Isa continues the same distancing from the returnees, a group much more narrow in their views, not at all open even to Israelites who remained behind in the land and never went into exile (Hanson).” With regard to this difference between these chapters of Dt-Isa, I opined, in my license *tesina* (“The Salvific *Kenosis* of the Kingly Servant. Analysis and Interpretation of Isa 52, 13-53, 12,” Gregorian University, 1998, unpublished, 36), that this difference is due primarily to the presence of the three last poems of the Servant in Isa 49-53. Otherwise, in the whole of Dt-Isa we have themes of consolation and encouragement for Israel.

²⁸¹ See also Isa 51:17, 21-23. Recall Jer 16:18; cf. Zech 9:12.

²⁸² In 52:12, it is said that Yhwh goes both before and behind, reminding one of the beautiful refrain in George Harrison’s song inspired by Hinduism “Hear Me Lord,” which goes: “At both ends of the road / to the left and the right / above and below us / out and in there’s no place you’re not in”

²⁸³ See Isa 50:2-3.

²⁸⁴ Note the creation language in Is 45:8, which reminds us of Gen 1.

This redemption of Israel is connected to the creative power of the only God,²⁸⁵ who has no rivals,²⁸⁶ and who has chosen Israel.²⁸⁷ God acts in history (through the Persian king Cyrus, though he does not know it),²⁸⁸ and everyone will see what God is going to do.²⁸⁹ Nature itself will rejoice.²⁹⁰ What befell Israel had already been foretold by Yhwh, it was by God's own design,²⁹¹ but the new exodus will make the first one be forgotten.²⁹² Israel is forgiven; God had never actually divorced his spouse,²⁹³ and the other nations are invited to turn (convert) to Yhwh.²⁹⁴ In fact, the most remote regions await Yhwh's salvation.²⁹⁵ We also see here more of the dawning of eschatology: the mention of the garden of Eden, 51:3, together with creation themes from Gen 1, suggest the return to the beginning (*reductio ad principium*, or *restitutio principii* or *restitutio in integrum*). Isa 51:9-10 evokes the primeval victory over chaos, as in Near Eastern cosmogonies.²⁹⁶ It is a return to the time of Noah, to the eternal covenant, 54:9-10. Also noteworthy is that one begins to hear about Yhwh spoken of as king, 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7.²⁹⁷ It will be the time when *all* shall be taught by Yhwh, 54:13,²⁹⁸ and his *Servants*

²⁸⁵ See Isa 41:21-29; 43:10-13; 44:6-19.

²⁸⁶ See Isa 41:22-23; 45:9-13.

²⁸⁷ See Isa 44:2, 24, 26; 43:1-3. Scholars have noted that it is only in the exile that Abraham begins to be mentioned: Isa 29:22 (which is not from First Isaiah); 41:8; 51:2; 63:16 (Third Isaiah). It was Jacob who was spoken of earlier (Hosea).

²⁸⁸ See Isa 41:2-5; 43:14-15; 44:28; 45:1-5 (Cyrus is even called "messiah," and "friend or beloved, 48:14, like Abraham, 41:8, and "shepherd," 44:28).

²⁸⁹ See Isa 45:6; 52:10.

²⁹⁰ See Isa 43:20; 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 55:12-13.

²⁹¹ See Isa 41:26; 43:12; 48:3-11.

²⁹² See Isa 43:16-21; 48:20-21; 49:10-11; 52:11-12. Is 43:18 a question (as in the *Biblia de Jerusalén*) or rather a command (to forget)? Cf. Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8.

²⁹³ See Isa 44:21-22; 49:14-16; 50:1; 54:5-8. Cf. Hos 2:4, 18 [NRSV 2:2, 16].

²⁹⁴ See Isa 45:14 (submissively); 45:20-25 (to the glory of Israel); cf. Luke 2:32, which cites Isa 49:6. However, oracles against Babylon are not lacking, Isa 46-47. We find the reason in 52:1-5.

²⁹⁵ See Isa 51:5.

²⁹⁶ See the *Biblia de Jerusalén* notes to 51:9 and 10, but better, the observations made in BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 187-189. A cosmogony is an account of the creation of the world.

²⁹⁷ On the relationship between God's primordial victory over chaos, and his kingship, a great Bible scholar says: "Near Eastern religion, and especially the West Semitic religion, has at its heart a cycle of myths about the establishment of kingship among the gods. The cosmogonies and rituals have two levels: (1) the celebration of the victory of the god of fertility and life and order over the unruly old powers of chaos and death, and (2) the establishment of the earthly kingdom after the heavenly model, a ritual attempt to bring the king, the nation and the people into harmony with the gods and the state into the eternal orders of creation;" *Frank Moore Cross. Conversations with a Bible Scholar* (H. Shanks, ed.; Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1994), 46.

²⁹⁸ The *Jerusalem Bible* translates "disciples."

shall be saved, 54:17.²⁹⁹ For then the unconditional covenant made with David will be extended to the whole people, 55:1-3, an everlasting covenant, having repercussions on other peoples, 55:4-5. The second part of the inclusion of this book in 55:10-11, besides being one of the most beautiful Bible passages on the Word of God, also evokes the creative nature of God's Word in Gen 1.

*The Servant of Yhwh poems.*³⁰⁰ Embedded in this second part of Isaiah are four poems which, for Christians —if not for Christ himself— are from the first the most important Old Testament reference for the mission and, especially, the passion, of Jesus. I say “embedded” because this word can refer to diamonds which are set or inlaid onto another precious surface, and this is the case with these poems (they are not songs). In effect, the “servant” of Yhwh in Dt-Isa is always Israel-Jacob, except in our four poems, which are found in: Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12.³⁰¹ In these poems, the Servant is an individual, not the collectivity Israel.

Unlike the people Israel, which did not keep silent in face of destruction and exile, which was not cut off from the land of the living, and which deserved the divine punishment of destruction and exile because of transgression of the covenant, the servant in [Isa] 53 is one who apparently did not complain, who ostensibly did not survive, and who experienced suffering through no guilt of his own.³⁰²

The only difficulty with this view of the poems is in 49:3, where we find “Israel” after “servant” in almost all the manuscripts. The process of interpretation of these mysterious poems was continuous, and we thus find “Israel” here as a gloss (a scribe's “clarification”) inserted into 49:3.³⁰³ Let us look, then, at these poems which are so important for Christians.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ This verse already seems to belong to Third Isaiah, who uses the plural of servant as one of the names for his group, as we shall see. The Hebrew word which is behind what we here call “saved” is *tsedaqah*, “righteousness,” but here in the sense of “salvation;” in the *New Jerusalem Bible*, “saving justice.” This Hebrew word refers to a relationship with God which puts one in the sphere of salvation, and Paul thus uses its Greek version, e.g., in Rom 3:21-26.

³⁰⁰ The actual expression “servant of Yhwh” appears only in Isa 42:19 in reference to “blind” Israel.

³⁰¹ I follow, as in my license *tesina*, the great Jewish scholar HARRY M. ORLINKY, “The So-Called ‘Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Suffering Servant’ in Second Isaiah,” *Vetus Testamentum Supplementum* 14 (1967), 94.

³⁰² ORLINKY, “The So-Called ‘Servant’,” 20-21. According to Orlinsky, the same hold true for the other poems.

³⁰³ The *Jerusalem Bible* puts it in parentheses. ORLINKY, “The So-Called ‘Servant’,” 80-88, adduces powerful arguments that it is a gloss which creates “syntactical and contextual difficulties,” that is, it

The first poem, 42:1-4, is found in chaps. 40-48, and has yet to reflect the great conflict that the Servant will have as shown by the following poems. Yhwh speaks about his chosen Servant, whom he supports and who enjoys his good-pleasure. Yhwh has put his Spirit upon him (we find this expressed in even stronger terms in 61:1, a passage which some consider to be the fifth Servant poem), and the Servant “will make go out” (announce?) *mishpat* (divine law) to the *goyim* (pagans). He will not do this pompously, but delicately, but will be faithful in “making sprout” (a possible translation of this verb) *mishpat*. In this he will not faint or be crushed (cf. Jer 1:17), until *mishpat* is established on the earth, and the islands (= the most remote places on the globe) await his *torah* (= instruction, doctrine, especially the priestly one).³⁰⁵ Let us note that the mission of this Servant is to “put in place [divine] right” in all the earth, normally the king’s function (see in this sense Zech 9:9-10; Ps 72), but it is also linked to prophets (cf. Jer 1:5, 10).

The second poem, 49:1-6, is addressed to the islands and distant peoples, and speaks of the Servant from the time of his being called while still in his mother’s womb in order to be the servant of Yhwh, with a mouth that is like a sharp sword (thus is the Word of God in Heb 4:12; cf. Rev 1:16; 19:5), kept by God as a “choice arrow.”³⁰⁶ This probably refers to the harsh words that prophets utter, e.g., Isa 30:27; Hos 6:5; Amos 3:7-8; 7:10; Jer 5:14; 20:8; 26:11). Yhwh will “glory” in his Servant, but the latter is already complaining that perhaps his labor has been in vain. To this discouragement God responds giving him a still greater mission: his vocation from the beginning is not just to make Jacob return to his God, for the restoration of Israel is too small a thing for the

disturbs the poem and makes no sense given 49:5-6, where this Servant has the mission of making Israel return to Yhwh. Orlinsky also points to a fact he considers significant: the omission of “Israel” in a medieval Hebrew manuscript (the best manuscripts are medieval), known as Kennicott 96.

³⁰⁴ It is also important to Jews, as we shall see regarding the fourth poem.

³⁰⁵ So it can be said that this individual has the functions of a prophet, king and priest.

³⁰⁶ This is normally war imagery, against enemies. These expressions can also stand for cutting remarks, Ps 63:4, or the thunderbolts that God send out, Ps 77:18 (*NRSV* 77:17); in 127:4, they are the “sons of (one’s) youth” who protect one.

Servant.³⁰⁷ Yhwh sets him as a light to the *goyim*, “so that my salvation (*yeshuaty*) shall be to the ends of the earth.”³⁰⁸

In the third poem, 50:4-9, the Servant again speaks of his prophetic ministry, which he describes as “supporting the exhausted” with his word.³⁰⁹ We here see that this Servant, who twice describes himself as a “disciple,” perhaps of Isaiah (see 8:16), has a special concern for —and an audience among— the poorest and downcast (see the continuation of this ministry in 57:15; 58:7; 61:1-3; 66:1-2).³¹⁰ Every morning the Lord speaks to him, but he is persecuted and mistreated.³¹¹ He will not shrink back, but shall make his face like flint (hard rock; cf. Luke 9:51, where Jesus “makes his face firm” to go to Jerusalem). He trusts in Yhwh’s help, will overcome his enemies and shall be vindicated.

In the famous fourth poem of the “Suffering Servant,” the Servant himself does not speak, but rather Yhwh does (at the beginning and end), and a group who pondered what happened to this Servant, and the significance of his suffering. Firstly, Yhwh gives like a summary of the Servant’s trajectory: exaltation, humiliation, admiration which he will cause.³¹² The first verb which is applied here to the Servant, *yaskil*, usually translated “shall prosper,” designates the “prudent” person (Amos 5:13) who teaches and serves as an example. It is hence the masculine plural participle, *maskilim*, denotes the leaders

³⁰⁷ Isa 49:6 talks about “making stand” the tribes of Jacob and “making return (convert) the preserved ones of Israel.” Jesus’ mission is described both as only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt 10:6; 15:24, and as to “other sheep who are not of this fold,” John 10:16, a probably allusion to the Gentiles (cf. 11:52).

³⁰⁸ The LXX translates: “for you to be unto salvation until the end of the earth.” Cf. Luke 2:32 (Jesus); Acts 13:47 (Paul).

³⁰⁹ The adjective “exhausted” comes from the root which appears several times in 40:28-31, and which can also mean “to faint” (but it is not the same verb as in 42:4).

³¹⁰ Not to mention “eunuchs” and foreigners, 56:3-7.

³¹¹ The gospel writers will speak of the same kind of treatment applied to Jesus.

³¹² In Spanish, for “exaltation” I had “enaltecimiento,” and for “humiliation,” abajamiento,” both of which are spatial terms (“getting lifted up,” “lowering oneself”). On the other hand, we will not enter into the numerous textual and other problems that this most difficult poem offers; see my said *tesina*, “Salvific *Kenosis*,” 3-13. Today, I would not have chosen the emendations to the text so lightly. The Qumran scroll, 1QIsa^a, the only complete scroll of Isa, offers very interesting readings. One is a basis on which to translate the verb in 52:15 as “sprinkle” instead of “admire,” that is, as a reference to Yom Kippur (see Lev 16:15; cf. Heb 9:13-14.) On all this there more information in CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 28-29. The trajectory (“career”) of Jesus as the Servant, intimated in these poems, is more explicit in Phil 2:6-7 and in John, where the divine Word becomes flesh in order to reveal the essence of God to human beings and then returns to the Father.

(“wise”) of Dan 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10, in what has been called “the oldest interpretation of the Suffering Servant.”³¹³ The better word to use in translation is “insight;” cf. Gen 3:6.

The poem relates the paradox which was the life of the Servant,³¹⁴ which seemed incredible to the spokesman for the group who recognized its significance. No one took this personage into account. He grew up in Yhwh’s presence (as a prophet?; cf. 1 Kgs 17:1), as a mere twig in the parched earth, Isa 53:2;³¹⁵ he was a contemptible being who lived suffering, and was like a “hiding of the face” (either his face—like a leper—or the face of onlookers, who did not want to see it, since he was so disfigured beyond human semblance; the expression can mean both, and is thus “double-duty”).³¹⁶ But he bore his opprobrium in place of the people, who thought that he was accursed of God; it was the guilt of others which he carried,³¹⁷ and through the divine discipline (*musar*) he underwent, *shalom* has come to us, here in the sense of definitive well-being or “salvation.”³¹⁸ We were healed by his stripes.³¹⁹

The narrator confesses that “all of us” like the flock has gone astray, and that Yhwh placed on him the guilt of us all. The Servant was a victim of oppression and

³¹³ See H.L. GINSBERG, “The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant,” *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953), 400-404, and CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 19, 57. The *maskil* occupies a prominent leadership position in Qumran. We would inelegantly translate *maskilim* in Daniel as “insightful ones.”

³¹⁴ *Parádoxos* in Greek means “unexpected, incredible, marvellous, strange, startling,” KARL FEYERABEND, *Langenscheidt’s Pocket Greek Dictionary. Greek-English* (Langenscheidt – Hodder and Stoughton: Berlin – Munich, no date), 287.

³¹⁵ “Root” is found in connection to the Remnant in 2 Kgs 19:30 || Isa 37:31; cf. Isa 11:1, 10; 27:6.

³¹⁶ CLAUS WESTERMANN, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 20, says that the language of the poems simultaneously reveals and conceals the Servant. The tradition saw the Servant as a leper; see Lev 13:45-46. This tradition was very important for St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

³¹⁷ In Isa 53:5, our “crimes” and “iniquities” are mentioned. This last word in Hebrew (*’awon*) means something that deforms. Might this explain the “disfigurement” (*mishḥat*) of the Servant in 52:14? 1QIsa^a seems to utilize the grammatical problem represented by the noun *mishḥat* (“disfigurement,” instead of the more appropriate adjective “disfigured”) to render the text “I so anointed (*mashaḥti*) your appearance more than a man;” see WILLIAM H. BROWNLEE, “The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls I.,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 132 (Dec. 1953), 10-11. One should also note that to “bear” sin (Isa 53:4, 12, Hebrew verb *nasa*, “to lift,” as in 52:13), at times means to “assume” sin (Lev 19:8), and is related to expiation in Lev 10:17, so that it can be translated “forgive,” as in Mic 7:18; Job 7:21; see MARGARET BARKER, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing,” *A Scottish Journal of Theology* 49 (1996), 1-20.

³¹⁸ The biblical concept of divine discipline or correction (in Hebrew *musar*, from the verb *yasar*) is important; cf. Heb 13:5-7. The verb is found in Lev 26:23, the noun in Prov 3:11; 6:23; 13:24 (the famous verse on corporal punishment, “Spare the rod and spoil the child”), and frequently in Prov. Isa 53:5 literally reads, “The *musar* (“discipline”) of our *shalom* (“well-being”) [fell] upon him.” The very beautiful Ps 16:7 literally says, “Even at night he corrects me in my kidneys” (= my inmost being).

³¹⁹ “Stripes” are the blows given by a rod or whip, that is, blows which cut the skin, or wounds. Matt 8:17 translates Isa 53:4 as “He *took away* (this is the meaning of *élaben* here; see Matt 5:40; 15:26) our infirmities,” in the context of Jesus’ healings.

“lowered or humbled” (the verb from which comes *‘anawim*),³²⁰ without opening his mouth, like a lamb or a ewe before those who are going to kill it (cf. Jer 11:19).³²¹ The Servant was “snatched” by force and without right (*mishpat*) from the land of the living, “for the crimes of my people,” and buried among the wicked. It was the “good-pleasure” (a different word than in 42:1) of Yhwh to crush him, but by offering himself as a “sin-offering” (*asham*, one of the sacrifices that were offered in order to expiate sin, e.g., Lev 7:5; 14:21)³²² Yhwh’s “good-pleasure” will be fulfilled, and the Servant will have his reward.³²³ The Servant will justify many (will cause a multitude to be just, like Abraham in Gen 15:6).³²⁴ It is said that the Servant “poured out his soul (*nephesh*) unto death,”³²⁵ and was counted among the criminals, carrying the sin of many and interceding for “criminals.”³²⁶ And thus we come to the end of Second Isaiah. It is not difficult to see why the New Testament authors, and very probably Jesus himself, understood his destiny and what befell him in terms of the Servant of Yhwh.³²⁷

Isaiah 34-35. These chapters are in the style and line of thought of Second Isaiah.³²⁸ Isa 34, an oracle against the nations and Edom (which had become Judah’s archenemy after the Babylonian defeat; see Ps 137:7), has apocalyptic traits which we will also see in Third Isaiah and after (cf. the sword drunken [with wine/blood] of Yhwh after the great massacre in Isa 34:5-7 with 63:1-6; both passages mention Bozrah, Edom’s capital). The eternal fire of 34:9-10 is like that in 66:24. Isa 35 “belongs thematically and

³²⁰ Jesus is described in Matt 11:29 as *praús* and *tapeinós*, two Greek adjectives which frequently translate the Hebrew *‘anaw*, “humble, lowly.” See Num 12:3; Zech 9:9 (Hebrew *‘anaw* or *‘ani*, Greek *praús*); Ps 25 (LXX 24):9; 37 (LXX 36):11 (*‘anawim*, *praéis*, plural forms); Zeph 2:3 (*‘anawim*, *tapeinoi*); Isa 14:2 (*‘aniyei*, *tapeinoi*).

³²¹ Jesus astonishes Pilate with his silence, Mark 15:5.

³²² The LXX translates *perí hamartías*, the same expression as in Rom 8:3, which should be understood in this cultic sense.

³²³ Regarding the “light” (in some versions) and being “satisfied,” in 53:11, G.R. Driver, cited in my *tesina*, “Salvific *Kenosis*,” 9-11, says they go together (cf. Jer 31:14; Lam 3:15), so that one should translate “he shall be flooded with light.” Could this be what John 12:41 means?

³²⁴ The Hebrew word *rabbim*, “many” (“great” in 53:12) is found five times in this poem, thus constituting something of a *shibboleth*, a motto based on a word that is insignificant by itself, but which attains great importance for the “in-group” or sect (*shibboleth* comes from Judg 12:5-6). This word *rabbim* will be taken up in Dan 11:33-34; 12:2-3, 10 (“many, the multitude”) in the context of the *maskilim*, and that is how Mark 10:45; 14:24 will use it. The Qumranites also adopted it.

³²⁵ The verb here translated as “poured out” is quite the equivalent of the “emptied” of Phil 2:7. *Nephesh*, “soul, life,” can also be translated here as “blood,” according to WESTERMANN, *Isaiah 40-66*, 268.

³²⁶ “Crimes” has the sense of deliberate offences, quite blameworthy transgressions, such as those which can only be forgiven (if that) on Yom Kippur, Lev 16:16; cf. Num 15:30.

³²⁷ It is the basis of statements such as Luke 24:25-27; Acts 3:18.

³²⁸ Cf. WILLIAM H. IRWIN, “Isaiah 1-39,” *NJBC*, 248.

linguistically with the poems of Second Isaiah. Suffice it to note the theme of Zion restored, Israel as blind and deaf, the new miracles in the wilderness, and the *via sacra* over which the exiles are to return (35:8-10; cf. 40:3-5).³²⁹ Note that the salvation of the Chosen People, seen realistically, has as the other side of the coin vengeance over its oppressive enemies, 35:4. The prophecy about the blind, deaf, lame and mute in 35:5-6 came to be seen as messianic, “works of the Messiah” who would thus reveal himself by performing them (see Matt 11:2-6), along with encouragement to the downcast, 35:3-4 (cf. Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2). Note also that 35:10 is the same as 51:11.

We have come to the end of the Babylonian exile. In 538, the Persian king Cyrus II (the Great) issued his decree (Ezra 1:1-4) allowing the Jews—for this is how we must refer to them now—to return to their Land.³³⁰ This is the new exodus that Second Isaiah had announced a bit before, as we have seen. We shall see how not everything will be as rosy for the returnees, for they shall be divided.

Haggai

“For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts.” Hag 2:6-7 (NRSV).³³¹

*Politico-social situation.*³³² Almost two decades have gone by since the initial return of the exiles. In 522, the son of Cyrus, Cambises II, who succeeded him on the throne, died without leaving behind a son, and the Persian empire was in turmoil. There were liberation movements among the vassal states, including Judah, but we have little information about this.³³³ There was a power struggle which lasted two years, until Darius I killed the impostor Bardiya (Pseudo-Smerdis), who claimed to be Cyrus’ son;

³²⁹ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 183.

³³⁰ We also know about this from the “Cyrus cylinder,” discovered in 1879 in Ecbatana, the ancient capital of Media (modern Iran).

³³¹ Note that in this period, in which Judah is weak and has no army, Yhwh is often called with the ancient appellative Yhwh *tsebaot*, “of the armies,” traditionally, “of hosts.” “Host” here is from the Latin *hostis*, “stranger, enemy,” cf. Spanish *huestes*, English hostile. “Host” as in the Eucharist is from the Latin *hospes*, from *hostis* as above, but now meaning “guest,” as in hospitable; cf. Spanish *huesped*.

³³² For more information, see EDWIN M. YAMAUCHI, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1990, 1996).

³³³ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 203.

Darius became king. It is during this turbulent period that we should place Zerubbabel,³³⁴ a Davidite (descendant of David) who had been appointed governor by the Persians, Hag 1:1; Joshua was the high priest, 1:12.³³⁵ Many suppose that Zerubbabel represented a threat to the Persians;³³⁶ the rebuilding of the Temple is linked to Jewish independence under a Davidic king. We should thus read the strong words in Hag 2:20-23: the “signet ring” (*hotam*) is a rereading of Jer 22:24, where Yhwh says that even though “Coniah” (Jehoiakim, Zerubbabel’s grandfather) were as a *hotam* on Yhwh’s right hand, Yhwh would tear him off. Now, in these latter times, Haggai—an official government and clerical prophet— announces the reversal of this previous state: Zerubbabel will be the new king of the (political) liberation.³³⁷

But evidently he was not successful. Zerubbabel mysteriously disappears from the scene, replaced by the high priest Joshua, as we see in Zech 6:9-14, where it appears that the problematic mention of Zerubbabel has been eliminated (“Sprout,” *NRSV* “Branch,” as we saw with Jer 23:5, is a messianic title; see footnotes 214 and 218 above) from the original text. In his place is put the high priest, Joshua, with a crown! He has had to be rehabilitated from some wrongdoing, probably idolatry, Zech 3:1-7.³³⁸ But Haggai, who exercised his ministry earlier, still held these political hopes for Zerubbabel.

The solution adopted by the Persian empire with regard to Judah can be known by the letter of Artaxerxes (probably the First) less than a century later, Ezra 7:11-26.³³⁹ The reformers, the Zadokite priest and scribe Ezra, and Nehemiah the governor, were high-ranking personages in Babylon (Nehemiah was a high official in Artaxerxes’ court, Neh

³³⁴ The name means “son of (= born in) Babylon” (literally, *Zer-Babili* = “seed of Babylon); BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 154.

³³⁵ It is not at all clear that we should identify Zerubbabel with Sheshbazzar, who ‘put the foundation’ of the second Temple, Ezra 5:14-16. This “foundation,” in 536, was ineffective to rebuild the Temple; see the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Ezra 5:2 (a). The true date for the beginning of the construction of the second Temple is 520; the work was finished in 515, Ezra 6:14-16, but by then Zerubbabel is nowhere to be found.

³³⁶ NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 159; BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 154, 199-203.

³³⁷ On the socio-political situation of this period and the tendency toward messianic movements, see BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 214-215.

³³⁸ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 207. The “dyarchy” (cf. “monarchy”), government by two persons (respectively holding the civil and religious powers), is still apparent in the two messiahs (anointed ones, “sons of oil”) of Zech 4:1-14. We also find the removal of dirty clothes and the putting on of clean ones as a sign of forgiveness and rehabilitation in the parable of the “prodigal son,” Luke 15:22.

³³⁹ The dates of Ezra and Nehemiah are quite debated: whether it is Artaxerxes I (*ca.* 445) or II (*ca.* 398). According to HANSON, *The People Called*, 293, the letter of Artaxerxes, in Aramaic, has been reworked from the perspective of the Chronicler (the author of Chronicles who had a lot to do with, if he is not the same author of, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah).

2:1). They go to Jerusalem with a great entourage and all the official powers to establish order in the divided community. Ezra and his priest-colleagues are given substantial monetary subsidies and tax-exempt status.³⁴⁰ They can enforce the *torah* of their God strictly (this is our Pentateuch as the constitutional document). Hanson states:

The significance of this development [the Torah as constitution, administered by the clergy] can scarcely be overstressed, for it meant that in the official judgment of the world power of that day, the priestly version of Yahwistic faith contained in the Torah of Moses was the *religio licita* [the official, sanctioned religion] in the land. For the Persians, this meant that a basis had been established for the restoration of order in a land that, hitherto torn by rival factions, had proven to be a buffer of dubious dependability between the Persian empire and its rival to the south, Egypt. For Jewish religion itself, it means that tremendous legal clout had been added to the Zadokite cause: the Persian empire stood unequivocally on the side of its claim that acceptance of the Torah of Moses, as interpreted and enforced by the Zadokite priestly leadership, constituted citizenship in the true community of Israel.³⁴¹

From the moment that the Persian authority eliminates the messianic pretender Zerubbabel and supports the moderate project of the Zadokites, we will see Judaism divided between those who are allied to the government and its principal seat of power, the Temple—a narrow-minded group with regard to those who are not of the “holy race” (Ezra 9:2), and others who are more open and “universalistic.” But let us not get too far ahead of ourselves: let us now take a look at a prophet who follows the nationalist and priestly tradition of Ezekiel, Haggai.³⁴²

Haggai’s message: rebuild the Temple! Times change, and so does the message of the prophets. Micah and Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of the Temple, because it gave a false sense of security to the Jerusalemites. Now comes Haggai with the opposite message: the reason that the people have suffered such poor harvests and eat and dress so badly is that they have not taken an interest in rebuilding the Temple all these years since the return, Hag 1:2-11.³⁴³ The leaders are Zerubbabel and Joshua, representing at the time the civil and religious powers, 1:2, 12; 2:2. It is Zerubbabel’s role

³⁴⁰ See HANSON, *The People Called*, 293, who we follow here.

³⁴¹ HANSON, *The People Called*, 293.

³⁴² The name itself means “festive,” in the sense of *hag*, the pilgrimage feasts (Passover, etc.).

³⁴³ Economic hardship, scarcity and discouragement will characterize the Second Temple period, 515 B.C.E.-70 C.E. BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 277, endnote 30, says that “The miserable social and economic conditions in Judah are reflected in Hag. 1:6, 8-11; 2:16-17; Zech. 8:10; Isa. 58:3-4; 59:6, 9-15; Joel 1—2; Neh. 5:1-5.”

to rebuild the House, 1:14, about which it is promised that it will be more glorious than the first, 2:3-9. They have just to put the foundation (which to the older people seems to be quite meager compared to how they remembered that of the first Temple) and Yhwh will shake everything (“the heavens and the earth”) up, everything will change.³⁴⁴ This is the despair of the person who can no longer stand the state of things, an outlook which will issue in full-blown apocalyptic not much later. Yhwh is the Lord of all, everything is in his hands: the wealth of the nations will come to Jerusalem to adorn God’s temple—at least this is what this cultic prophet hopes (Haggai is linked to the Temple). Hag 2:10-14, according to the commentators, reflects the rejection of the collaboration of “impure” people (perhaps the Samaritans, or more generally, those who remained on the Land during the exile; see Ezra 4:1-5).³⁴⁵ But before laying down “a stone upon a stone” to build the Temple,³⁴⁶ Yhwh will give his blessing, Hag 2:15-19.³⁴⁷ Of course, these anxious expectations are not fulfilled, and disillusion comes, what Blenkinsopp and others call “cognitive dissonance,” a disquieting breach between what is believed and what reality shows to be the case.³⁴⁸ But the solution that is adopted is not the abandonment of the beliefs, but their reformulation and the postponement of the time in which they are to be fulfilled. Biblical rereading has an essential role in this.

Zechariah 1-8

“Then the angel of the Lord said, “O Lord of hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?” Zech 1:12 (NRSV).

Introduction. In the book of Zech we distinguish the first part, Zech 1-8, from the rest, which is later, and which we call, as with the Book of Isaiah, Deutero- and Trito-Zechariah. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and, like him, was a prophet

³⁴⁴ This is what is known as *peripéteia*, the sudden change of fortune of the heroes in the Greek tragedies, as Blenkinsopp states, *A History of Prophecy*, 202.

³⁴⁵ Cf. NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 158. There begins the hatred between Jews and Samaritans; see 2 Kgs 17:24-41; Sir 50:26; John 4:9; Luke 9:51-56.

³⁴⁶ Jesus will use a very similar expression when he predicts and describes the (eschatological) destruction of this Second Temple (as grandiosely rebuilt by Herod the Great), Mark 13:2.

³⁴⁷ In 2:6, the waiting period is said to be “a very little while.”

³⁴⁸ Blenkinsopp discussed this in his course on Isaiah 56-66 given at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Spring of 1998.

connected with the cult and the Jewish government. We can date him rather precisely to 520, a bit after Haggai.³⁴⁹ See the references to this first part of Zech in what was said above regarding Haggai (pages 57-59).

This section of Zech is very interesting as an informative reflection of the situation and mental state of the returnees, and also of the Dtr work on the edition of the “(Later) Prophets.”³⁵⁰ Actually, this part of the book is “included” (enclosed), that is, sectioned-off by *inclusiones*, by two passages clearly Dtr in tone, 1:1-6 and 7:1-14 (Zech 8 already marks another step toward eschatology, which makes for a very good transition to Dt- and Tr-Zech). Despite all the conversion and salvation promised during the exile, the precarious and dire situation of the returnees makes leaders of the people such as Zechariah think that Yhwh is still “irritated,” and that there is still more “turning” to Yhwh that is necessary so that Yhwh may also “turn” to them, 1:2-3. Note the typical Dtr reproaches in 1:4-6, and the idea of divine retribution according to one’s conduct. Zech 7 reflects the practice—which will be widespread in this Second Temple period—of periodic fasting (see also 8:19), seeking for Yhwh to change their difficult situation.³⁵¹

Zechariah’s visions. We come now to Zechariah’s visions, which are probably seven,³⁵² and which probably all took place in one night of February, 519, Zech 1:8 (he awakens in 4:1). We are now frankly in the ambit of apocalyptic (literature which treats of revelations), with visions and an interpreting angel (1:12; 2:2; 4:1; 5:2),³⁵³ typical apocalyptic elements. In these visions we have a good illustration of the biblical process of rereadings: earlier texts are adapted in an updating which seeks to give them a

³⁴⁹ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Zech 1:1 (a).

³⁵⁰ See footnote 27 above. In fact, Zech 1:4; 7:7, 12 speaks of the “earlier prophets.”

³⁵¹ “To fast” is related with “to weep,” Joel 2:12 (see the complaint in Mal 3:14), and with “afflicting oneself” (the *Jerusalem Bible* in Lev 16:29 translates “afflict” [verb *’anah*, whence *’anawim*, as we have seen, footnotes 154, 320] as “fast”). See the combination of fasting and “affliction/humbling oneself” in Isa 58:3, 5, in another context of complaints that it has no effect on or influence over Yhwh (see the expression in Zech 7:2, “to mollify [soften] or appease the face of Yhwh.”)

³⁵² See the observations made in BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 207, who thinks that Zech 3-4 should be considered as a continuous narrative which is the central piece of the seven—and not eight, as in the *Jerusalem Bible*—visions, “with marked correspondence between the first (1:7-17) and the seventh (6:1-8),” as is common in Hebrew composition. The “eighth” vision would be that of 3:1-7, addressed to Joshua, inserted before the central messianic vision, that of the two “sons of oil,” Zerubbabel and Joshua, Zech 4:14.

³⁵³ In Latin, *angelus interpres*. See Rev 5:2. The angel is a mediator between the divine and human worlds, and it has been said that this reflects those periods in which there is suffering from alienation, where a great gap is felt to exist between God and human beings.

fulfillment which they perhaps did not enjoy previously, and which thus makes them relevant to a new situation.

The first vision (1:7-17) is of four horsemen (an image also used in Rev 6:1-8). There is peace everywhere: why, if Haggai had predicted the convulsion of heaven and earth, and already the seventy years of exile predicted by Jeremiah have passed, is Yhwh not yet over his anger? The response is that Yhwh is irritated with the nations, but he will have compassion on Jerusalem, and his House shall be rebuilt. The cities of Judah will abound in goods, and Yhwh will console Jerusalem.

The second vision (2:1-4; *NRSV* 1:18-21) is of four horns (the horn is a symbol of power in the Bible) which caused Jerusalem to be dispersed, followed by the four blacksmiths (which, according to the *Jerusalem Bible*, are symbols of the angelic powers) who will defeat them. Let it be said here that there are many things in Zech and in the later books of the Hebrew Bible which are very difficult to understand.³⁵⁴

The third vision (2:5-9; *NRSV* 2:1-5) is of a man (an angel; see *Jerusalem Bible* note g to 2:8) with a measuring line.³⁵⁵ The population of Jerusalem will be so numerous that there are no walls that can contain it, wherefore Yhwh himself will be her wall of fire around her, and Yhwh himself her glory within her; cf. Isa 4:5; 60:1.

The fourth vision (Zech 3-4) is the central one, that is, it occupies the chief (or key) place.³⁵⁶ The text has been disturbed, and its order is difficult to determine.³⁵⁷ Zech 3:1-7 speaks of Joshua, the rehabilitated high priest, as we saw, but what follows in 3:8 speaks of “my servant Sprout (or Branch),” a messianic title which probably refers to Zerubbabel.³⁵⁸ The same must be said of 6:9-15: the crown is to be placed on Joshua’s head, but 6:12-13 is a reference to Zerubbabel.³⁵⁹ The text has been corrected (one or more times; cf. the *Jerusalem Bible* note m to 3:8) after the disappearance of the messianic pretender Zerubbabel and his substitution by the high priest as head of the

³⁵⁴ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 206; cf. Isa 54:16-17.

³⁵⁵ Other examples of men/angels are found in Gen 18:2, 16, 22, 33; 19:1, 15 (see *Jerusalem Bible* note d to 18:22); Luke 24:4, 23.

³⁵⁶ As happens with the fourth day in the P account of creation, when God creates the lights to separate day from night and as signals for the Jewish religious feasts (of great importance for P), and with Leviticus.

³⁵⁷ See the alteration of verses in the *Jerusalem Bible*, and what BLENKINSOPP says in *A History of Prophecy*, 207.

³⁵⁸ Cf. the *Jerusalem Bible* note m to 3:8, and page 58 and footnotes 218 and 352 above.

³⁵⁹ See 4:7-9 (it was thought that Zerubbabel would build the new Temple), and BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 207. The Hebrew text of 6:11 reads “crowns;” see the *Jerusalem Bible* notes.

community.³⁶⁰ This topic has been discussed above, on the section regarding Haggai's politico-social situation.

The fourth vision continues in Zech 4, where it stands out because the angel awakens the seer. The seven-element candlestick and Yhwh's seven eyes indicate God's total dominion over every world event.³⁶¹ "The Lord of all the earth" will rule through these two human representatives (respectively, the civil and religious leaders).³⁶²

The fifth vision (5:1-4) is of a flying scroll which measures the same as the "vestibule or porch" (*ulam*) of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kgs 6:3,³⁶³ indicating, according to Professor Blenkinsopp, that the document derives from the Temple.

In view of the connection between the temple and ownership of land, discussed earlier, it may be conjectured that the condemnation of theft and perjury had to do with illegal expropriation of real estate that had been going on during the captivity.³⁶⁴

In the sixth vision (5:5-11), the image of a woman in an *ephah*, a receptacle for measuring, represents guilt and iniquity, which are sealed with lead and taken to Babylon. Blenkinsopp supposes that this means purification from idolatry, especially "the addictive cult of the Canaanite goddess of fertility."³⁶⁵ Finally, the seventh vision (6:1-8), which features four horses like the first (and thus forms an *inclusio* with it), marks the end of the inert tranquility which so perturbed the seer and his people. There is now activity everywhere ("the four winds," 6:5): "when the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth" (NRSV), perhaps to rouse the exiles (and foreigners) to join with Israel.³⁶⁶ The thing is not at all clear, except that it indicates that Yhwh *tsebaot* is beginning to act (= save), that is, the last vision inverts the situation in the first vision. Moreover, despite the obscurity that envelops these visions (at least for us), we can posit

³⁶⁰ Zech 4:6 (4:6^b in the *Jerusalem Bible*) is to be read in this pacifistic sense.

³⁶¹ See AELRED CODY, "Zechariah," *NJBC*, 355.

³⁶² See *Jerusalem Bible* g note to 4:14.

³⁶³ See *Jerusalem Bible* note b to Zech 5:2, which translates the *ulam* as "vestibule" (lobby); its note to 1 Kgs 6:2 (a) translates it as "porch."

³⁶⁴ *A History of Prophecy*, 208. On page 198, Blenkinsopp asserts that "Title to real estate was also contingent on good standing in the cultic community . . ." As an example, see the penalty established in Ezra 10:8 for those who refused to dismiss their foreign wives and children: they forfeited all their property, which passed to the Temple, and were excommunicated. Recall also Ezek 11:11-17, and our discussion in footnote 240 above.

³⁶⁵ *A History of Prophecy*, 208, with references to Ezek 8:3; Jer 44:15-19.

³⁶⁶ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 208.

a concentric correlation among them: between the first and the seventh, the horses, firstly indicating calm, later activity; between the second and sixth, the pagan nations and idolatry, which are finished with; between the third and the fifth, the matter of the population of Jerusalem and the extension of her land, which will be restored to her rightful owners. In the middle, the fourth vision, which underlines Yhwh's dominion as it is exercised by his representative(s).

This first part of Zech ends with Zech 8, which has an eschatological perspective. Yhwh will dwell in Zion, and Jerusalem will have a new name, 8:3.³⁶⁷ People will live many years and the youth will joyfully play in the streets (plazas), 8:4-5.³⁶⁸ Zech 8:6-7 speaks of the Remnant and of "those days" (more probable translation than "these days"), in which Yhwh *tsebaot* will save his people, for nothing is impossible for Yhwh. It is a message of hope and encouragement still based on the reconstruction of the Temple, 8:9-12. A situation of "eschatological reversal" is predicted, 8:13-15, 18-19,³⁶⁹ and there is a vision which is inclusive of other nations, 8:20-23.

Isaiah 56-66 and the "Isaian Apocalypse"

"And Yhwh *tsebaot* will make for all peoples on this mountain a banquet of rich foods, a banquet of aged wines, foods rich in marrow, refined aged wines. And he will consume on this mountain the covering, the covering over all peoples, and the web that is weaved over all the nations. He will consume death forever, and my Lord Yhwh will wipe the tears of all the faces, and the reproach of my people he will remove from upon all the earth, because Yhwh has spoken. And it shall be said on that day, "Look, this is our God, we waited for him and he saved us; this is Yhwh, we waited for him, let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isa 25:6-9.

The sections treated here and their dates. We here treat of Isa 56-66, which in part is from the early postexilic period (*ca.* 525),³⁷⁰ and Isa 24-27, the so-called "Isaian apocalypse," which Blenkinsopp assigns to the 'eschatological reinterpretation of prophecy' (my phrasing).³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ The giving of new names is a characteristic of eschatology.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Isa 65:15-25.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Luke 6:20-21.

³⁷⁰ The Temple seems not to be built yet, Isa 60:13; 66:1.

³⁷¹ *A History of Prophecy*, 237. He thinks (216) that the beginning and the end of Third Isaiah, Isa 56:1-8; 66:18-23 may constitute bookends, added later in accordance with this well-known method of biblical composition and editing. "Comparisons with Zech. 14:16-21, which refers to people coming to Jerusalem

The “nucleus” of Isaiah 56-66. This third part of the book is composite in nature. Let us begin with what many consider to be the “nucleus” of Tr-Isa, Isa 60-62.³⁷² It shows no evidence of the conflict within the community which can be seen in other sections of Tr-Isa. Rather, everything has to do with the glorious restoration of Zion/Jerusalem.³⁷³ Yhwh will dwell in her midst, because of which she will be radiant and able to illuminate the other peoples, 60:1-3, 19-20; 62:1-2.³⁷⁴ All her sons and daughters shall return, and will bring the wealth of the nations.³⁷⁵ The Temple is spoken of favorably, and is greatly embellished. The role of foreigners is to do the “heavy lifting” as slaves, 60:10; 61:5. All kingdoms will be subjected to the people of God, whose doors shall be always opened in order to receive “the wealth of the nations brought by their kings,” 60:11. The ones who formerly humiliated Israel will now come to her bowed down, 60:14. New eschatological names will be given out, 60:14, 18; 61:6; 62:2-4, 12, and there shall be no violence on the Land, for everyone will be righteous, 60:18, 21. There will be a great eschatological reversal, 61:7.³⁷⁶ Yhwh will make an everlasting covenant with his people, whom everyone will recognize as the blessed seed (or “race”) of Yhwh, 61:9.³⁷⁷ God will wed Jerusalem in splendor, 61:10-12; 62:5 (as a *virgin*).

Isaiah 61:1-3. We know this passage from Jesus’ inaugural discourse in Luke 4:16-22; some consider it the “fifth song” of the Servant. It is noteworthy that it speaks of Yhwh’s anointing of the prophet by Yhwh’s Spirit, something unique in the Hebrew

to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and with Jonah, which pioneers a new understanding of prophecy, suggests the century between the administrations of Nehemiah and the conquests of Alexander.” That is, more or less between 450-330, which is rather late. As an example of even later dates in this book we have Isa 19:16-25, which Blenkinsopp (236-237) says takes us to the Hellenistic period (which begins in 333). See *Jerusalem Bible* note h to 19:16. As an extreme possibility, some connect 19:18-19 (reading “City of the Sun,” or “Sun City,” in Greek Heliopolis) with the temple built in Leontopolis (Egyptian province of Heliopolis) by the high priest Onias IV in 170 B.C.E.; see *The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Third Edition. New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (Michael D. Coogan, ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1005 (note to Isa 19:18).

³⁷² See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 217, who dates it to the end of the exile or to the first years after the return.

³⁷³ This is what is known in biblical studies as “Zion restoration theology.”

³⁷⁴ The idea of continual light is also found in Zech 14:7; Rev 21:23-25.

³⁷⁵ The Scottish economist Adam Smith (1723-1790) took the title of his famous book *The Wealth of Nations* from verses like Isa 60:5, 11; 61:6, and, especially, 66:12, according to Professor Blenkinsopp.

³⁷⁶ Recall the double penalty in Jer 16:18, paid by Judah in Isa 40:2; see page 34 and footnote 281 above. Now the cycle is complete with the double-recompense, 61:7. Cf. Mark 10:31 as a classic example in the New Testament of the eschatological reversal formula.

³⁷⁷ The expression “holy seed (or race)” is found in Ezra 9:2.

Bible.³⁷⁸ The *sending* (official mission) of the prophet is to “evangelize” (bring good news, a term typical of Dt-Isa) the *‘anawim*, “to bind the broken-hearted,”³⁷⁹ to announce the *deror* (of the Jubilee year, Lev 25:10, that is, total liberation from debts and slavery, and everyone’s return to home and family) to “captives” (from the verbal form which refers to the Babylonian Exile). Those who weep will be consoled, 61:2,³⁸⁰ and there shall be other eschatological reversals: “a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit,” 61:3 (*NRSV*). All this Yhwh will hasten to fulfill “in its time,” 60:22, and there will be “sentinel-reminders” (*mazkirim*) on Jerusalem’s walls lest Yhwh forget, 62:6-7.³⁸¹

Several passages from Isaiah 56-66. But the thing tarried, and the dejection (*anomie*) which characterizes the Second Temple period set in.³⁸² The difficult circumstances, and the non-fulfillment of optimistic prophecies such as those of Haggai, made the people think that God was far-off.

The prophet complains of the collapse of leadership, 56:10-12, of the bad lot of good people, 57:1-2, and of the spread of idolatry and syncretism, together with sexual perversions, 57:3-12. There will be salvation only for the humble who take refuge in Yhwh, 57:13-21.³⁸³ But to “humble” oneself outwardly is not enough, 58:1-5; one should share one’s bread with the hungry and welcome the homeless in one’s home, 58:6-7. Only thus will the promised light come and will Yhwh respond, 58:8-12. A “penitential psalm” follows, 59:1-20, which explains that Yhwh is neither unable to save nor deaf,³⁸⁴ but rather that he “has hidden his face” due to the sins of the people.³⁸⁵ We have another

³⁷⁸ It is not at all clear that Elisha was anointed in 1 Kgs 19:16; cf. the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 19:16 (b).

³⁷⁹ As a physician: cf. Ezek 34:16; Mark 2:17.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Matt 5:5.

³⁸¹ Cf. Gen 9:15-16; Num 10:10.

³⁸² The word *anomie*, which comes from the Greek *ánomos*, *anómía* = “without law, state of the absence of law,” was coined by the French (Jewish) sociologist Émile Durkheim to define the “social instability resulting from a breakdown of standards and values; also personal unrest, alienation, and uncertainty that comes from a lack of purpose or ideals;” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. Tenth Edition* (Merriam-Webster: Springfield, 1997), 47. We will clearly see this despondency in Mal. See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 210. *Anómía* appears in Matt 7:23; 24:12 associated with the eschatological cooling of love; the “man of *anómía*,” the “*Ánomos*” (traditionally, the “Antichrist”), will be revealed at the End, according to 2 Thess 2:3^b, 8.

³⁸³ Isa 57:15, “high and lofty, I dwell, etc.,” is like a rereading of 6:1, “seated on a high and lofty throne.”

³⁸⁴ Like Ba’al in 1 Kgs 18:26-27.

³⁸⁵ “Deaf” signifies the felt absence of God due to guilt, Mic 3:4, and is like abandonment by God, Deut 31:17-18; 32:20; Job 13:24 (see the promise in Ezek 39:29). It is frequent in the psalms: 13:1; 27:9; 30:7;

psalm in 63:7-64:11, this time canvassing the history of Israel. Because of the people's rebellion, and grieving his Holy Spirit, God became Israel's enemy, 63:10. Note the frequency of "Spirit" in this verse and in 63:11, 14, and God as Father or Mother in 63:8, 15,³⁸⁶ 16; 64:7.³⁸⁷ Note the suppliant tone with which God is implored in this time of anguish: "Would that you tore the heavens and came down!," 63:19; what is awaited is the definitive theophany.³⁸⁸ The psalmist acknowledges the people's sin, 64:4-6 [NRSV 64:5-7], but prays that God's anger not last too long, 64:8, 11 [NRSV 64:9, 12]. We have here a good snapshot of the psychological state of Israel in the Second Temple period.

Transition to apocalyptic. And with this mention of the awaited theophany we go on to the apocalyptic vision of Isa 63:1-6. God comes back from the great slaughter he has just performed in Edom (the enemy of Israel), "stooping in his might" (*The New English Bible*) —for he is wearing heavy body armor— and is drenched in blood. The image of the winepress, where grapes are trampled, is used for the divine wrath which culminates in the "final" judgment; see Joel 4:13 (NRSV 3:13); Rev 19:11-16. God alone waged the battle, which was against all peoples (symbolized by Edom).³⁸⁹

"Universalism" and conflict. It is now that we shall see the first and last portions of Third Isaiah. Isa 56 begins with an exhortation similar to Jesus' programmatic one in Mark 1:15: do good, for God's salvific visitation is near. What follows is understatedly called by Professor Blenkinsopp "a remarkably liberal statement of membership in the community."³⁹⁰ If they join themselves to Yhwh, keep the Sabbath and hold fast to his covenant, both foreigners and eunuchs can be members of the people of God. To eunuchs is promised a "monument" (*yad*) and an everlasting name better than the sons and

44:24; 69:17; 88:14; 102:2; 143:7; cf. 51:9. The great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber associated it with the feeling of Jews in regards to the Nazi Holocaust, in which God seemed not to protect them.

³⁸⁶ The heart" and "compassion" which have been withheld of the NRSV in Hebrew are the "entrails" and "womb."

³⁸⁷ Needless to say, God as Father, and the Holy Spirit, will figure prominently in the New Testament.

³⁸⁸ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 63:19.

³⁸⁹ Julia Ward Howe's famous 1861 hymn, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," is inspired in this passage. The first strophe goes: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; he hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword; his truth is marching on."

³⁹⁰ *A History of Prophecy*, 216. What Isa 56 declares is in disagreement with Deut 23:2-9; Ezek 44:7-8; Ezra 9:1-4 and Neh 9:2. In his *Biblicum* course on Isa 56-66 (Spring 1998), Blenkinsopp described it as "prophetic emendation of Torah."

daughters that they cannot have, which will not be *cut off*.³⁹¹ Foreigners are promised that they will be able to present sacrifices on Yhwh's altar, in his Temple, which shall be called "house of prayer for all peoples."³⁹² Isa 56:8, in a somewhat veiled manner, promises to add "others" to the ones already gathered to Israel.³⁹³

We now come to the final part of Third Isaiah, Isa 65-66.³⁹⁴ Isa 65:1-7 is a diatribe against idolaters or syncretists, who practise such occult rites as "incubation" in gardens.³⁹⁵ On the other hand, it is said that Yhwh allowed himself to be found by those who did not seek him, cited by Paul in Rom 10:20-21,³⁹⁶ while Israel (supposedly) irritated the God who stretched forth his hands to them all day, Isa 65:1-3.³⁹⁷

We can say that a unifying theme of Isa 65:8-66:17 is that of the vindication of the "Servants," a group linked to the prophet which is in continuity with Second Isaiah and his group, all of whom are "universalists" and persecuted.³⁹⁸ It is interesting to see the names that these individuals are given: in 65:9, "my chosen ones and my servants" (it is Yhwh who is speaking). It is easy to recognize the link with the servant of Isa 42:1, except that a group is being spoken of now. God will bless them, and they will be the reason that not everyone will be destroyed, 65:8.³⁹⁹ In 65:11-14, there is a strong contrast between idolaters or syncretists, and the Servants, expressed as beatitudes/curses, as in Luke 6:20-26. It will go so badly for the adversaries of the Servants that their name will

³⁹¹ *Yad* in Hebrew means "hand, monument, penis." You see the pun regarding 'eunuchs and cut off'. In Israel, the memorial to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust is called *Yad Vashem*, "monument and name."

³⁹² Jesus quoted these words in his action (traditionally called the "cleansing") in the Temple, Mark 11:15-17. Lohmeyer says that "house of prayer" is the eschatological name for the Temple; on all this see CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 143-144.

³⁹³ On who these "others" may be, see CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 158-159.

³⁹⁴ These two chapters are described by the *Jerusalem Bible* note as an apocalypse (or "apocalyptic collection").

³⁹⁵ "Incubation" is a nocturnal ritual in which a revelation from some spiritual being is sought, at times with sexual aspects (the *incubus* is the spirit who lays with one while he or she sleeps; it comes from the Latin *incubare*, "to lie in or upon, to pass the night in a temple, to hatch, brood over [warm the eggs];" S.A. HANDFORD – MARY HERBERG, *Langenscheidt Shorter Latin Dictionary* (McGraw-Hill: Berlin – Munich, 1955, 1966), 164. See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Isa 65:4. The reading of the Qumran scroll, 1QIsa^a, in Isa 65:5, which we will not translate here, was described by Professor Blenkinsopp in private conversation as "obscene;" it is worse than what is said in 57:8.

³⁹⁶ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Rom 10:21.

³⁹⁷ Regrettably, the Church placed an inscription of these verses in the facade of the Church of San Gregorio a Quattro Capi at the entrance of the Jewish ghetto in Rome, in front of the synagogue, which constituted, according to Blenkinsopp, a dishonest and insulting use of Isaiah.

³⁹⁸ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 219-220.

³⁹⁹ The marginal note here in the *Jerusalem Bible* refers to 4:3, where some holy survivors of Jerusalem are spoken of.

serve as a point of comparison in curses (the opposite of Abraham's name in Gen 12:3^b), while the Servants will enjoy a new (eschatological) name, 65:15, related to the new heavens and the new earth which Yhwh is going to create, and which will be a paradise, 65:17-25.⁴⁰⁰ Note the reversal, or fulfillment, in 65:24 of the situation in 58:3, 9; cf. 64:11; 66:4.

We come to the final chapter. The theme of the heavens and the earth reappears, in a polemic against the Temple building project, linked to the priestly group.⁴⁰¹ The majestic Lord Yhwh of the Isaian tradition (6:1; 57:15) is, on the contrary, with the poor and humble, 66:1-2;⁴⁰² moreover, those who sacrifice in the Temple also murder and practise idolatry, 66:3. Who is right will be known in the End. The word of Yhwh is addressed to the "tremblers" (*haredim*, a term still used in ultradevout Jewish circles, something like the "Shakers" and "Quakers"), another name for the Servants.⁴⁰³ These are hated and excommunicated by their brethren on account of Yhwh's Name; their brethren also mock the eschatological hope of the Servants, but it is they who in the End will be put to shame, 66:5.⁴⁰⁴

What follows in Isa 66:6-17 seems to be another bit of Zion restoration theology. It is the *voice* (Word) of Yhwh, coming out of the Temple, doing justice on earth and comforting Jerusalem (cf. 40:1).⁴⁰⁵ Yhwh's coming is announced, full of fire (mentioned three times, as in Matt 3:10-12; Luke 3:9, 16-17). The unclean idolaters shall be punished. The *Jerusalem Bible* calls Isa 66:18-24 "an eschatological discourse." Yhwh

⁴⁰⁰ This passage "recycles" Isa 11:9, that is, it rereads it, incorporating it here in a more grandiose or complete eschatological vision.

⁴⁰¹ This is the well-known thesis in PAUL D. HANSON, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic. The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology. Revised Edition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 1979); see also *The People Called*, 253-277. According to this view, the visionary and "universalistic" group (open and inclusive) who followed Second Isaiah, was in conflict with, and persecuted by, the Zadokite group, closed-minded and exclusivistic, who was in charge of the Temple, and who maintained order as required by the Persian empire, from whom they obtained significant privileges, 293). Blenkinsopp cautiously insists that the Isaian group is not against the Temple as such, at least as shown by Isa 66:6, where this group's vindication comes from a declaration that issues from the Temple. See his observations in *A History of Prophecy*, 213-214.

⁴⁰² Cf. Acts 7:44-50.

⁴⁰³ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 220; another name is "mourners," 57:18; 61:2; 66:10.

⁴⁰⁴ This shame is the typical term for the defeat of the wicked in the Bible, but there is a word that only appears twice which denotes supershame, *deraon* (NRSV "abhorrence," in Isa 66:24, "contempt," in Dan 12:2, which recycles it).

⁴⁰⁵ The Word of God creates, Gen 1, and his voice is very powerful, Ps 29. It is fertile and efficacious, Isa 55:10-11, and upholds human beings, Deut 8:3; cf. John 1; 18:6.

will gather all the nations and tongues, who will see his Glory (they will know him). They shall be given a *sign* (cf. the messianic “flag or standard” for the Gentiles in 11:12), perhaps for protection, as in Gen 4:15; Ezek 9:6; Rev 7:3, and some escapees (*peleitim*) will be *sent* (commissioned as prophets) in order to make Yhwh known to the nations.⁴⁰⁶ We here have full-blown universalism. We should skip over Isa 66:20 as being the correction of a “nervous editor,” as Blenkinsopp described it, who wanted to soften this universalism by trying to make the Gentiles’ role that of mere transporters, for what follows could not be more incredible: Yhwh will take from among the Gentiles priests and Levites! This certainly bespeaks a new world (the new heavens and the new earth which will remain),⁴⁰⁷ related to the Servants, 66:22 (as in 66:14), where *everyone* will worship Yhwh,⁴⁰⁸ while Yhwh’s enemies shall shamefully lie in eternal fire, 66:23-24.⁴⁰⁹

*The “Isaian Apocalypse,” Isa 24-27.*⁴¹⁰ We shall only see it in broad strokes. Firstly, the devastating judgment of Yhwh, 24:1-16^a, which ends with the praise of the ends of the earth. Isa 24:16^b-23 ends with the announcement of the reign of Yhwh *tsebaot*. A short hymn, 25:1-5, follows, and then a most important passage, that of the “eschatological banquet” (which is in the background to Jesus’ meals and the Eucharist), 25:6-8, which we translated above. Written in prose, it announces a delicious banquet for

⁴⁰⁶ We here take the opportunity to say something about a marvellous late passage (see footnote 371 above), Isa 19:16-25. It says that there will be an altar and a stele in the midst of the land of Egypt which will be a *sign* for Yhwh *tsebaot*, such that when the Egyptians call upon Yhwh, Yhwh will send them a savior. There will be mutual knowledge (intimate relationship) between Yhwh and Egypt, who will worship him *on that (eschatological) day*, for Egypt will turn (verb *shuv*) to Yhwh. There shall be a highway (*mesillah*, same word as in Isa 40:3 and 62:10, here together with “flag or standard,” as in 11:12), meaning friendship, between Assyria and Egypt (two great historical enemies of Israel), and Israel will take its place as people of God alongside these other two, who will also be people of God, in order to be a blessing in the midst of the earth.” My people” (Egypt) and “work of my hands” (Assyria) are expressions which are said only of Israel (40:1, etc.; 29:23; 45:11; 60:21; 64:7). Only Israel is Yhwh’s “(personal) property” (*nahala*), but this word (see, e.g., Deut 4:20) is less particularistic than *segullah*, the king’s “personal treasure,” Deut 7:6.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Rev 21:1.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Mal 1:11, which BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 210, interprets as referring to the Yhwh cult in the Diaspora, which attracted many proselytes; see Zeph 3:9; Zech 14:16.

⁴⁰⁹ See footnote 404 above. In the synagogue, the order of these verses is reversed so as not to end on such a negative note.

⁴¹⁰ It is so-called since Bernhard Duhm (1892), who was the first to divide the Book of Isaiah into three sections so widely accepted now; see BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 98, 99. On 237, Blenkinsopp describes Isa 24-27 as “a compendium of mostly eschatological *logia* [sayings].” With respect to the date(s), he says (238) that “While the historical context remains obscure, the reference to Leviathan and Tannin [NRSV “the dragon”] at the beginning (27:1) and to Assyria and Egypt at the end (27:12-13) may contain a veiled allusion to the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires [after 319 B.C.E.], respectively, while the city of foolish people (27:10-11; cf. Sir. 50:26) may at this point allude to the fate of Samaria after the Macedonian conquest” [by Alexander the Great in 333].

all peoples, from whom shall be removed the veil of ignorance (lack of relationship with God and his people) which covered them until that moment, which we can call “apocalyptic,” having to do with an “unveiling.” Death will be no more,⁴¹¹ and sadness will be over (cf. Rev 21:4), as will be the “reproach” of Israel.⁴¹² Then those who waited for their God’s salvation will indeed rejoice, for they shall see it fulfilled.

Another hymn follows, 26:1-6, and then something which begins as a sapiential psalm, but becomes a petition and confession of trust, 26:7-15.⁴¹³ In 26:16-19, we have a small piece which lends itself to a messianic and eschatological interpretation: the mention of the woman in birth pangs will be an important image for the suffering which must precede the coming of the Messiah in Judaism (cf. 1 Thess 5:1-3; John 16:21; Rev 12:1-5). The eschatological tone of the passage is quite stronger in the LXX; 28:18 says that “we conceived in the womb and had birth pangs and gave birth; the Spirit of your salvation we produced upon the earth.”⁴¹⁴ According to Blenkinsopp, the reference in 26:19 is to the End-Time resurrection, and not a metaphor as is usually supposed (this passage may be sufficiently late for this).⁴¹⁵ In 27:1, Yhwh’s victory is described in mythic terms: from the Ugaritic poems, we learn that Leviathan and the Sea Dragon are marine monsters conquered by Ba’al in the beginning of creation; Yhwh’s final victory evokes, or is a return to, that primordial victory, that is to say, it is seen *eschatologically* (the End corresponds to the Beginning). The situation of the unfaithful vineyard of 5:1-7 is then reversed, in 27:2-5. In the End, Jacob (Israel) will be forgiven and will flourish; there shall then be the eschatological ingathering of the dispersed children of Israel (cf. Matt 10:6; 15:24) and a *shofar* (= horn, trumpet) will sound, here with an eschatological flavor (see the expression in Joel 2:1 in reference to the day of Yhwh), and Yhwh will be worshipped in the holy mountain (which is) in Jerusalem.

⁴¹¹ Cf. 1 Cor 15:26.

⁴¹² This is the term used for its humiliation by foreigners in Josh 5:9; 1 Sam 11:2; 17:26, etc.

⁴¹³ The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* note to 26:7-27:1, page 1012, calls it “An apocalyptic psalm with attached commentary.”

⁴¹⁴ The punctuation can be changed: “we gave birth (to the) Spirit of your salvation.” I capitalized “Spirit.”

⁴¹⁵ Clear reference to the resurrection in Dan 12:2 dates to 165 B.C.E. Cf. the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* note to Isa 26:19, page 1013 (Prof. Blenkinsopp is the contributor to the Book of Isaiah for the *NOAB* 3rd ed.

Jonah

“And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?” Jonah 4:11 (last verse).

We need not linger too much on this delightful booklet, which it is better to read than to describe.⁴¹⁶ Blenkinsopp tells us that it concerns the problem of unfulfilled prophecy and the frustration it occasioned and, therefore, also the problem of theodicy, justifying God’s conduct and sovereign freedom: since God is sovereignly free, the possibility of salvation always exists.⁴¹⁷ Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, is sent to preach to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire who so oppressed Israel. Jonah, instead, boarded a ship sailing in the opposite direction, “far from Yhwh.” But Yhwh is in charge of all things. He sends a great wind which creates a storm, so that the sailors cry out to their gods, while the prophet is sound asleep!⁴¹⁸ It is the captain of the sailors who admonishes the prophet.⁴¹⁹ The prophet is discovered to be reason for the storm, and after calling upon Yhwh and acknowledging divine freedom, the sailors throw Jonah into the sea, which stopped its fury. Then begins a series of divine “dispositions.” First, the great fish, who swallows Jonah, who sings a composite psalm (see the marginal references in the *Jerusalem Bible*). Then, at Yhwh’s command, the fish spews out Jonah to the land. Yhwh calls Jonah a second time, and he now goes and makes the call to conversion.⁴²⁰ The Ninevites believed and did penance, from the king on down (he commanded everyone to fast, pray and repent, including the animals!). And God heard their prayer and forgave them.

⁴¹⁶ Dating it is difficult. BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 243-244, says that “If we must find a target for the writer’s criticism, it would not be Ezra and Nehemiah but the kind of prophetic threat represented by the author of the so-called Isaian apocalypse [against an unnamed city whose inhabitants are without discernment],” Isa 27:11. See the dates given in footnote 410 above. The prophet is not Jonah, son of Amittay, of 2 Kgs 14:25 (eighth century), although he has been given the same name.

⁴¹⁷ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 245.

⁴¹⁸ The same verbal root as the prophets in Isa 29:10.

⁴¹⁹ The *Jerusalem Bible* (1966), in its introduction to Jonah, 1141, says that “All the characters of this story are likeable, the pagan sailors, the king, the populace, even the animals of Nineveh, all except the only Israelite on stage—and he is a prophet!” This is another example of Jewish openness of mind and maturity, capable of acute self-criticism. We have other examples in Ezek (see page 42 above).

⁴²⁰ Another example of vocation renewed is found in Jer 15:19; after his “burn out” in 1 Kgs 19, Elijah’s prophetic call will only be renewed in his eschatological role, Mal 3:23 [*NRSV* 4:5]; Sir 48:10; see CHÁVEZ, “La huída de Elías,” 13-14, or the English version “Elijah’s Flight to Horeb.”

But this was not at all to Jonah's liking: he became so irritated he wanted to die.⁴²¹ He sits in the shade, and Yhwh disposes a plant which covers him, making Jonah happy, only to become irritated again when God disposes a worm which kills the plant. Jonah has a conversation with God which shows him to be childish and immature, and Yhwh shows him how absurd the comparison is between Jonah's petty worries and divine concern for a great city, in which many people live "who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals."⁴²² Jonah is cited in the New Testament as an example of penance which will be invoked in the final judgment against non-believers, Luke 11:29-32, and in Matt 12:38-41, in this sense and also as a type of resurrection on the third day; cf. Matt 16:1-4.

Obadiah

"For near is the Day of Yhwh upon all the nations . . . And saviors will go up to Mount Zion, to judge the mountain of Esau. And kingship shall be Yhwh's!
Obad 15^a, 21.

This book, the shortest in the Old Testament, is about the vision of someone who is called "servant of Yhwh."⁴²³ It supposes the fall of Jerusalem in 587, when Edom mocked her and allied itself with the Babylonians, Obad 9-14,⁴²⁴ but it must be before 312, when Edom was destroyed by the Nabateans. Let us go over the history.⁴²⁵ Edom descends from Esau, the brother whose right of first-born Jacob usurped, Gen 25:21-34;⁴²⁶ 27:1-45; 36:1. Edom does not allow Israel to take a shortcut through its territory in the exodus, Num 20:14-21. Edom came under Israelite dominion during the period of the monarchy until the Syro-Ephraimite War (734), when it got its independence, only to fall under Assyrian, and then Babylonian, domination; Babylon demanded fealty. During the exile, many Edomites immigrated into the Land of Israel, which was underpopulated, especially the area around Hebron, which would later be called Idumea. During the

⁴²¹ There may here be a caricature of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:4.

⁴²² The meaning is that the Ninevites do not have good discernment, and are thus helpless.

⁴²³ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 150, thinks that we here have, as with "Malachi" = "my messenger/angel," an artificial name, since "servant" is a typical designation for prophets.

⁴²⁴ See Ps 137:7; Lam 4:21-22.

⁴²⁵ See footnote 258 above.

⁴²⁶ See the *Jerusalem Bible* notes to Gen 25:23 (f), 26 (g), 30 (h). So both peoples are linked by close blood ties.

Maccabean wars (*ca.* 165), the Jews forced the Idumeans to convert, and from them come the kings called Herod, which we know from the New Testament.⁴²⁷ The Edomites were renown for their intelligence and wisdom, Obad 8,⁴²⁸ and Job is from there.⁴²⁹

On “that day,” Obad 8, which designates the eschatological Day of Yhwh (Obad 15), Yhwh will destroy its wise ones and will call to account all nations (= will annul human power which is opposed to him; cf. 1 Cor 1:19-20; 3:19). It will be a day of vengeance against “Edom,” symbol of “unjust oppression.”⁴³⁰ Not one survivor will be left (Obad 18), but it is Yhwh’s people who will possess the Land, “the exile, this force of the sons of Israel,” Obad 20,⁴³¹ and will judge the wicked,⁴³² and kingship shall be Yhwh’s!, Obad 21.⁴³³

Joel

“And what will then happen is that I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your youths will see visions. And even upon male and female servants I will pour my Spirit in those days . . . And everyone who calls upon the name of Yhwh will escape.” Joel 3:1, 5^a [NRSV 2:28-29, 32^a]; cf. Acts 2:17-18, 21.

Blenkinsopp places this prophet in the Persian period, after 515 (when the construction of the second temple is finished).⁴³⁴ The walls of Jerusalem are already rebuilt, 2:7. Because of his ties to Amos (Amos 1:2; 9:13; Joel 3:16, 18), Joel precedes him in the Hebrew canon (but comes after Micah in the LXX).⁴³⁵ As happened with

⁴²⁷ On all this, see NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 180-181.

⁴²⁸ See the *Jerusalem Bible* notes to Job 2:11 (b) and Jer 49:7 (h).

⁴²⁹ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Job 1:1 (b).

⁴³⁰ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 150.

⁴³¹ The boundaries of the Land are very broad, even without determining what is meant by Sepharad, which will be the Hebrew name for Spain. It may be that *hel* (NRSV “Halal,” admittedly a conjecture for the Hebrew text reading “in this army,” as note b indicates) is *Halal*, where the exiles from the northern kingdom settled, 2 Kgs 17:6; 18:11. Cf. Jesus’ beatitude, Matt 5:4; Ps 37:11.

⁴³² This is an apostolic function in Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; a function of the “saints” in 1 Cor 6:2-3. The Qumran documents 1QpHab 5:4-5; 1QS 8:10 speak of the judgment of the nations and of the wicked ones of Israel.

⁴³³ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to Obad 21 (b).

⁴³⁴ *A History of Prophecy*, 224. The prophet “is greatly concerned with the impact of the disaster on the temple economy (1:9-10, 13, 16; 2:14).” In order to avoid economic disaster, the community must conduct liturgical celebrations in the Temple, in which this prophet has a leading role. In other words, he is a “cult prophet.”

⁴³⁵ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 74, states that “The juxtaposition of Joel with Amos may be due to the many themes that the two books have in common: a plague of locusts, drought represented as fire, ritual lamentation, the day of Yahweh, cosmic disturbances, the promise of miraculous fertility.”

Amos 9:11-15 and other verses, Joel has received additions, has been retouched and reinterpreted in an eschatological sense. Blenkinsopp thinks that a real plague of locusts led the prophet to proclaim penance and prayer, Joel 1-2 (Joel 2:12-18 is the first reading for Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the penitential period of Lent).⁴³⁶ The petitions were effective: Yhwh heard, 2:18, and nature changed favorably.⁴³⁷ But what interests us here is the final form of the text as we have it in our Bible, the book as it has been left to us by “a later hand [who] transformed the plague of locusts into a proleptic symbol of final judgment to take place on the Day of Yahweh.”⁴³⁸ Note that it is said that the day of Yhwh is near, 1:15; 2:21; 4:14. Note also the recycling of other prophetic passages, such as Isa 13:6 in Joel 1:15 and Zeph 1:15 in Joel 2:2; cf. Joel 2:11 with Mal 3:2; Joel 4:16 [NRSV 3:16] with Amos 1:2; 9:13.

The day of Yhwh has cosmic dimensions and effects, 2:10; 3:3-4; 4:15-16 [NRSV 3:15-16],⁴³⁹ and on it Yhwh will display all his might, 2:11 (the appellative *tsebaot*, armies, does not appear in Joel, although this verse does use military language). In the second part of the book, Joel 3-4 [NRSV 2:28-3:21],⁴⁴⁰ now frankly eschatological, this unifying theme of the book, the Day of Yhwh, is developed. With the link formula “then afterward” (NRSV), it is predicted that “in those days” (eschatological term) the Spirit of Yhwh will be poured out on all flesh (= all human beings): everyone will have the Spirit of the prophets,⁴⁴¹ with visions and all, that is, full knowledge of (and intimate

⁴³⁶ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 223-224.

⁴³⁷ Joel 2:23 says “because he has given (or gives) the early rain (or the teacher) for (or “of”) righteousness.” Cf. the *Jerusalem Bible*, and the note to 2:23 (a), which refers to the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran sect. The Qumranites make a play on words with Hos 10:12 in CD 6:11, which says “until there shall arise at the end of the days one who teaches righteousness,” whence comes “the Teacher of Righteousness,” according to JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2000), 103. See Isa 30:19-26; 1 Kgs 8:35-36 || 2 Chr 6:26-27; in these passages rain is linked to divine teaching, playing with the double meaning of the Hebrew verb (cf. Isa 55:10-11).

⁴³⁸ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 229. This author notes that some commentators think that even in the first part of the book (Joel 1-2) all the references to the Day of Yhwh are editorial, but opines that “While this is certainly possible, it is by no means certain because, whatever its origin, the idea of the Day of Yahweh was a familiar topos [a commonplace = recurring theme] in preexilic prophecy.”

⁴³⁹ Cf. the apocalyptic passage on Gog of Magog in Ezek 38:18-23; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25-26.

⁴⁴⁰ As always, we use the verse numbering of the Hebrew (Masoretic) text, “MT.” In the Vulgate and many English Bibles, the verse numbers are different. The same goes for Mal 3.

⁴⁴¹ This prophetic passage corresponds eschatologically to Moses’ more modest wish in Num 11:29. Cf. another instance of “all flesh” knowing Yhwh in Isa 40:5.

relationship with) God.⁴⁴² This passage, with the significant addition “in the last days,” is quoted in Acts 2:16-21 as being fulfilled on Pentecost. “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved,” Joel 3:5 [NRSV 2:32], is understood in a clearly universal sense in Acts 2 and Rom 10:9-13.

In Joel 4 [NRSV 3] we have another prediction of what will happen “in those days, in that time.” God will “change the fortunes” (*ashiv et-shebut*) of Judah and Jerusalem.⁴⁴³ This is here seen as vengeance upon the pagan nations which historically oppressed Israel, 4:17, 19-21 [NRSV 3:17, 19-21], dispersing it and throwing lots for her Land, selling them as slaves, 4:3, 6 [NRSV 3:3, 6], exacting great payment of tribute, 4:4-5 [NRSV 3:4-5].⁴⁴⁴ God will gather all the nations (*goyim*) and will make them go down to the valley of *Yehoshaphat*, “Yhwh judges (or has judged).”⁴⁴⁵ After the prose addition in 4:4-8 [NRSV 3:4-8] there is an incitement to war (see the *Jerusalem Bible* notes to 4:9 (k-l), in which is recycled in reverse mode the famous passage on the end of days of Isa 2:1-4 || Mic 4:1-3.⁴⁴⁶ The cosmic signs are reiterated, Joel 4:15 [NRSV 3:15] and we have a first conclusion in 4:16-17 [NRSV 3:16-17], recycling Amos 1:2 and Hag 2:6; cf. Zech 8:3; Ezek 44:9. The final verses, Joel 4:18-21 [NRSV 3:18-21] also echo other biblical passages such as Amos 9:13^b; Jer 17:25; Ezek 25:13; 29:9-12; 35:15; 47:1.

Malachi

“Look how I send my messenger who clears the way before me, and suddenly the Lord whom you ask for will enter his Temple, and the messenger of the covenant which you desire, look how he comes, says Yhwh *tsebaot*.” Mal 3:1.

⁴⁴² Another image of full communication between heaven and earth is found in John 1:51, with Gen 28:10-17 in the background.

⁴⁴³ Again, our verb *shuv*, “return from captivity” or “convert.” See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 4:1. Ps 126:1 in Hebrew says *beshev Yhwh et-shibat*; Job 42:10 says *Yhwh shav et-shebit*.

⁴⁴⁴ They will get a taste of their own medicine, 4:4-8 [NRSV 3:4-8].

⁴⁴⁵ See the *Jerusalem Bible* note to 4:2 (c). The great final battle of Yhwh against the nations in Zech 14:3-4 takes place in front of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. It is sitting there that Jesus gives his “eschatological discourse” in Mark 13:3; Matt 24:3. Cf. the other eschatological battle field, Yizreel, already seen in Hos 1:5 (see the *Jerusalem Bible* note there). Some twenty kilometers to the northeast is Tel (mound) Megiddo, in Greek Harmagedon, a version of the Hebrew *har* (“mountain” of) *magedon* (or *megiddon*). Cf. Zech 12:9; Rev 16:16; see *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 103-104.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Luke 22:35-38.

We here treat Mal to indicate his connection with the second part of Zech. Mal, Zech 9 and Zech 12 are prophetic pieces whose original title is simply *massa*, “oracle.”⁴⁴⁷ Their authors are unknown; the editors of the *corpus propheticum* incorporated Zech 9-14 into Zech, and put Mal as the twelfth book of the minor prophets, thus establishing the pattern 3 + 12, like the three “patriarchs” (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and the twelve tribes.⁴⁴⁸ “Malachi” in Hebrew means “my angel/messenger,” and it is thought that this name is simply taken from Mal 3:1, “incongruously, since the anonymous seer did not think of himself in that role.”⁴⁴⁹ Blenkinsopp ventures that according to the few indications in the book, it can be dated to between 515 and 445, that is, after the building of the second Temple but before, or during, Ezra and Nehemiah’s reform.⁴⁵⁰ One might suppose a later date, given the flourishing Yhwh cult in the Diaspora, 1:11.⁴⁵¹ Note the frequency of “my Name,” Dtr usage.⁴⁵² This, together with the mention of the covenant with Levi in 2:4,⁴⁵³ makes the connection with the Deuteronomists clear, as we shall see a bit later.⁴⁵⁴

It is a time of great *anomie*.⁴⁵⁵ People think God does not love them, 1:2, and priests offer Yhwh defective animals, 1:6-10, 13^b-14^a (cf. Deut 15:21; 17:1; Lev 22:18-15). They begrudge and curtail Yhwh’s tithe, 3:8-10^a, which makes nature unresponsive, 3:10^b-12 (similar to Hag 1:2-11). They are bored with God, 1:13^a, and conclude that it is not worth it to be good, 3:13-15, and that the God of the Final Judgment (or of the

⁴⁴⁷ See footnote 3 above.

⁴⁴⁸ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 209.

⁴⁴⁹ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 209. That is, in Mal 3:1, the prophet predicts that this messenger will come, sometimes translated as “angel of the covenant.” Cf. Exod 23:20; 32:34. A prophet is a “messenger” in Isa 42:19; 44:26; Hag 1:13; 2 Chr 36:15-16, but the Levite priest is in Mal 2:7.

⁴⁵⁰ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 209-210. He thinks that the collapse of religious enthusiasm (very evident in Mal) which followed after the rebuilding of the Temple in 515 occurred fifty years later. AELRED CODY, “Malachi,” *NJBC*, 360, says that a grammatical study of Mal places it closer to Hag and Zech 1-8 than to Neh, Ezra and Chr. Cf. SICRE, *Profetismo*, 359 (between 480-430). SCHMIDT, *Old Testament Introduction*, 278-279, puts Zech 9-11 ca. 300, and Mal about a century earlier, that is, 400.

⁴⁵¹ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 210, states that “the cult of Yahweh in the Diaspora . . . was even then attracting proselytes,” and cites Isa 56:3-8, but in *ibid.* he dates that passage to between 430-330 (see footnote 371 above).

⁴⁵² Yhwh *tsebaot* is also frequent.

⁴⁵³ Cf. Deut 18:1-8; 21:5; 33:8-10.

⁴⁵⁴ See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 211-212. For Dtr, there is no distinction between priest and Levite, as in Num 18:8-24; Ezek 44:10-16; 48:10-11. See the Dtr account of the golden calves in Exod 32, especially 32:25-29.

⁴⁵⁵ See page 66 and footnote 382 above.

Parousia) is nowhere to be found, 2:17.⁴⁵⁶ This state of affairs contrasts with the vigorous Yhwh cult in the Diaspora: Yhwh is already revered among the nations, 1:5, 11, 14^b.⁴⁵⁷

Professor Blenkinsopp's ideas are useful in the effort to give a coherent interpretation to this somewhat complex booklet.⁴⁵⁸ "The author's intense concern for the cult, together with his ferocious attack on the priesthood, suggests that he may have been either a dissident priest turned prophet or a Levite" (209), and we may have here "a much-compressed account of real disputes going on in the temple precincts during the period prior to and perhaps during Nehemiah's administration" (210). The problem of marriage with foreign women, Mal 2:10-16, was one of the most serious issues confronted by the reformers Ezra and Nehemiah (see especially Ezra 10:1-44, with the list of the guilty including priests).⁴⁵⁹ Blenkinsopp sees a great similarity between the Yhwh-fearers who consulted among themselves in Mal 3:16, and whom Yhwh inscribed in his book of remembrance as his "special possession" (*NRSV*, 3:17),⁴⁶⁰ and the "tremblers" of Ezra 9:4; 10:3, 9, who made a covenant to send away their foreign wives and children.⁴⁶¹

These "servants" (again!) of Yhwh, in 3:17-18, are the "true eschatological community" who awaits the imminent coming of the messenger of the covenant

who would prepare for the final temple theophany by purifying the sons of Levi and thus preparing the community for the eschatological judgment (3:1-4). The final paragraph of the book, which is also the conclusion to the prophetic corpus as whole, identifies this eschatological precursor as Elijah, who is to return from heaven before the end to reunite divided Israel (cf. Sir. 48:10).⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁶ Recall the great hopes raised by the words in Hag 2:6-9, 15, 18-19, and by Zechariah.

⁴⁵⁷ CODY, "Malachi," 360, believes that Mal 1:11 is a "rhetorical exaggeration" whose purpose is not to exactly describe the Gentiles' situation with regard to Yhwh, but rather to shame the priests of Judah by comparing the quality of their offerings with that of the pagans everywhere. What *Jerusalem Bible* note 1. h says in this regard is quite improbable.

⁴⁵⁸ See *A History of Prophecy*, 209-212.

⁴⁵⁹ In Ezra 9:1-2 the "holy seed (or race)" is contrasted to the "people of the lands."

⁴⁶⁰ In Hebrew, *segulla*; see footnote 406 above.

⁴⁶¹ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 221, considering that marriage with foreigners led to idolatry and syncretism, Ezra 9:1-2, even for priests, 10:18-24, also believes that the "tremblers" of Isa 66:5 protested against the same thing. He concludes that the "covenant" of Mal 3:16-18 is identical to that of the *haredim* ("tremblers," see page 69 above and footnote 401) of Isa 66:5 and Ezra 9:4; 10:3; see also *A History of Prophecy*, 276, end note 21.

⁴⁶² BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 210, 211.

Blenkinsopp believes that the author of Malachi has adopted the “eschatological prophet” tradition which arose from Deut 18:15-18, the prophet like Moses awaited at the end of days who plays such an important role in the Second Temple period, in Qumran and in Christianity.⁴⁶³

Mal closes the collection of the books of the prophets, and probably also of the Torah and the Prophets.⁴⁶⁴ By juxtaposing Moses, the greatest of all the prophets, Deut 34:10, to the other prophets (represented by Elijah), the Dtr redactor perhaps wanted to equate the two parts of Scripture (the main ones, or the only ones considered to be such at the time), or indicate that the prophets must submit to the Torah of Moses (in accordance with the Jewish tradition).⁴⁶⁵ Mal is the last book of the “Old Testament” in the Christian canon, just before the New Testament, in which is fulfilled the prophecy of the sending of Elijah as the precursor of the messianic age. In the Hebrew canon, Mal is followed by the Writings.

Second and Third Zechariah

“And Yhwh will become king over all the earth, on that day Yhwh will be one and his Name one. . . . And everyone who remains (alive) from all the nations which were against Jerusalem will go up every year to worship King Yhwh *tsebaot*, and to celebrate the feast of the *sukkot*.” Zech 14:9, 16.

Introduction. These sections, Zech 9-11; 12-14, with anonymous authors, and each beginning with *massa* (“oracle”), can be dated, in general terms, to the Hellenistic period, between 333-167, although we are in one of the most obscure parts of the Bible with regard to historical references and interpretation.⁴⁶⁶ Generally, all this section of

⁴⁶³ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 211. This expectation of the eschatological figure of Elijah is fulfilled by John the Baptist in Matt 3:1-12 (Elijah dressed like that, 2 Kgs 1:7-8); Matt 17:10-13; Luke 1:17; 7:24-27. But in other contexts it is Jesus who is assimilated to Elijah: Luke 7:16; Acts 3:19-23 (*apokatástasis*, “universal restoration,” is the noun which comes from the verb in LXX Mal 3:23 (MT 3:24, NRSV 4:6). Jesus, in Luke 9:51, is said to be “assumed” (as in the Assumption of Mary) into heaven, like Elijah in LXX 2 Kgs 2:11 (see the note thereto in the *Biblia de Jerusalén*). See footnote 23 above.

⁴⁶⁴ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 209.

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Mark 9:4-5 (Elijah/Moses, Moses/Elijah). Judaism gives the Torah precedence, Christianity favors the (Latter) Prophets. See JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, *The Pentateuch. An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (Doubleday: New York – London, etc., 1992), 232, and pages 5-7 above.

⁴⁶⁶ The *Sitz im Leben*, the socio-historical context, is important in order to understand Scripture. See BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 231. On 234, he says that “we know practically nothing of the internal history of the community during the fourth and third centuries.” He also points out that the biblical

Zech treats of the final salvation which is awaited, albeit Zech 9-11 differs from Zech 12-14; the former is almost all in verse,⁴⁶⁷ while the latter (except 13:7-9) is in prose. Zech 12-14 “is composed for the most part of some sixteen short eschatological *logia* [sayings] beginning with the formula ‘on that day’ (*bayyôm hahû*’), which appears only once (9:16) in the previous section.”⁴⁶⁸

Zechariah 9-11. We know that we are in something different than what comes before in Zech because of the language, style and circumstances, although there are many obscure things which we will not go into; we shall only look at those parts which interest us because of their relevance for us Christians. Zech 9:1-8 speaks of the defeat of Judah’s neighbors and of the consequent expansion of the borders of the Land. Zech 9:9-10 is the famous passage about the coming to Zion of her king, peaceful, righteous and saved,⁴⁶⁹ “humble and riding on a donkey, on a *purebred jackass*” (cf. Gen 49:11 in *NAB*). This is the eschatological fulfillment of the “oracle of Judah” (Jacob’s blessing to this his son) in Gen 49:8-12.⁴⁷⁰ The gospels see the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus’ “messianic entry” into Jerusalem (the most literal version is that in Matt 21:4-7, where Jesus seems to sit on two animals —!— but Mark 11:1-7 devotes more space to the tying and untying of the donkey, which ties it more to Gen 49).⁴⁷¹

What follows in Zech 9:11-17 is another salvation oracle, with such evocative phrases as “by the blood of your covenant” (cf. Heb 13:20) and “prisoners of hope,” 9:12 (see Gen 37:24; Isa 42:7; 49:8-9; 61:1). The rest of “Deutero-Zechariah” could be put under the rubric of “rebuke of the shepherds,” which echoes Ezek 34.⁴⁷² Yhwh is against the bad and false shepherds, Zech 10:2-3; when he visits his flock, these will become

authors in this period are not as directly inspired as the earlier prophets, but rather they claim inspiration in order to interpret the earlier prophecies; this is how God speaks through them.

⁴⁶⁷ Zech 11:4-16 is in prose, as the layout in the *NRSV* and other Bibles indicates.

⁴⁶⁸ BLENKINSOPP, *A History of Prophecy*, 233. On the importance of Zech 9-14 in the Passion narratives, see F.F. BRUCE, “The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 43 (1961) 336-353.

⁴⁶⁹ See CODY, “Zechariah,” *NJBC*, 357. He is “savior” in the LXX and the Vulgate, and, hence, in modern (our) versions.

⁴⁷⁰ From the tribe of Judah came David, and from his “house” = dynasty, 2 Sam 7:11^b-17, would come the righteous king awaited at the end of time, that is to say, the “Messiah.” Cf. the expression “the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,” in Rev 5:5, taken from Gen 49:9; Isa 11:1, 10.

⁴⁷¹ See CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 63-67, with reference to JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, “The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961) 55-64.

⁴⁷² Cf. CODY, “Zechariah,” *NJBC*, 357.

mighty warriors, 10:4-12.⁴⁷³ Of the prose passage 11:4-16, Blenkinsopp says that “This strangest and most obscure of all prophetic texts continues to defy attempts to crack its narrative code.”⁴⁷⁴ Here Yhwh is also against the sheep, who are destined for slaughter, and addresses a shepherd who breaks “the covenant which Yhwh had made with all peoples,” 11:10.⁴⁷⁵ The union between Judah and Israel is also broken, 11:14-16, apparently as part of an eschatological or pre-eschatological reversal (see Mic 7:6; Matt 10:34-36; Luke 12:51-53; Mark 14:27 and parallels) of the ingathering under a good shepherd of texts like Ezek 34:15-16, 23-25, 31; 37:15-28. This shepherd in Zech is given his last wages, thirty silver sheqels, the price of a slave gored by an ox in Exod 21:32; Yhwh complains that this is the sum for which he has been valued (or devalued), Zech 11:12-13. Matt 26:14-16; 27:3-10 states that Judas sold Jesus for the same amount, but that the money could not be put into the Temple treasury as Judas intended because it was “blood money.”⁴⁷⁶

Zechariah 12-14. Here we have two descriptions of the Day of Yhwh, “that day,” one in Zech 12-13, the other in Zech 14.⁴⁷⁷ In Zech 12:3, all the nations of the world attack Jerusalem, but Yhwh defeats them, 12:4, 6, 9, so that the leaders of Judah acknowledge that strength is in Yhwh *tsebaot*, 12:5 (cf. 4:6). Judah shall be saved, and will share in the splendor (*NRSV* “glory,” same word as in Isa 62:3, *NRSV* “beauty”) of David’s dynasty, 12:7-8, and the latter will be like God, like the angel of Yhwh leading

⁴⁷³ Zech 10:8 includes three parallel elements: the (eschatological) ingathering, using the Hebrew verb *qabats* (whence comes “kibbutz,” the typical Israeli communal farm); redemption (using a verb from the linguistic field of “salvation”); and multiplication (a great population), as in the primordial blessing of Gen 1:28 etc. Cf. Zech 2:8; 9:16.

⁴⁷⁴ *A History of Prophecy*, 232. For myself, the passages which are obscure and perhaps undecipherable make the Bible more stimulating and remind us that we should not think that we can know it all, or that we can have the Word of God under our control; cf. Deut 29:28 [*NRSV* 29:29].

⁴⁷⁵ Some have wanted to see here the covenant of Gen 9; cf. CODY, “Zechariah,” *NJBC*, 358.

⁴⁷⁶ See the *Jerusalem Bible* notes c-e to Matt 27:9-10. CODY, “Zechariah,” *NJBC*, 358, points out that the Syriac version of Zech 11:13, followed here by most of our Bibles, has “treasury,” while the Hebrew (Masoretic) text reads “potter” (*yotser*, found also at the end of the verse), which Cody thinks may be a mistake for *otsar*, “treasury.” Matthew, who says that the prophecy came from Jeremiah, may want to evoke in the reader connections between Zech 11, Jer 32:6-15 (the purchase of a field as a sign of hope) and the “field of blood” (Hakeldama district/Valley of the son of Hinnom/Gehenna) of Jer 19. This intertextual approach is now more probable than supposing a stupid mistake on Matthew’s part (confusing Zechariah with Jeremiah; Matthew expects the reader to know the quote is from Zechariah, but wants him or her to think of other passages as well—in Jeremiah).

⁴⁷⁷ See NEWSOME, *Hebrew Prophets*, 203-204.

them (cf. Exod 14:19).⁴⁷⁸ Mysteriously, “on that day” Yhwh will pour out “a spirit of favor (or grace) and of supplication over the house of David and over the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” Zech 12:10. What follows is not very clear, except that they will look at Yhwh or at an unknown individual “whom they pierced,” mourning (in the LXX, striking their breasts, as in Luke 23:27, 48) as for an only son and a first-born.⁴⁷⁹ Given the mention of the god Hadad, associated with rain as he is, we should connect Zech 13:1 with the passage we are looking at; the open fountain for (cleansing or purifying from) sin and impurity would then be linked to the spirit of 12:10, as in Ezek 36:25-27; John 7:38-39.⁴⁸⁰ Clearly, this is an eschatological gift, as in Joel [2]3 and Acts 2:17-21.

In Zech 13:2-6, it is prophesied that on that day, Yhwh will put an end to idolatry, and likewise prophets and unclean spirits!⁴⁸¹ The prophetic profession, as was said in the introduction, page 3 above, had degenerated to the point that it should be eliminated (see the legislation in Deut 13:2-4; 18:9-21, where it is associated with diviners, astrologers and sorcerers). It will be so shameful, that the one who is accused of being a prophet (!) will choose to explain his wounds (see 1 Kgs 18:25-29) as the result of a debauched fight, perhaps in a situation of male prostitution, as Blenkinsopp suggests.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ The democratization of David’s prerogatives is found in Isa 55:3. The Davidic king is seen as adopted by Yhwh in Ps 2:7; 89:27-28 (already in 2 Sam 7:14). Ps 2 became associated in the Jewish tradition with Ps 110; see Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Heb 1; John 5:18. The “sons of God” became angels in the biblical tradition (see note a to Gen 6 in the *Jerusalem Bible*). On “like the angel of Yhwh,” see 2 Sam 14:17.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. the combination of only son, beloved, in Gen 22:2. Cf. Amos 8:9-10 and Mark 15:33. From “beloved” in Greek comes the man’s name Agapito in Spanish, applied in Greek to Jesus in Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; cf. John 1:18; 3:16, 35; 10:17; 19:37; Rev 1:7. The mourning in Zech 12:11 is likened to the mourning which took place in Damascus (a bit to the north) for the storm god Hadad-rimmon (the “Thunderer,” in Akkadian, the language of Mesopotamia), who brought rain after his return from the abode of the dead.

⁴⁸⁰ In primitive Christianity, it is the reception of the poured-out Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5) which purifies the Gentiles, Acts 15:8-9.

⁴⁸¹ This echoes profoundly in the New Testament, where a distinction is drawn between the prophets (who were sent before Jesus, Mark 8:27-30; 12:1-6; Matt 11:13; Luke 16:16; Heb 1:1-4) and Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, John 1:18. Cf. Luke 7:16; Acts 3:21-24; 7:37. The casting out of unclean spirits is very important in Jesus’ eschatological ministry; in Mark 1:21-27, a programmatic episode (which summarizes the essential elements of Jesus’ mission, as Luke 4:16-20 does in that gospel), Jesus’ “new teaching” is actually described as ‘commanding unclean spirits, who obey him’, Mark 1:27. In fact, the unclean spirit in this episode *declares* (better than *asks*) that Jesus has come to destroy unclean spirits, 1:24; cf. Acts 10:38.

⁴⁸² *A History of Prophecy*, 235. The Hebrew text says that he received the blows “in the house of my lovers” (Piel of the verb *ahab*, “to love”). Cf. 1 Kgs 20:35-37.

Zech 13:7-9 describes the eschatological trial. First, Yhwh reverses the situation in Ezek 34:23-25 (the gospels see this eschatological reversal as fulfilled in Jesus).⁴⁸³ Two thirds of the earth (the word “this [territory]” in the *Jerusalem Bible* is added) will perish (cf. Rev 8:6-13; 9:13-18); the remaining third God will “make enter” into the fire of purification and trial,⁴⁸⁴ but this purification will result in the establishment of good relations with God, 13:9.⁴⁸⁵

Zech 14 is one of the most important passages in the Old Testament. It begins with another description of the Day of Yhwh in which, again, all the pagan nations (*goyim*) wage battle against Jerusalem (Yhwh himself, as Lord of the world, will gather them for this purpose). The City is taken, and half of it goes into exile, “but the Remnant of the people will not be cut off from the city” (14:2). The Yhwh will go out to combat against the nations, planting his feet on the Mount of Olives which is in front of Jerusalem, to the east.⁴⁸⁶ It will be eschatological helter-skelter, one will have to flee (cf. Mark 13:14), and then Yhwh will come with all his saints (cf. Mark 13:27; Matt 25:31).

It is not clear what Zech 14:6 says, but 14:7 says that there shall only be light, only daylight, no night.⁴⁸⁷ From Jerusalem shall flow living waters (without regard to the season, 14:8).⁴⁸⁸ Then will the *Shema* be finally fulfilled, Deut 6:4: Yhwh will be the only king over all the earth, Yhwh will be the only God, that is, the Kingdom of God will finally have come. Jerusalem, the City of God (Ps 87:3), will be high up and inhabited in safety (an image of eschatological peace which corresponds to the primordial paradise). There shall be no more curse!⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸³ See Mark 14:27; Matt 26:31; John 16:32 (but it is not found in Luke).

⁴⁸⁴ As God is petitioned not to do in the Lord’s Prayer, commonly translated “lead us not into temptation,” from the Latin *temptatio*, “trial.” This “purification” or “refining” (applied to metals, also called “assaying, calcining, smelting”), is mentioned in Isa 1:25; 48:10; Mal 3:2-3; Dan 11:35; 12:10; Matt 3:10-12; cf. 1Q Community 3:20-22 (Qumran).

⁴⁸⁵ See the marginal references in the *Jerusalem Bible*; cf. Hos 2:25.

⁴⁸⁶ This mount, almost never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, is the anonymous mountain where Yhwh stops in Ezek 11:23, on his way to exile with his people. It figures importantly in the New Testament (e.g., Mark 11:1; 13:3) and in Judaism, as the place where the Messiah is to appear.

⁴⁸⁷ The reversal of the situation in Amos 8:9; cf. Isa 60:1-3; Rev 21:23-25. The image of light, applied to Jesus, is very frequent in the New Testament, and is one of the Fourth Gospel’s principal themes.

⁴⁸⁸ In the Holy Land, it rains in winter. These living waters, associated with purification in Lev 14:6, 51-52, and with Yhwh in Jer 2:13, are what Jesus gives in John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; cf. Rev 7:17.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Rev 22:3; Gal 3:10; Rom 8:1.

All those who are left (survive) of the *goyim* will go up every year to worship King Yhwh *tsebaot* and to celebrate the great Jewish Feast of Booths,⁴⁹⁰ Sukkoth, which is associated with rain.⁴⁹¹ Everyone will submit to Yhwh's reign, or be punished, Zech 14:16-19. Our chapter ends with a most important eschatological hope: the purification of everything, for everything shall be holy, that is, consecrated or belonging to God (since King Yhwh will have subjected everything to himself).⁴⁹² The last verse, which predicts that on that day there shall no longer be a merchant in the Yhwh *tsebaot*'s House,⁴⁹³ is in the background to what Jesus did in the Temple according to Luke 19:45 and John 2:16 (although Mark 11:15-16, followed in part by Matt 21:12-14, goes much further).⁴⁹⁴

Daniel

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given the dominion, and the honour, and the kingdom; and all nations, tribes, and languages, shall serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed.” Dan 7:13-14 (RSV).

The importance of the Book of Daniel. In the Jewish canon, Dan is included in the Writings, and not among the Prophets. But in the Christian canon Dan occupies the fourth place after the first three great prophets, and in fact in some editions of the LXX, the Twelve are placed before the four great prophets, so that Dan occupies the place of the last book of the Old Testament canon. We will end our overview of the Prophets with

⁴⁹⁰ That is, there shall also be a “remnant” from among the Gentiles. This verb “to remain, be left over” is also found in 2 Chr 8:7-8; Ezek 6:8; 12:6; 14:22; Amos 6:9; Zeph 2:9; Zech 13:8.

⁴⁹¹ During the seven or eight days of Sukkoth, the Jews prayed for the rain that usually came in winter. There were daily processions to the Siloam spring (see *Jerusalem Bible* note e to John 9:7; cf. Isa 8:5), and water ceremonies around the altar. Light also figured in an important way: four immense candelabra (“menorahs”) were placed in the Court of Women in the temple, lighting everything round about. Cf. the link between water and salvation in Isa 12:3, and water and the Spirit in Isa 44:3, linked to Sukkoth in the Jewish tradition.

⁴⁹² CODY, “Zechariah,” 359, points out that anyone will be able to cook the sacrificial victims, an activity reserved for priests in Ezek 46:19-24. Jesus’ ministry is seen in Mark as the destruction and elimination of evil and impurity: 1:24; 3:22-27; 7:19; cf. Luke 10:17-19. Paul establishes a chronology (or a taxonomy or orderly sequence) for the subjection of all things to God in 1 Cor 15:20-28.

⁴⁹³ “Merchant” is here literally “Canaanite,” and the LXX thus understands it.

⁴⁹⁴ This topic is fully dealt with in CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*. Mark implies the symbolic paralyzation by Jesus of the Temple activities, before he predicts its destruction in 13:2, and before the Temple itself, rendered obsolete by Jesus’ redeeming death, is symbolically destroyed by the rending of the curtain in 15:38.

Daniel, as if to put the finishing touch, because Dan recapitulates the whole of Israel's prophetic hopes. Everything that we Christians believe is to be understood in the prophets of Judaism: that history proceeds towards a conclusion, towards an ending in which all the yearnings of the people of God —after many tribulations— will be satisfied, a final time when God will definitively intervene in human history —all this we find in Dan in some form, and three things in particular: 1) Dan evidences a developed apocalypticism (visions concerning the definitive future of the world); specifically, he divides history into periods governed by beasts (that is, the inverse of what God disposed in Gen 1:28; Ps 8; Wis 9:2), until the final stage in which God's originally-intended order is finally realized. 2) This is when the "Son of man" will receive a kingdom and total and everlasting dominion; this is the Kingdom of God, the realization of the divine purpose at the time of creation. The relevance of this for Christianity is clear. 3) Dan is the only book of the Hebrew Bible which speaks explicitly of the final resurrection. Earlier Judaism already yearned for an existence with God after death, but this was not formulated unequivocally until Dan.

Content of the Book of Daniel. Dan is composed of two principal sections, contained respectively in chapters 1-6 and 7-12. Chapters 13-14 are in Greek (that is, are deuterocanonical), are additions, and will not be seen here.⁴⁹⁵ Dan is written in Aramaic, the language of the Jews in the Holy Land after the Exile (Jesus' language, too). Since it is not the holy tongue, the beginning and end of Dan were translated into Hebrew so that the book could be included in the canon (something like a "kosherization" or linguistic baptism, although this is just one possible explanation for the two languages in Dan).

The first section (Dan 1-6) consists of stories about "Daniel," a very ancient personage renown for his wisdom (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3). The stories are set in the Babylonian Exile, and bring together wisdom traditions about the diet (it should be kosher) and about dreams. Recall that Joseph, the interpreter of dreams in Egypt, is described in the same terms (Gen 41:39) as Daniel in the Exile (Dan 1:20). So that part of the purpose of the book seems to be to serve as an exhortation to remain faithful to God amidst pagan (non-Jewish, foreign) temptations. These stories speak about Daniel in the third person ("he," etc.).

⁴⁹⁵ Also deuterocanonical is LXX Dan 3:24-90, the canticles of Azariah and the three young men.

The first section shares with the second (Dan 7-12) the importance given to angels (Dan 8:15-16; 9:21; 10:13, 21; 12:1, or “Watchers,” 4:10, 14, 20) as intermediaries. Angels become important in times of crisis, when God seems distant, and have the role of defenders and interpreters of visions. In both sections we have a historical perspective in which God Most High is in control of everything despite appearances to the contrary, and shall finally reign, 2:20-22; 3:33; 4:14, 22, 31; 6:27. The key vision is that of a statue, Dan 2:31-43, whose various components represent a succession of different empires which are destroyed one after the other, until the Kingdom of God arises, 2:44-45.

Situation of Daniel. Dan is a book that we can accurately date to *ca.* 165 B.C.E. It is a terrible time for the Jews. A year before, the Seleucid king (in the area north and east of Palestine) Antiochus IV “Epiphanes” had unleashed a fierce persecution against the Jews, attempting to eradicate Judaism. He plundered the Temple, profaned it, and forced Jews to abandon everything that the Law required, especially circumcision, the Sabbath and the kosher diet. We can read about all this in much detail in the deuterocanonical books of the Maccabees.

Daniel’s Answer. It is in this situation of anguish that apocalyptic arises,⁴⁹⁶ a type of religious thinking and writing which, in veiled language full of ciphers and symbols (partly to avoid detection by the persecutors), declares that the outcome of what is transpiring is already determined in the divine realm in heaven, Dan 8:19, and that the seer, with the help of the angelic interpreter, has beheld in a vision that God is in control of everything, has put his faithful ones to the test (Dan 7:25; 11:35; 12:10), and will finally overcome and judge good and evil, rewarding and punishing. For now, one must hold out, because there is still much time to wait, Dan 8:26.

In Dan 7, Daniel has a vision of beasts. The lion with eagle wings is Babylon; the bear, the Medes; the leopard with wings, the Persians, and, lastly, a horrendous fourth beast. Actually, it had been some time already that the first empires had disappeared for this author. He is most interested in the fourth, the Greek empire, and especially the Seleucids who are persecuting his people. This last one is described in much detail,

⁴⁹⁶ The word “apocalyptic” comes from the Greek *apocalýpsis* = “revelation,” to remove the veil; Rev. 1:1.

although it is not yet known when God will have finished with it.⁴⁹⁷ In fact, Dan is not off by much, but it is obvious that he did not know of the death of Antiochus IV (Dan 8:25; 11:45) and of the purification of the Temple (in 164 B.C.E., 8:13-14; 9:17, 26).

Apocalyptic has to do with eschatology, ideas about the end of the world in its present form (there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1). Apocalyptic looks forward towards that final time of definitive salvation, and sees it as the implementation of God's primordial design at the time of creation, when God made all things good. It was human beings who spoiled it, who inverted the divine order of things with sin. This is what the beasts who dominate the world—and Israel in particular—represent. The End Time, when God intervenes in order to remedy all our ills, will correspond to the Beginning, characterized by the peace and well-being of the Garden of Eden. This yearning for the End predominates in the second section of Dan.

The great vision of Dan 7:9-14 is that of the throne of God surrounded by fire and myriads of angels, his ministers, opening the Judgment books. Dominion is taken away from the beasts, and is given to “one like a son of man who comes in the clouds of heaven” (cf. Mark 13:26; 14:62). The human being again receives, but now definitely, dominion over creation (Gen 1:28; Ps 8; Wis 9:2). It is total dominion, expressed in Greek with the word *exousía*, the one applied to Jesus in Mark 1:22, 27; 2:10, etc., often translated “authority.” This refers to the eternal Kingdom of God, which is received by the “saints of the Most High,” Dan 7:18, 27. But these are seen collectively, that is, as one entity; the people of God has a “corporate personality,” which is why it is represented by the “son of man” as an individual. This is how Judaism in the time of Jesus could see in the “son of man” a specific individual.

Daniel interprets the Scriptures. Another aspect of Dan shared in common with the New Testament is the interpretation of Scripture as if it referred to the time in which one was living (Rom 4:23; 15:4; 1 Cor 9:9-10; 10:6, 11). This is what Daniel does. In 9:2, he ponders the Scriptures trying to understand what Jeremiah meant concerning the “seventy years” of Exile. That is, Daniel is not satisfied with the text of Jer 25:11-12 only in its original meaning, but seeks rather to apply it to his own time more than four

⁴⁹⁷ Apocalyptic is also distinguished by predictions and schedules concerning when liberation will at last come. This gives rise to miscalculations, as we can see from the revisions to the date initially given by Dan 8:14: 12:11; 12:12 (cf. *Jerusalem Bible* note q to 8:14 and note i to 12:12; *NOAB* 1277 note to 12:11-12).

centuries later (from 587 to 165). Dan's solution, given by the angel Gabriel (9:21), is to read the Hebrew consonants *š b ' y m* with two possible vocalizations (placing of vowels), one giving rise to the word "seventy," the other giving rise to the word "weeks." The resulting combined reading is then "seventy weeks of years" (9:24), or 490 years. This is an expression already used for the calculation of the Jubilee Year in Lev 25:8 (with seven instead of seventy), and in fact the idea of a final, or tenth Jubilee, figured importantly in certain strands of apocalyptic. Making Jeremiah's period extend to 490 years brought the time of the end of the Exile (understood as the time before final salvation) quite near to Dan's own day (the chronologies of the Babylonian and Persian empires were not very well known). The time lapse is necessary in order for the people to atone for their sins. This way of looking at the deeper meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy is also evidenced in Lev 26:14-40, where the Sabbath year rest for the Land (25:2-5, every seven years), unobserved during the time of Israel's sinfulness, will have to be made up in Exile-time (Israel is also threatened with seven-fold punishment). This is also the interpretation of Jer 25:11-12 given in 2 Chr 36:21, the last verses of the Hebrew Bible.

The "abomination of the desolation." This designates the profanation of the Temple by Antiochus IV, who placed a statue of the pagan god Zeus Olympios in the Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar. The expression means "the loathsome thing (= idol) which leaves one desolate (because it is a monstrous sacrilege)."⁴⁹⁸ Dan announces the purification of the Temple in the future, narrated in 1 Macc 4:36-59; 2 Macc 10:1-8, and which Jews today celebrate in December in the feast of Hanukkah (= "dedication" of the restored Temple).

The faithful Jews prepare for the End. Many Jews succumbed to Seleucid persecution and abandoned their faith, but Dan urges his compatriots to remain firm, 11:32-35. The "prudent ones" (NRSV "wise," in Hebrew *maskilim*) deserve special mention.⁴⁹⁹ They are the leaders who encourage the people to remain faithful to Judaism, to the covenant with the one true God; they shall suffer the greatest trials, but they shall receive the greatest reward when the resurrection and the judgment come after the great

⁴⁹⁸ This expression was also used by Jesus to describe the final tribulation in Mark 13:14-19.

⁴⁹⁹ This name comes from the plural masculine participle of the verb applied to the Servant in Isa 52:13 (usually translated "shall prosper"). See footnotes 165, 215, 324 above, and CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 19, 30.

final tribulation, Dan 12:1-3. The purpose of the resurrection is to enable reward and punishment to be meted out, at least to the very good and the very evil.⁵⁰⁰ That is to say, it was discovered that, contrary to what the Deuteronomic tradition taught, the lot of the righteous is not always good, nor that of the wicked bad (Ps 37:10-11, 25), but rather, one must wait for final justice after death. Job already expressed in some way this yearning that all things be cleared up and that the final reckonings be made and accounts put in order even after this life, Job 19:25-27, although cf. Job 14:7-16. Now, for the first time in the Hebrew Bible—in fact, this part of Dan is in Hebrew; cf. 2 Macc 7, in Greek and deuterocanonical—it is declared that there will be a resurrection at the end of time, Dan 12:13.

The idea of purification through great suffering (Dan 11:35; 12:10) is taken up in Rev 7:14. Mark 13:19 takes up the idea of a tremendous *tribulation* (a very important apocalyptic term), adding that “such as will not (ever again) be.” Other concepts also found in the New Testament include Michael (Dan 12:1; Rev 12:7) and that of the dead as merely sleeping (Dan 12:2; Mark 5:39; John 11:1, 13; 1 Cor 15:51), etc.

Conclusion

What broad stokes may we propose in order to describe prophecy in Israel? It arises out of the human need not only to explain reality and events, but also to draw lessons from these, guidelines for one’s life, and encouragement for the future. What distinguishes Israelite prophecy from that of other peoples is firstly its Yahwistic character, the peculiarities which derive from being at the service of Yhwh. Yhwh is a righteous God, who defends the weak, who cannot be bribed nor manipulated with gifts (Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7). He is not pleased with the worship of the unrighteous (Prov 15:8). Although he chose Israel from among the nations, through the ministry of prophets like Ezekiel, Yhwh is capable of uttering the most biting criticisms of his people. Divine righteousness (what Jerome translated as *iustitia*, “justice”) demands that Israel and the nations be punished for their unrighteousness (“injustice”). As the great Bible scholar

⁵⁰⁰ The meaning of “many” in Dan 12:2 is at times debated, some arguing that it means just that, others that it means “everyone.” In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is believed that all shall rise for the Final Judgment; Matt 25:31-46; Rev 20:5, 12-15.

Claus Westermann has stated, one of Second Isaiah's innovations is to proclaim a God who does not simply grant military victories to his people (the usual role of gods), but who announces beforehand the punishment that his holiness behooves. Thus, by showing Israel that he is in charge of history, Yhwh also gives ground to trust in his salvation oracles.⁵⁰¹

As Westermann also says (7), what characterizes the prophet's word is its otherness, its provenance from a place which is not the merely human sphere, but rather is the very sphere of the divine; or, as we stressed in the beginning, the prophet's access to the divine council (*sod*). "My ways are not your ways" (Isa 55:8). Thus, the prophetic word, proceeding from what the one sent heard and saw when he accessed the *sod*, oftentimes contradicts what human beings think and expect. But the divine purpose is the salvation of the people, and these are forcibly purified after the catastrophe, for only thus can they really belong to the sovereign God (Zeph 3:12-13). We thus see that prophecy in Israel, along with its religiosity in general (at least in certain circles), increasingly takes on apocalyptic traits. Apocalyptic—and messianism, the hope for a total, extraordinary and definitive salvation—has been described as the escapist fantasy of the desperate, the result of the total loss of confidence in the human capacity to remedy the horrible state of the world.⁵⁰² But Israelite apocalyptic, which dreams of or imagines a new world of peace and justice, the recreative work of an omnipotent God, in whom all faith and trust is placed, merely takes to its ultimate consequences primitive Yahwist faith, the faith Abraham had when he believed God and went off to an unknown Land, leaving behind his fatherland and family. The object of the "promises" made to Abraham then were simply land and offspring (Gen 15), which as fulfilled, only to be lost with the Babylonian exile. Upon returning to her Land, Israel has to face a situation of successive empires and oppressors, and the precariousness of life. Yes, Israel despairs of human solutions, and exaggerates its trust in God. But can one exaggerate one's trust in God? For those of us who accept the holy writings of the Bible as Word of God, for those of us who share the biblical faith: the faith of Isaiah and Daniel, the faith of Abraham and Joseph, the faith of Paul and Jesus, this faith is not excessive, but rather corresponds to

⁵⁰¹ See WESTERMANN, *Isaiah 40-66*, 15-17.

⁵⁰² See the important article by PAUL D. HANSON, "Apocalypticism," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 33-34.

the experience of the God who is always greater (*Deus semper maior*) of those who professed it and profess it still.⁵⁰³ We can only govern ourselves by the example of these faithful human beings, by the faith of these prophets, believing them (cf. Exod 14:31; 2 Chr 20:20) and obeying them (Jer 26:5; Mark 9:7). And what the prophets end up announcing is the Kingdom of God, when God subjects everything and really becomes the sovereign King of all, and no evil or enemy may still spoil his creation. And at the time when these expectation were most vivid, in what Zechariah calls “that day,” and Saint Paul “in the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), is when Jesus of Nazareth, “a prophet powerful in work and word” (Luke 24:19), appears in Israel, proclaiming the Good News that the Kingdom of God has drawn near (Mark 1:15). For us Christians, this is the Jesus (= “salvation”) of whom all the prophets spoke (Matt 26:56; Luke 24:25, 27; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43; cf. Matt 11:13).

⁵⁰³ Cf. Gen 48:11; John 1:50; 14:12; Eph 3:20.