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Chapter 1

THE NATURE OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

1. *The First Commitment to Writing of the Prophetic Words*

As prophetic books I reckon those of the three major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as well as the Twelve Minor Prophets. The book of Jonah, however, should not be included, as it is a story *about* a prophet and not a collection of speeches actually spoken by him.

The first question to be asked when considering these books from the viewpoint of the history of literature is: why do we have prophetic books dating only from the middle of the eighth century BCE and onwards, starting with the coming on stage of Amos, the first of 'classical' prophets? We know of the existence of prophets such as Samuel, Nathan and Gad active at least two hundred years earlier. The explanation can hardly be found in the novel and momentous message which the later prophets convey—their moral primacy, as it was to be called in modern study—since the prophets' contemporaries regarded them solely as bearers of divine words. The godly authority rather than the content of the speeches conveyed by this or another prophet was decisive; for the Israelites of biblical times there was no difference between the prophecy of Hosea son of Beeri and that of Ahijah the Shilonite.

The answer, then, is to be looked for in a far more prosaic factor—the onset of the era of writing. In former times, until the middle of the monarchic period, writing was the privilege of a happy few: members of the elite at court and in the temple. Only with time, starting at the beginning of the eighth century, did the skill of writing spread among broader circles. Epigraphical finds in Palestine—mostly seals and a few ostraca—prove this fact.¹ The oldest evidence dates

1. R. Hestrin and M. Dayagi Mendels, *ḥwtmwt mymy byt r'šwn* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1978); N. Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah*

from the end of the ninth century; from then on the material steadily increases, clearly evidencing the gradual spreading of writing among the people at a relatively late date. The commitment to writing of various literary types was influenced by this development. The first to come into existence were the royal chronicles and histories; stories composed to enlighten and entertain the king and his court originated at the same stage. Learned priests started to write down the precepts of the temple and priesthood, as well as cultic psalms. It was at a later stage that the disciples of the prophets—belonging to a lower social class—recorded their teachers' words as well as stories relating to their masters. This explains why prophetic literature starts in the eighth century BCE, describing the deeds of the prophet Elisha, active in the last decades of the ninth century BCE, and recording the words of Amos and Hosea spoken on the eve of the fall of the kingdom of Israel, in the middle of the eighth century.

2. Speeches by Distinct Prophets Juxtaposed in One Book

The prophetic books bear the names of single prophets, and it is to them the various books are ascribed in their opening phrases: 'The prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz' (Isa. 1.1); 'The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah' (Jer. 1.1) and so on. The question is: how far do these books indeed contain the very words spoken by these prophets, or constitute at least a written résumé of their actual words? To answer this question we will have to advert to the books themselves.

First, one may discern that occasionally the words of various prophets found their way into one book. This is the case with the book of Zechariah. The first part of the book, chs. 1–8, contains prophecies by Zechariah son of Ido, spoken in Jerusalem in the days of the Return, starting in the second year of King Darius (520 BCE). The historical background of the book are the days of the Persian Empire at the end of the sixth century BCE. This background is altogether absent from the second half of the book (chs. 9–14), where mention is made of Aram, Assyria and Ephraim as well as of Yavan (9.13). This gave ground to the assumption that some very ancient prophecies from the eighth century BCE are imbedded here,² prophecies reworked

(Hebrew; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986); S. Ahituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1992).

2. H. Tadmor, 'Azriyau of Yaudi', *Scripta Hierosolymitana*. VIII. *Studies in*

and edited at the end of the Persian or beginning of the Hellenistic era. By a different theory Zechariah 9–14 is of an altogether late origin, the ancient names being codenames, as is the case in the book of Daniel and in the writings of the Qumran sect.³

An additional point sharpening the distinction between first and second Zechariah is their greatly diverging concepts of divine revelation. The first Zechariah gets his inspiration from night visions (1.8; 4.1): he falls asleep, sees visions till the angel wakes him and interprets them. Thus, here we deal with a dream-revelation even if the word 'dream' itself is not mentioned. In the second Zechariah, on the other hand, we explicitly read: 'For the teraphim spoke delusion, the augurs predicted falsely, and dreamers speak lies and console with illusions' (Zech. 10.2). This altogether reversed attitude resembles Jeremiah's words concerning prophets who told dreams (Jer. 23.25–29). In rejecting dreams, likening them to the unpermissible process of augury and divination by 'teraphim', Deutero-Zechariah differs entirely from the attitude of the later apocalyptic literature; his position has the hallmark of the classical prophets and their first disciples.

Better known than the division of the book of Zechariah is that of the book of Isaiah into two distinct books: chs. 1–39; 40–66. The argumentation according to which chs. 40–66 are not considered to be by Isaiah son of Amoz, from the eighth century, is well known; it will thus suffice to adduce a partial summary.⁴

The explicit historical background of Isa. 1–39 is the appearance of Assyria in the western part of the fertile crescent (Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine) in the last third of the eighth century (733–701 BCE). The Assyrian king is a frequent protagonist in the prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz. In Palestine there are two states which oppose him: the kingdom of Israel and that of Judah (Isa. chs. 7–8; 9.7–20; 17.3; 28.1–4). This is not the case in chs. 40 and onwards. Here the enemy is not the Assyrian Empire but the new Babylonian Empire (46.1–2; 47). However, the days of Babylon are numbered: it is about to be con-

the Bible (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), pp. 232–71.

3. *Šyym ktym* in Dan. 11.30 is a codename for the Romans, borrowed from Num. 24.24, it has also been used in Qumran writings (War scroll and Peshar Habakkuk). Cf. Y. Hoffmann, *The Prophecies against Foreign Nations in the Bible* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1977), pp. 298–304.

4. M.H. Segal, 'Isaiah', *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Hebrew), III (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1958), pp. 908–36, cols. 927–28.

quered by Cyrus, king of Persia, who is God's shepherd and anointed one (44.28; 45.1). As for Israel, it is no longer a kingdom; it resides in the diaspora (45.13), in holes and dungeons (42.22). Jerusalem has been destroyed and is waiting to be rebuilt (44.28; 45.13; 51.3; 52.9); the people are to be redeemed and to go out from Babylon (48.20-21). These historical conditions prevailed around the middle of the sixth century (550-540 BCE).

According to this reality the prophetic vision changes. Isaiah son of Amoz foresees the revival of the Davidic kingdom at the hand of an ideal king (9.1-6; 16.5; 32.1-8) who is to appear upon Assyria's downfall (10.33-11.9). As opposed to this, in Isaiah 40 and onwards there is no expectation for any Israelite king: Israel will be redeemed by God—through his servant Cyrus or even directly (see below). It seems as if the nation has abandoned all notion of a kingdom or royal ideal, nor are they mentioned by the prophet.

The change in the political and geographical horizon results in a shift in the prophet's admonition. Isaiah son of Amoz takes his listeners to task on account of idolatry (2.12-22; 17.8; 30.22; 31.7); whereas in chs. 40-53 the prophet has no truck with Israel's idolatry (the only exception being 48.5). Idol worship here is the practice of the nations against which the prophet polemicizes. To him, Cyrus and the redemption of Israel from Babylon are eternal proof of the omnipotence of God and the nonentity of idols. Idolatry is the theme of a trial this prophet conducts on an imaginary stage (41.21-29; 43.9-10; 44.6-20; 46.5-11).

The differentiation between the words of Isaiah son of Amoz and those of the other prophet, usually designated Deutero-Isaiah, rests on two concepts: the difference in historical conditions on the one and in prophetic message on the other hand. The claim regarding a change in historical conditions does not (solely) result from the inability of modern research to accept a prophet's foreseeing events which were to take place over a hundred and fifty years after his days; it mainly lies in the fact that the prophet of Isaiah 40 onwards does not predict the Babylonian exile and the advent of the Persian Empire, but assumes these changes to have taken place already. As to the difference in prophetic message: the themes and content characteristic of each of these prophets are indeed set, to a certain extent, by the historical conditions in which they were active, but in the main each of them expresses his own unique outlook and viewpoint. Thus, the understanding of the

specific message of each prophet largely depends on our ability to distinguish between utterances of different prophets which found their way into one book, in this case—between the words of Proto- and those of Deutero-Isaiah.

Less widespread, and thus less accepted, is the postulate by which the last few chapters in the book of Isaiah—chs. 54-66 in my opinion—do not originate with Deutero-Isaiah, but are to be attributed to yet another prophet, designated in research as Trito-Isaiah.⁵ This further distinction is not only important to a full understanding of Isaiah 40-66, but may serve as a key in explaining the formation of the book of Isaiah. Because of the crucial nature of this point, I shall go into its details at some length.

The differentiation between Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah is based first and foremost on the obvious disparity in their content. To begin with, the two prophets differ in their concept of Israel's redemption. Deutero-Isaiah heralds redemption by the hand of the Persian king, Cyrus. He is God's shepherd (44.28); he is his anointed (45.1); he will conquer Babylon (48.14) and will return the Judaeans exiles to their land, rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (44.28; 45.13). Cyrus is sustained by God, who does not act overtly but remains invisible. The Lord, in the words of Deutero-Isaiah is 'a God who concealed himself...who brings victory' (45.15). As opposed to this, Trito-Isaiah describes the redemption as a feat carried out by the Lord himself. To him, it is the Lord alone who will act; so in the eulogium the prophet attributes to the Lord: 'Of the peoples no man was with Me... Then I looked, but there was none to help; I stared but there was none to aid; so my own arm wrought the triumph, and my own rage was my aid' (63.3, 5, compare 59.16). The deliverance in Trito-Isaiah has an eschatological stamp. The Lord who 'is coming with fire, his chariots are like a whirlwind' (66.15), puts an end to the regular course of history heralding a new era 'a new heaven and a new earth' (65.17, compare 66.22). Not so for Deutero-Isaiah: the deliverance at the hand of Cyrus as depicted by this prophet is altogether part of a historical sequence of events. We thus have two contrasting notions of redemption: the realistic-historical concept, as opposed to the metaphysical-eschatological.

5. Scholars have usually accepted Duhm's attribution of chs. 56-66 to Trito-Isaiah. I follow Kuenen in detaching chs. 54-66 from Deutero-Isaiah; cf. A. Rofé, *Studies on the Composition of the Books of Torah and Prophets* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1986), pp. 108-119.

These shifts in perception entail an additional difference which concerns the question of the future world rule. Deutero-Isaiah regards Cyrus as a ruler appointed by God (41.1-4; 44.24-45.13). Under his rule Israel will be redeemed and come back to its land. As opposed to this Trito-Isaiah heralds the onset of a new world empire, the empire of Israel. As David in his time was: 'a leader of peoples, a prince and commander of nations' (55.4), so in the days to come, far away nations will serve Israel: 'So you shall summon a nation you did not know, and a nation that did not know you shall come running to you' (55.5; compare a similar expression in Job 19.16: 'I summon my servant but he does not respond'). Strangers shall pasture Israel's flocks, aliens shall till their land and trim their vines (61.15). Jerusalem is depicted as a capital of a world empire, a city of plenty, to which foreign princes shall bring tributes and glory (60.4-17, compare 54.11-12). It is surprising that in this world empire no future Davidide plays any role at all. Apparently, Trito-Isaiah transposed elements from the Persian reality of his time into his vision of Israel's world empire.

At the same time, however, Trito-Isaiah's vision of redemption reflects the reality of *Eretz Israel* in his days. Time and again does the prophet promise Judah that it shall regain its land; 'Your offspring shall dispossess nations and shall people the desolate towns' (54.3); 'But those who trust Me shall inherit the land and possess My sacred mount' (57.13); 'I shall set you astride the heights of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of your father Jacob' (58.14); 'And your people, all of them righteous, shall possess the land for all time' (60.21); 'they shall have a double share in their land, joy shall be theirs for all time' (61.7); 'I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, from Judah heirs to My mountains; My chosen ones shall take possession, My servants shall dwell thereon' (65.9). These repeated promises reflect the unbearable situation prevalent in the land of Israel during the fifth century, when most of the Judaeen mountains were in the hands of the Edomites, and the enemies of Judah and Benjamin acted as lords of the land. From the book of Chronicles, a historical source dating to those days, we glean the unendurable pain that 'Our heritage has passed to aliens' (Lam. 5.2), and the gnawing anguish lest the inheritance of Jacob will slip out of his hands. The Chronicler describes a Transjordanian attack: 'Now the people of Ammon, Moab and the hill country of Seir, into whose [land] You did not let Israel come when they came from Egypt, but they turned aside from them and did

not wipe them out, these now repay us by coming to expel us from Your possession that You gave us as ours' (2 Chron. 20.10-11). This is all the more painful seeing God had given the land to 'the descendants of Your friend Abraham forever' (2 Chron. 20.7). Even though the Chronicler puts the words in the mouth of Jehoshaphat, he obviously depicts the reality of his own days at the end of the Persian era. This is the prevailing situation which provoked Trito-Isaiah's repeated promise of a reinheritance of the land, a theme altogether absent from Deutero-Isaiah. The latter perceives Israel's redemption quite differently; to him it will be a second exodus from Egypt (43.16-20; 44.27; 48.20-22; 51.9-11).

Both Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah herald a time when foreign nations will acknowledge the God of Israel. If for Deutero-Isaiah this means their unreticent recognition that the Lord of Israel is the only God (45.14-15, 20-25), Trito-Isaiah is less explicit, but alludes to their recognition of the Lord's glory (59.19; 66.18-19). In Trito-Isaiah, however, I notice a certain development: he is aware of the concrete problem of converts and Judaizants. He maintains that those who live with Israel will cleave onto them (54.15); the foreigners who attached themselves to the Lord will be ingathered together with the exiles of Israel (56.3-8). Thus to him the nations' acceptance of the Lord is of a clear cultic nature: 'And new moon after new moon, and Sabbath after Sabbath, all flesh shall come and worship Me, said the Lord' (66.23).

Idolatry is one more theme on which these two prophets diverge. To Deutero-Isaiah idol worship is one of the ways of the nations which they will relinquish (45.20-21; 46.1-11). Only once, in passing, does he mention Israel's idolatry (48.5). Trito-Isaiah, however turns his wrath against Israel's idolatry, which he holds as the cause of the disastrous downfall in his days (57.3-8; 65.1-7, 11; 66.3, 7). On this theme there is a remarkable affinity between Trito-Isaiah and Isaiah son of Amoz.

In this context we should examine Israel's ethical image as held by each of these two prophets. Deutero-Isaiah sees Israel as one entity, a rebel from birth (48.8), whose earliest ancestor had sinned (43.27), who wearied the Lord with its continuous sinning (43.24). But then Israel expiated its iniquities (40.2) and the Lord wiped away its sins (43.25; 44.22). Trito-Isaiah divides the nation into two. First there are the servants of the Lord (54.17; 65.9, 13-15; 66.14), his chosen ones (65.9, 22), those who trust the Lord (57.13) who are concerned about his word (66.2, 5), his people who seek him (65.10), those in Jacob

who turn back from sin (59.20), the righteous (60.21). The second group are the wicked (57.20, 21), foes of the Lord (66.14), those who rebelled against him (66.24), who forsook the Lord and ignored his holy mountain (55.11). These two groups will be recompensed in accordance with their deeds. This division of the nation into two reflects an ideological polarization unknown until then. It is well possible that here there is a foreshadowing of the division into sects—Pharisees and Sadducees—of the Hasmonean–Roman period.

The prophets' different stands on the concept of reward entails their variance on yet another concept: the Word of the Lord. In the eyes of Deutero-Isaiah the people's redemption is not conditioned by their deeds: it is a sovereign act of the Lord. Thus, the Lord's word is not conditional, it is infallible. That is its property: 'But the word of our God is always fulfilled' (40.8). The fulfilment of the Lord's word proves his prophets true vis-à-vis the augurs and diviners (44.25–26). It also proves his verity as opposed to the nonentity of idols (45.20–25; 46.8–11). As against this, for Trito-Isaiah the word of the Lord is not meant to be fulfilled. It is like the rain and snow sent down to fertilize the earth. The 'Word' is to impregnate the hearts of its hearers, the hearts of the wicked whom it inspires to leave their sinful ways (55.6–11). The Word of the Lord does not seek to be fulfilled, it seeks to execute the wish of its sender.⁶

There are seven points of divergence between what I have defined as the utterances of Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40–53) and those of Trito-Isaiah (chs. 54–66). It is therefore almost impossible to attribute chs. 40–66 to one prophet, even conceding that in the course of a lifetime opinions do change. If we take into account what I have identified as their historical background, a long span separates the two prophets. Deutero-Isaiah was active in the middle of the sixth century, round the days of Cyrus's conquest of Babylon (540 BCE). Trito-Isaiah prophesied two or more generations later, well into the fifth century, during the period of adversity prior to Nehemiah's restoration of the province of Judah and the (re)construction of Jerusalem's walls.

How, then, can the fact that the words of numerous prophets found their way into one book be explained? Quite often the reason may be of

6. For a more detailed treatment, cf. A. Rofé, 'How is the Word Fulfilled? Isaiah 55.6–11 within the Theological Debate of its Time', in *Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of B.S. Childs* (ed. G.M. Tucker et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1988), pp. 246–61.

purely technical nature: a scroll without title was appended to another. This seems the case in the joining of Zechariah 1–8 with 9–14, and Isaiah 1–39 with 40–66. The historical narration at the end of the first half of the book (Isa. 36–39) was borrowed from 2 Kgs 18–20, in order to conclude the prophecies of Proto-Isaiah with a description of their fulfilment. An analogous procedure obtains in Jeremiah 52 which was taken from the end of the book of Kings. That being so, we may assume that whoever appended the historical epilogue to the words of Isaiah son of Amoz had an already finalized text in front of him.

Another reason for the joining of the words of several prophets to each other may be their belonging to the same school. The second prophet may either be a direct pupil of the first, or he may have belonged to the circle of scribes who conveyed and preserved their master's prophecies, keeping his message alive for future generations. This seems to be the relation between Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah. It has been proved that Trito-Isaiah was familiar with the words of Deutero-Isaiah from which he quotes, though with changes, giving them a new turn.⁷ From a number of examples I shall adduce one only.

Deutero-Isaiah describes the exodus from Babylon: 'For you will not depart in haste, nor will you leave in flight; for the Lord is marching before you, the God of Israel is your rear guard' (52.12). This is how the prophet saw the future return to Palestine: the Lord physically protected the returning exiles, guarding the head and the rear of their columns. Trito-Isaiah in his admonition on a fast day, preaches in very similar words: 'then shall your light burst through like the dawn, and your healing spring up quickly, your righteousness shall march before you, the *kabōd* of the Lord be your rear guard' (58.8). The words may well be similar, but the scenes they evoke are altogether different. The march is no longer of returnees on their way back to Zion, but rather a symbolic (and therefore secondary) way towards happiness and satisfaction (light, healing, the response of the Lord); here the voyager is accompanied not by the Lord himself but by his own righteousness, and by *kabōd YHWH*, an intangible concept, which for Trito-Isaiah may be either the radiance of the Lord (60.1, as in the Priestly document), or his mighty deeds (66.18–19). As well as disclosing the dependence of Trito-Isaiah on Deutero-Isaiah, this example testifies against a mere accidental 'lumping together' of the

7. Cf. W. Zimmerli, 'Zur Sprache Tritojesajas', *STU* 20 (1950), pp. 110–22, reprinted in *idem, Gottes Offenbarung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1963), pp. 217–33.

words of both prophets; it corroborates their being joined organically in the transmission of a definite prophetic school.

A final methodological word of warning is in order: in the research of biblical literature it does not suffice to compare the style of various pericopes, it is the *meaning* of the words that counts. Altered contexts, as well as semantic changes, impede too easy identifications and point the way to the detection of distinct authors.

3. *The Elaboration of Prophetic Words by the Disciples*

Besides the joining of prophecies spoken by various prophets together into one book, one should take into account the phenomenon of the reworking of prophecies in the process of their transmission. At first sight we might not believe this possible. The words of the prophets were considered utterances of the living God: who would dare to submit them to any changes? All the same, the prophecies have been reworked and elaborated upon. The religious devotion of the transmitters caused them to rephrase the material: precisely because the words were those of a living God, they considered it their duty to adapt them to each new generation. In later generations the words were no longer actually changed, only commented upon in homilies in order to make them relevant to a new reality. In former generations, however, the very prophecies were still reworded to imbue them with a valid message.

Evidence of the act of reworking of the prophet's words is found in the parallel passages in Jer. 21.1-7 and 37.3-10. In both passages, we are told about the delegation King Zedekiah of Judah sent to the prophet Jeremiah during the last war with the Chaldeans, on the eve of the fall of Jerusalem. Two ministers took part in the delegation: Pashhur son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah according to 21.1; Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah according to 37.3. From the list in 38.1 we know that one of these ministers was Jeremiah's enemy; the other, according to 29.25, 29, was his friend. The delegations came to hear the word of God from the prophet's mouth (21.2; 37.7), or to ask the prophet to pray to God (37.3). In both cases they were looking for an oracle from the prophet. But since they wanted it to be a prophecy of salvation they asked the prophet to intercede with the Lord first (37.3). Jeremiah, however, answers pronouncing a detailed prophecy of doom (21.3-7; 37.6-10).

From the historical-literary aspect the question arises regarding the

relation between these two passages: do they tell about two different delegations or do we have two versions of one event? If we consider the circumstances, it is feasible indeed that Jeremiah was sought out by more than one delegation. The Babylonian siege on Jerusalem lasted for a year and a half—and some scholars claim even for two and a half years; during this period King Zedekiah could have sent to Jeremiah five or six times. We know besides that he also inquired personally of the prophet 37.17-19; 38.14-23. However, we do not deal here with what could have been, but with the data as preserved in the book of Jeremiah, and on analysing these I find that we have two versions of one event. This conclusion is sustained by the following points.

First of all, neither of the stories mentions, not even with so much as a hint, that a preceding delegation had already been sent to Jeremiah. In each of the stories the present deputation is referred to as a single occurrence. From this, I infer that these are not two separate events related by one author, but rather one undertaking, most probably the same, described by two authors. This situation bears resemblance to the well-known doublets, so familiar in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

Indeed, the great number of deviations in the nature of the two stories indicates that they were written, or at least transmitted, by two different authors. Jer. 37.3-10 is rich in historical and biographical detail: the Chaldeans had besieged Jerusalem but on hearing of the setting out of the Pharaoh's army from Egypt they had raised the siege (vv. 5, 7). In the words of Jeremiah 'even if you defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans that is fighting against you...' (v. 10) we hear an echo of a certain temporary success the Judaeans had had against the Chaldeans retreating in the direction of the coast. At this point King Zedekiah sent for word from Jeremiah. The prophet, however, replied that the Egyptian expedition would go back to their country and the Chaldeans would return to destroy the city (vv. 7-8). Jeremiah himself was in Jerusalem, as yet not under arrest (v. 4), though this was to happen soon afterwards (vv. 11-15). All of these details are absent from the story as related in 21.1-7; here we learn about the fact of the delegation—no more. Yet, 21.1-7 conveys material missing from 37.3-10: this passage reveals the lot of King Zedekiah who was to die at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. It is no mere chance that this information does not obtain in 37.3-10. From other stories we learn that even at a later date Jeremiah

still promised King Zedekiah that if he surrendered in time he would live (38.17-23, compare 34.4-5). We have seen that 37.3-10 offers a wealth of historical details pertaining to the time of the delegation, all missing from 21.1-7, which in its turn is informed as to what took place later—Zedekiah's death. The latter source thus delivers a *vaticinium ex eventu*, whereas 37.3-10 is, as far as I can judge, a reliable historical story of a relatively ancient date; 21.1-7 is less reliable and younger.

Yet the narrative in 21.1-7 has merits of its own. It does not focus on the fate of the king and his servants but rather on the question of who destroyed Jerusalem. In 37.8-10 it was done by the Chaldeans; in Jeremiah's answer there is a hint of defiance: 'Even if you defeat the whole army of the Chaldeans that is fighting against you, and only wounded men were left lying in their tents, they would get up and burn this city.' Jer. 21.4-7 on the other hand stresses that the act will be carried out by the Lord. It is he who turns around the weapons in the hands of Zedekiah's men (v. 4); he will introduce the Chaldeans into the city (v. 4); the Lord himself will battle against the Judaeans with anger and rage and outstretched arm (v. 5); the Lord strikes with pestilence (v. 6); and finally it is the Lord who delivers those who survive into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 7). This author stresses the Lord's role in the fall of Jerusalem, while the Chaldeans are a mere tool in his hands. Here speaks a theologian who emphasizes the Lord's action in the recent history of Judah. This author is not as accurate in his description of the actual events or in conveying Jeremiah's words, as was the one in 37.3-10; but he comments on the prophet's answer in the light of Jeremiah's teaching as he understood it.

Another point should be made: this theologian was influenced by the book of Deuteronomy or by the school where this book originated, the Deuteronomistic school. He described the Lord's battle against Jerusalem 'with an outstretched arm, with anger and rage and great wrath' (v. 5). These are expressions frequent in the book of Deuteronomy: when depicting the exodus (4.34; 5.15; 7.19; 11.3; 26.8) or the exile (29.27).

The duplicate narration of Zedekiah's delegation is evidence that the prophetic books contain original and reworked prophecies side by side. Only in rare cases do we have both versions, at times the authentic prophecies have been retained, at others only the reworked ones. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two or to identify the

elaboration. However, from now on, the right starting point should be the awareness of these elaborations. We will therefore be justified in identifying them even in those passages which do not offer the tangible witnesses we had at our disposal for the comparison of Jer. 21.1-7 and 37.3-10.⁸

In the case seen just now the reworking was a thorough one: in the prophecy as it obtains in Jer. 21.1-7 no more than the main points of 37.3-10 have been retained. The two prophecies do not show any linguistic similarity: neither in language or style nor in vocabulary. This is not the case in the next example, where it can be seen that the reworked text, as against the original, evinces no more than minor changes. The reworking interprets the original, yet at the same time somewhat blurs its message. Thenceforth the recasting goes beyond the primary meaning, and in the process of generalization even contradicts it. Let us now look at Jer. 22.1-5:

¹Thus said the Lord: 'Go down to the palace of the king of Judah, where you shall utter this word. ²Say: "hear the word of the Lord: O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, and your courtiers and your subjects who enter these gates! ³Thus said the Lord: 'do what is just and right; rescue from the defrauder him who is robbed. Do not wrong the stranger, the fatherless and the widow; commit no lawless act, and do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place. ⁴For if you fulfill this command, then through the gates of this place shall enter kings of David's line who sit upon his throne, riding horsedrawn chariots with their courtiers and their subjects. ⁵But if you do not, heed these commands, I swear by Myself, declares the Lord, that this place shall become a ruin.'"

The opening of the oracle urges the kings (vv. 2-3a) to judge properly and prevent the mighty from violating the rights of the destitute ('rescue from the defrauder him who is robbed'). This is followed by a warning: 'do not wrong the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, commit no lawless act and do not shed the blood of the innocent' (v. 3b). How odd! The king who, at the outset, was called upon to do right and stop the violation of the weak is suddenly turned into a potential defrauder, admonished by the prophet to cease from his ways

8. For a more detailed treatment, cf. A. Rofé, 'Studies on the Composition of the Book of Jeremiah', *Tarbiz* 44 (1974/5), pp. 1-29 (Hebrew, with English summary on pp. 5-8). For opposed views cf. W.L. Holladay, *Jeremia 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), *ad loc.*; W. McKane, *Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), I, *ad loc.*

of oppression and violence and, even worse, the bloodshed of the innocent. This certainly is inconsistent.

An examination of Jer. 21.11-12 verifies the awareness that the two parts of 22.3 are at variance. In 21.11-12 we read as follows:

¹¹To the House of the king of Judah: [this superscription relates to all the prophecies regarding the kings from here to 23.8]. ¹²Hear the word of the Lord, O house of David, thus said the Lord: 'Render just verdict early in the morning. Rescue him who is robbed from him who defrauded him, else my wrath will break forth like fire and burn, with none to quench it, because of their wicked acts.'

All the elements obtaining in 21.11-12a show in 22.1-3, even the title 'to the House of the king of Judah' (22.1). And so further on: 'Hear the word of the Lord' (plural in 21.11b), as against 'Hear the word of the Lord' (singular in 22.2); 'The House of David' (21.12a) against 'The king of Judah who sits on the throne of David' (22.2). The prophecy in 22.1-5 explains the one in 21.11-12. But at a certain point the exegesis no longer conforms with the original. 'Render a fast verdict in the morning' (21.12a) induces the judge not to tarry, to render a verdict in the morning, as the early morning is the time for lawsuits (cf. 2 Sam. 15.1-6; Zeph. 3.5; Ps. 101.8). If the judge does not intervene in time, he places the robbed at the mercy of the wicked who defrauded him. The 'do what is just and right' of 22.3a is a general demand for justice and moral standards, but does not convey Jeremiah's specific exhortation to the judges not to defer their duties.

However, decisive for my purpose is the fact that the verses which aroused suspicion, 22.3b-5, starting with the words: 'Do not wrong the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow' are not represented in the prophecy in 21.11-12, which seems closer to the original. The interpolation in 22.3b-5 bears the hallmark of a stock different from that of the original prophecy, which has been slightly paraphrased here. The concluding phrase: 'But if you do not heed... this place shall become a ruin', offers a key as to why the addition was made. The author responsible for 22.3b-5, felt the need for a rationalization of the severity of the punishment, the total destruction. He therefore replaced the minor sin of delayed judgment with that of bloodshed. Theodicy demanded a severe sin, committed by the king, not an omission but a commission.

We should here pay attention to another detail. The original prophecy 21.11-12 is phrased as words spoken by Jeremiah. The secondary

prophecy, the reworked and expanded one, in 22.1-5, is delivered as words the Lord spoke to Jeremiah. How can this fact be explained? It seems as if the author refrained from presenting his words as spoken by Jeremiah to the people, because his public was already familiar with the prophet's words. Therefore, the writer referred them to the occult stage in prophetic transmission, that between God and the prophet. Regarding this stage there was, as yet, no tradition, neither oral nor written. And indeed, in a number of cases, mostly in the book of Jeremiah, we find secondary prophecies, either reworked or added, phrased as words spoken by God to the prophet, in order to be delivered, in due time, to the people.

We have thus seen how the editor of Jer. 22.1-5 contributed his own reflections, appending them to the words of the prophet. This phenomenon merits a separate discussion in the next chapter.