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• CHAPTER 1 •

Isaiah: The Book

What Is a Book?

We speak of “the book of Isaiah,” but it would be a good idea to be clear at the outset as to what we mean when we speak of a biblical book. Our understanding of a book as a composition written by one or more authors, usually identified by name and protected legally from the intrusion, well-meaning or otherwise, of later hands, is a product of the early modern age. We cannot assume that this is the way books were understood in antiquity. Some ancient compositions included a colophon in which the owner of the tablet or the scribe who copied it is named. *Gilgamesh*, for example, was copied by a certain incantation priest named Sin-leqe-unninni. He may also have collated and arranged existing Gilgamesh material, but we may doubt whether he qualifies realistically as author of the poem. At any rate, the collating, classifying, and archiving of what can be called canonical texts, but without much regard for authorship, is well attested for ancient Mesopotamia.¹ In Greece, handbooks and technical manuals on such subjects as medicine and rhetoric were being produced from the 5th century B.C.E. These would have circulated among specialists without in any way presupposing widespread literacy or, much less, the existence of a book-publishing industry. The *Histories* of Herodotus (ca. 420 B.C.E.) and Thucydides (ca. 390 B.C.E.)

1. Wilfred G. Lambert, “Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity,” *JCS* 11 (1957): 1-14; Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Canonicity in Cuneiform Texts,” *JCS* 36 (1984): 127-44.

would have been read by the few and heard read in public recitations by the illiterate many. The same would be true of the works of the great tragedians. In preindustrial societies like ancient Greece and ancient Israel, the great majority of the population had neither the competence nor the motivation to read and write.²

In the Jewish context, books in anything like the modern understanding of the term only begin to appear in the Hellenistic period. J. B. Bury pointed out long ago that the concept of *littérateur* or author is a creation of that time. He added, perhaps somewhat hyperbolically, that from one end of the Mediterranean to the other people were expressing themselves in writing, and that since education was by then quite widely (if thinly) spread there was no lack of readers.³ An early commentator on Qoheleth who, not untypically, is identified only by a pseudonym, may also have been guilty of hyperbole when he complained that in his day, probably the second half of the 3rd century B.C.E., there was no end of making books (Qoh 12:12).

As far as we know, the first Jewish composition in which the author identifies himself is *The Wisdom of ben Sira*. He gives us his full name towards the end of the treatise ("Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach of Jerusalem," Sir 50:27), and his composition is recommended to the public at the beginning in a blurb written by his grandson. Needless to say, we are at the mercy of the few sources which have survived from the obscure period of early Jewish history that covers the last century of Persian rule and the Diadochoi down to the Maccabees. One or other of the Jewish historians writing in Greek, whose work has survived only in scraps handed down by later authors including Josephus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius, may antedate Sirach. Demetrius and Pseudo-Hecataeus in particular come

2. On literacy in antiquity, see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 66-93 (an average of 10 per cent of the population); Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 39-45. Aaron Demsky, "Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism, Part One: The Biblical Period," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (1988; repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 10-20, is too optimistic in assessing the degree of literacy in Israel of the biblical period, and is certainly mistaken in claiming that his maximalist view represents a consensus (15). On literacy in early Christianity, see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1-41.

3. J. B. Bury, *The Hellenistic Age: Aspects of Hellenistic Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1923), 32-33.

to mind.⁴ Literary activity at that time also included putting texts which had become part of the national patrimony under the name of a great figure from the past: Moses as author of the Pentateuch, David of Psalms, Solomon of Proverbs and much else besides. About the same time, names were attached to prophetic books. It is unlikely that all of the names assigned to the 15 prophetic books in the biblical canon had been passed down from the time when the prophecies were first spoken or written. Some names would have been known since they occur in the text (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos) or in a different text (Micah in Jer 26:17-19), but in several cases (Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) the name of the putative author appears only in the superscription, not in the text itself. (The attribution to Habakkuk of the poem in Hab 3:1-19 is dependent on the title of the book in 1:1). One of the Twelve, Malachi, is clearly fictitious, others are not above suspicion, and for most of the units in the *Dodekapropheton* independent confirmation of authorship is lacking. The question of Isaianic authorship will be taken up in the following chapter.

Books (Heb. *sēpārīm*) were in the form of a roll of papyrus or animal skin (*mēgillā*) rather than a codex. When Isa 34:4, followed by Rev 6:14, says that on judgment day the sky will be rolled up like a book, the authors are obviously thinking of a scroll, a *mēgillā*. The gradual transition from scroll to book in codex form, the form still in use, took place between the 1st and the 4th centuries C.E., and the spread of Christianity had much to do with it. The codex made finding a specific passage much easier and was more capacious, probably less expensive, and much easier to work with. A person needed two hands to manage a scroll, only one for a codex.⁵

In biblical texts, the term *sēper* refers to a range of products to which we would not assign the word "book."⁶ These include lists, records, con-

4. Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 1: *Historians*. SBLT 39 (Chico: SBL, 1983); Harold W. Attridge, "Jewish Historiography," in *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsberg (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 311-16; Pieter W. van der Horst, "The Interpretation of the Bible by the Minor Hellenistic Authors," in Mulder, *Mikra*, 528-46.

5. On books in early Christianity, see Gamble, 42-81.

6. In a stimulating article Edgar W. Conrad stresses the need to clarify the different meanings of *sēper* in biblical texts and argues against the common assumption that orality was displaced by writing; on the contrary, in many instances the written word was the basis for oral performance. See his "Heard But Not Seen: The Representation of 'Books' in the Old Testament," *JSOT* 54 (1992): 45-59.

tracts, and other legal documents. Letters (*sēpārīm*) are mentioned in Isaiah (37:14), as is a decree of divorce (*sēper kēritūt*, 50:1). In one cryptic aside (34:16), the reader is urged to consult a "Book of Yahveh." The passage immediately preceding (34:5-15) describes the impending devastation of Edom, destined to be handed over to satyrs and other unpleasant creatures under the sway of the demoness Lilith. There follows the invitation to consult this Book of Yahveh (*sēper YHVH*), a passage which Bernhard Duhm, one of the great names in Isaianic interpretation, described as one of the strangest in the prophetic corpus.⁷ The idea seems to be that consulting this "book" will verify that the ecological degradation of Edom will indeed take place and that that country has been, as it were, juridically handed over to wild animals. The *sēper* in question is not further identified. It could be a lost work, like "The Book of the Wars of Yahveh" or "The Book of Yashar" (Num 21:14; Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18), one which contained oracular utterances directed against hostile peoples like Edom; we are not told. At any rate, this "Book of Yahveh" is not to be confused with "the Book of God" or "the Book of the Living" which contain the names of the elect, those recorded by God for life (Isa 4:3). The "Book of Truth" of Dan 10:21 is different again, closer to the Mesopotamian "Tablets of Destiny."

From Scraps to Scrolls⁸

Since our inquiries are concerned with the future rather than the past of the book of Isaiah and, specifically, how it was received and interpreted in late antiquity, it will not be necessary to rehearse once again, in good historical-critical fashion, the history of the formation of the book. But for future reference, some issues relevant to our main theme need a brief mention.

1. The book of Isaiah is a component of Prophets (*Neviim*), the midsection of the tripartite Hebrew Bible canon. This section contains four historical books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and four prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve or, in the order set out in the famous baraita in the Babylonian Talmud: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the

7. *Das Buch Jesaja*, 2nd ed. HKAT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), 253.

8. I borrow this genial formulation from Philip R. Davies, "'Pen of iron, point of diamond' (Jer 17:1): Prophecy as Writing," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd. SBLSymS 10 (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 72.

Twelve (*b. B. Bat.* 14b). In the following section of the baraita, dealing with the authorship of the biblical books, the order is different again. Jeremiah authored the book that bears his name together with the book of Kings and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Canticles, and Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), while "the Men of the Great Assembly" wrote Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve. The surprising information that King Hezekiah wrote Isaiah is explained by Rashi on the grounds that Isaiah was murdered by Manasseh before he had time to write up his prophecies himself; a more probable explanation is that "wrote" here means "copied."⁹ The inclusion of history under the rubric of prophecy also calls for an explanation. Whatever else it implies, it reflects one of the transformations which prophecy was undergoing in the postdestruction phase of the history, transformations of profound and enduring importance. The profile of the prophet as critic of social mores and powerful counterforce to corrupt political and religious elites recedes into the background. It becomes the road not taken. One of its substitutes is the prophet as historian. In his polemical treatise *Against Apion*, Josephus, not unmindful of his own role as historian and his own claim to prophetic endowment, makes the remarkable claim that in Judaism "the prophets alone had this privilege (of writing historical records), obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God" (*C. Ap.* 1:37). By that time, however, the idea was familiar. According to the author of Chronicles, the prophet Isaiah was the historian of the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (2 Chr 26:22; 32:32), and the Chronicler refers to several other prophets as historical sources. The ideological shift is apparent. On this showing, the authority of the prophet bears on the past, not on the present or the future, and therefore the ability of the prophet to question and even destabilize the power structures of society is neutralized.

2. Within this overall structure of the *Neviim* there lurks a counterstructure comprising the three (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and the twelve (the *Dodekapropheton*). If, as seems probable, the final paragraph of Malachi, the last of the twelve, is the finale to the entire prophetic collection (Mal 3:23-24 [Eng. 4:5-6]), its allusion to the return of Elijah in the end time and his task of reconciliation seems to insinuate an eschatologi-

9. See the recent discussion of the baraita in Jed Wyrick, *The Ascension of Authorship* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 21-58.

cal reading of the collection as a whole, with a focus on the reintegration and reformation of Israel. This reading of the passage is confirmed by its earliest extant interpretation. Of Elijah, Jesus ben Sira writes:

At the appointed time, it is written that you are destined
to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury,
to turn the hearts of parents to their children,
and to restore the tribes of Israel. (48:10)

This eschatological thrust into the future, towards the creation of a renewed or new community, is found in almost all the prophetic books. Its identification in Isaiah is one of the chief aims of the present study.

3. Isaiah, a collection of many "scraps" and several compilations differing in linguistic character and theme, therefore much closer to the *Dodekapropheton* than to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is nevertheless presented as a unity, a *book*. The intent is implicit in the literary phenomenon of inclusion, that is, a deliberate linguistic and thematic parallelism between the beginning and the end of the compilation. The existence of this parallelism can be checked even without referring to the Hebrew text by comparing chapter 1, especially 1:27-31, with chapters 65-66. A unifying intention is also indicated by affixing the name Isaiah to the beginning of the scroll (1:1; 2:1), thus affirming authorial unity, though according to an understanding of authorship quite different from ours today. We will have more to say about the authorship of the book in the following chapter.

4. The prophet was, in the first instance, a public speaker, a demagogue in the etymological sense of the term. Much prophetic discourse in early Israel doubtless went unrecorded, but some survived by being recorded in writing by disciples, or committed to memory and written down subsequently, or deposited in temple archives. Since Baruch did not know Jeremiah's prophecies by heart, they had to be written down for him to read to the public during a festival in the precincts of the temple from which Jeremiah was debarred — not surprisingly since he had predicted its destruction (Jer 36:4-6). Ezekiel's chariot-throne vision appears to have been expanded and elaborated by a "school" of devotees who expatiated on the living creatures, the chariot wheels (*'ôpannîm*), and the lapis throne. Isaiah confided his testimonies and teachings to his disciples in order to guarantee the authenticity of the predictions they contained after the failure of his first incursion into Judean foreign affairs (Isa 8:16).

This written copy is called a "testimony" (*tē'ûdâ*), an indication that predictive prophecies could take on a quasilegal status when written and notarized for purposes of authentication, comparable to the prophetic "witness" written in a "book" alluded to at Isa 30:8-11, a text to which we shall return.

5. The history of the interpretation of Isaiah begins in the book itself. There are numerous instances in the book of exegetical addenda attached to existing sayings. By way of example, we might consider the four brief prose addenda in the Isaianic first person narrative or Memoir (7:18-25) and the five appended to a discourse directed against Egypt (19:16-25). These latter cover a period of centuries, moving from the oracular poem condemning Egypt and mocking Egyptian claims to wisdom (19:1-15) to what is surely one of the most eirenic statements in the entire Hebrew Bible: "Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria the work of my hands, Israel my possession" (19:25). All of these are introduced with the formula "on that day," which redirects them to a future very different from the unsatisfactory present. We can detect throughout the book an ongoing process of commentary and supplementation, of cumulative and incremental interpretative activity, until the point is reached where such activity had to be carried on outside the book, in the form of commentary on it. Hence the capacity to generate commentary, of which the earliest examples are the Qumran pesharim, is one of the surest indications that the text in question is considered authoritative, a candidate for canonical status.

This feature of the book raises the question of authorization: on what basis did the anonymous authors of these addenda in Isaiah justify their activity? Take, for example, the sayings directed against Moab, one of Judah's neighbors, which is to say, enemies. The long poem in the form of an ironic lament over the misfortunes of Moab, a poem which is a masterpiece of *Schadenfreude* (Isa 15:1-16:11), is rounded off with a comment on the ritual lamentations going on in Moab's national sanctuary referred to in the poem (15:2):

When Moab wears himself out presenting himself at the hill-shrine,
when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not succeed. (16:12)

This codicil to the poem hardly called for much by way of prophetic inspiration, but a later hand has added a further "oracular," that is, predictive, statement:

This is the saying which Yahveh addressed to Moab a long time ago, but now Yahveh says, "Within three years, the length of employment for a hired laborer, the pomp of Moab will be humbled in spite of its great population. Those who are left will be few and of no account. (16:13-14)

This statement presupposes a claim to speak in the name of the same God who spoke years earlier through another anonymous prophet. The nexus is created by the conviction that the God who spoke then is still actively communicating through chosen intermediaries. The new pronouncement does not follow logically from the older one, is not even presented as a comment on it, yet clearly follows from a reading of the text as in some sense an inspired and authoritative utterance. It can be considered interpretation only in the broadest understanding of that word. We do not know on what basis the one responsible for the addendum considered himself authorized to create, so to speak, new prophecy out of old. Since one of the tasks of temple prophets was to denounce, curse, and predict bad fortune for the enemies of the state, he could have been one of their number.¹⁰ At all events, the claim implied in the prediction is comparable to the authorization assumed by the Levitical scholars who expounded the laws read out by Ezra (Neh 8:7-8) or the *maskilim*, the wise and learned leaders of the Daniel conventicle who also scrutinized the prophetic books (Dan 9:1-2), and of whom we shall have more to say later. The claim to authorization as a mouthpiece of the deity characteristic of prophecy has now been taken over by the interpreter of prophecy. The exegete is now the prophet.

The Literate and Illiterate Are Invited to Read a Sealed Book

Even stranger than the allusion in Isa 34:16 to a book of Yahveh that the reader is urged to consult is the reference in 29:11-12 to a sealed book. This is one of several cryptic sayings in the book which give the impression of being intended for a limited circle of readers who can be expected to get the point:

10. Compare the case of Hananiah, whose altercation with Jeremiah in the temple precincts included a similar short-term, high-risk prediction, in this instance a prediction of the defeat of Nebuchadnezzar within two years (Jer 28:1-11).

The vision of all this has become for you like the words of a sealed book. When they hand it to one who knows how to read, saying, "Read this please," he replies, "I can't, for it is sealed." When the book is handed to one who can't read, with the request, "Read this please," he replies, "I don't know how to read."

It is pointless to ask an illiterate person to read a book, a fortiori a sealed book, and no less pointless to ask a person who is literate but unauthorized to break the seal to do so. But it is precisely the pointlessness which provides the clue to the function of this brief dramatic cameo. We could read it as the literary deposit of one of those prophetic sign-acts which function as a form of interaction further along the spectrum of communication from hortatory or comminatory discourse. A parallel would be Jeremiah offering wine to the Rechabites in the temple precincts (Jer 35:1-11). Jeremiah knew in advance that the members of this radically rejectionist group which eschewed alcohol would decline the offer, but the idea was to make a point for the benefit of others, in this case about fidelity to religious traditions. As the initial sentence indicates, the point being made in the present instance has something to do with failure to grasp the prophetic message, but its more precise import can be determined only in the context of the book as a whole.

So perhaps, then, there is more to this passage than meets the eye. In the first place, Isa 29:11-12 is one of those addenda referred to earlier, generally in prose rather than the usual accented "recitative" of prophetic discourse. These addenda are attached to and are generated by reflection on existing prophetic sayings, updating earlier pronouncements in light of later situations, creating in effect new prophecy out of old. They are of various kinds, but most of them serve to extend the scope of the original saying into the future. Many of these addenda are prefaced with the phrase "on that day" or a similar formula. This type of superscript introduces future projections, often expressing national and ethnic aspirations — or sometimes fantasies — including the end of the diaspora, the destruction or subjection of hostile nations, scenarios of cosmic upheaval and disintegration, and the like. Others deal with such themes as the end of idolatry (2:20; 17:7-8; 31:6-7), the abolition of warfare (2:2), the prospect of abundance, fertility, and healing (30:23-26).¹¹ The "on that day" formula con-

11. There are 44 of these "on that day" (*bayyôm hahû*) addenda in Isa 1-39 and only

nects with the prophetic topos of the “day of Yahveh” (*yôm YHVH*, Amos 5:18-20, etc.), variously described in Isaiah as “a day of burning anger” (Isa 13:13), “a day of tumult” (22:5), “a day of vengeance” (34:8; cf. 63:4), and, ominously, “a day of great slaughter when the towers come crashing down” (30:25). Taken together, these addenda contribute to an interpretative continuum leading in the direction of the kind of final resolution attested in Daniel and the Qumran sectarian writings.

This cryptic text is, then, a comment on or addendum to the passage immediately preceding:

Be in a daze, be in a stupor, close your eyes fast, be blind;
be drunk, but not with wine, stagger, but not with strong drink!
For Yahveh has poured out upon you a spirit of deepest slumber;
he has closed your eyes [the prophets], he has covered your heads
[the seers]. (29:9-10)

The defective syntax suggests that the phrases “the prophets” (*’et-hannēbî’im*) and “the seers” (*haḥōzîm*) have been inserted into the saying by a Second Temple glossator with the purpose of redirecting the charge of religious insensitivity onto those officially designated as prophetic personnel at the time of writing. They were probably inserted quite early; they are, in any case, present in the Greek version (LXX), which, however, substitutes “rulers” for “seers,” and in the fragmentary Qumran commentary on this verse (4QpIsa^c fr. 15-16). The scribe who added the words in parenthesis evidently shared the low opinion of officially designated prophets which seems to have been widespread during the Second Temple period (e.g., Neh 6:14; Zech 13:2-6). Compare a similar but briefer instance in 9:13-14 (Eng. 14-15):

lemma: “Yahveh cut off from Israel both head and tail”

gloss: “elder and dignitary are the head, the prophet [who is] the teacher of falsehood, the tail”

Leaving these glosses aside, the seer is accusing his public of spiritual imperception and obduracy when faced with the prophetic word — a common Isaianic theme expressed programmatically in the vision in the

one in 40-66, i.e., 52:3-6. I take this to be one of several indications of the great difference between the two parts of the book at the literary level.

heavenly throne room (6:9-10). This condition is described metaphorically as blindness, a drunken stupor, and sleep.¹² The metaphors may in turn have been suggested by the no doubt hyperbolic language in which the lifestyle of the religious elite in Samaria is described in 28:7-8:

These too stagger with wine, lurch about with strong drink;
priest and prophet stagger with strong drink;
they are befuddled with wine, they lurch about with strong drink;
stagger as they see visions, go astray in giving judgment;
all tables are covered in vomit, no place free of filth.

This very physical description of a state of serious inebriation prompts the idea of spiritual stupor and hebetude confronted with the prophetic message, which is then expressed metaphorically as an inability and perhaps also an indisposition to read the written word. And to take this one stage further, the last link in this interpretative catena is the promise that this condition — stupor, blindness, incomprehension — will eventually be removed: “The eyes that can see will no longer be closed, the ears that can hear will listen” (32:3).

Is the Sealed Book the Book of Isaiah?

Based on what has been said so far, 29:11-12, read as commentary on 29:9-10, could be explained simply as another way of expressing, through the metaphor of a sealed book, the incomprehension of the public confronted with the prophet’s oral message. But a closer reading of the passage may persuade us that further layers of meaning underlie the metaphor of the sealed book.

The first question is about the meaning of the phrase “the vision of all this” (*ḥāzût hakkōl*). The substantive *ḥāzût* is one of a cluster of Hebrew terms meaning an extraordinary visual experience, in short, a vision. The

12. The sleep (*tardēmā*) is the special kind which Yahveh placed on the Man in the garden (Gen 2:21), which overcame Abraham during “the covenant of the pieces” (Gen 15:12), and which prevented Saul and his men from noticing David’s entrance into their camp (1 Sam 26:12). The corresponding verb (*rdm*) describes the trance state in which Daniel experienced his visions (Dan 8:18; 10:9). Jonah, asleep in the hold of the ship, is a *nirdām*, perhaps insinuating a lack of spiritual awareness in addition to fatigue (Jonah 1:5-6).

word occurs exclusively in Isaiah and Daniel, but only in one instance apart from 29:11 is its meaning entirely clear, namely, the grim or hard vision (*hāzūt qāšā*) in which a prophet foresees the fall of Babylon (Isa 21:2).¹³ In the context it is clearly synonymous with *hāzôn*, comparable to the similar description of the reception of a *hāzôn* in Hab 2:2. Since the book of Isaiah as a whole is presented under the rubric of a vision, the use of the word “vision” with the qualification “of all this” (*hakkōl*) in this addendum suggests the possibility that “the vision of all this” alludes to the book of Isaiah in whatever shape it existed at the time of writing. The book contains three titles: it is introduced as “The Vision of Isaiah” (1:1), there is a similar superscription at the beginning of the second chapter, “The word that Isaiah . . . saw in vision” (2:1), and the anti-Babylonian saying in Isaiah 13 is also introduced as a vision (13:1). There is critical agreement that all three titles were inserted at a relatively late period, and a late date is also indicated by 2 Chr 32:32, where Isaiah’s prophecies are described comprehensively as “the vision of Isaiah ben Amoz the prophet.” By that time the term *hāzôn* had undergone a semantic expansion, taking in much the same connotation as our word “revelation,” including revelation available in writing. I suggest, therefore, that “the vision of all this” refers to a book containing Isaianic revelations, an earlier edition of the book of Isaiah as we know it, with which the scribe who added this cryptic note was familiar.

If, therefore, 29:11-12 was the work of a Second Temple scribe, perhaps the same scribe who added the prejudicial glosses about prophets and seers, it presupposes a shift towards the written end of the oral-written spectrum with respect to prophetic material, consistent with the widespread evidence for the *scribalization* of prophecy in the Second Temple period. There is some evidence that writing was, in some measure, a reaction to the nonreception of prophetic utterances. We considered earlier the case of Jeremiah, who had his prophecies, delivered orally over a 23-year

13. Translators ancient and modern have failed to find an entirely satisfactory explanation for *qeren hāzūt* and *hāzūt ‘arba’* in Dan 8:5 and 8:8, respectively. When it is not emended or omitted as a gloss it is usually translated “conspicuous,” qualifying the horn of the mythic ram. See the detailed textual note on Dan 8:5 in James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), 331-32. The terms *hōzeh* in Isa 28:15 and *hāzūt* in 28:18 seem to allude to a pact, the “deal with death” that the ruling classes in Jerusalem boast of having made. On this passage, see my *Isaiah 1-39*. AB 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 391-95, and “Judah’s Covenant with Death (Isaiah XXVIII 14-22),” VT 50 (2000): 472-83.

period, written out on a *mēgillat sēper*, a book in scroll form, after having been forbidden entrance into the temple, in effect, excommunicated (Jer 36:4-8). Habakkuk was told to write his vision on tablets, probably stone tablets, to guarantee its authenticity when its predictions were fulfilled (Hab 2:2-3). Since the public addressed refused to heed his message, Isaiah also had to write it on a tablet (*lūah*) and inscribe it in a book (*sēper*) that it might be there in time to come as a witness forever (Isa 30:8-11).

Earlier in the book we heard that, after the failure of his first intervention in international politics, Isaiah was told to secure the message and seal his teachings among his disciples in the expectation of the eventual vindication of their truth and relevance (8:16). This is the only other mention of a sealed document in Isaiah, and in view of what has just been said, it seems likely that the sealed “vision of all these things” is a reference to Isaiah’s sealed testimony confided to his disciples. To be a disciple (*limmud*, lit., “one taught”) is to hold in trust and internalize the teaching of the master, whether in oral or in written form, but in this instance the latter, since only the written word can serve as a *tē’ūdā*, a witness for future generations. The passage about the sealed book, therefore, deals with the reception or nonreception of *written* prophecy. As a sealed real estate transaction serves to guarantee proof of title (e.g., Jer 32:9-15), so the written text committed to the prophet’s disciples and protected by its seal guarantees the authenticity of the prophecy.

But why a *sealed* book? During the time of the kingdoms and in early Judaism, important documents would have been sealed with a lump of hot wax or wet clay (a *bulla*) on which the sender’s name or some form of identification would be impressed.¹⁴ Rulers and high officials would make the impression with a signet ring (e.g., Esth 8:8, 10), with a view to indicating the status of the sender and guaranteeing the authenticity and security of the document. The document in question could be, *inter alia*, a letter (1 Kgs 21:8), a royal edict (Esth 3:12), a notarized agreement or pact (Neh 10:1), a sealed real estate purchase document which could be produced as proof of title (Jer 32:9-15), or a divorce document (Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8; Deut 24:1-4). Important documents would require notarization by two wit-

14. Nahman Avigad, “Seal, seals,” *EncJud* 14: 1072-74, with many examples in the same author’s *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1976); and *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986).

nesses, like the tablet on which Isaiah wrote "Property of Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (Isa 8:2). We have good examples of such documents dealing with marriage and real estate among the Elephantine papyri.¹⁵ And to come to the point, sealing a predictive prophecy had the purpose of providing irrefutable proof of its authenticity, and therefore its divine origin, at the time of fulfillment. When that happened, and the prophet was sure that it would, the situation envisaged in Isa 29:11-12 would be reversed. The book would be unsealed and its meaning would become clear to those now capable of hearing and understanding:

On that day the deaf will hear the words of a book,
and free of all gloom and darkness
the eyes of the sightless will see. (29:18)

The Isaianic-Danielic Interpretative Trajectory

In biblical texts sealed prophetic books are mentioned only in Isaiah and Daniel (Dan 8:26; 9:24; 12:4, 9). The sealed book containing secrets hidden in the mind of God, coded messages awaiting decryption, is one of the more expressive motifs of apocalyptic discourse in Daniel, Qumran, and early Christianity. That the book is sealed is sometimes implied rather than stated explicitly, especially in apocalyptic texts. We are not told that the 70 esoteric books copied by Ezra and his team of scribes and reserved for "the wise among your people" were sealed, but since they contained apocalyptic revelations they probably were (4 Ezra 14:45-48). It would therefore be imprudent not to consider the possibility that there exists a connection of some kind between the sealed book of Isa 29:11-12 and later apocalyptic references to such books, especially since the thrust towards the apocalyptic worldview is in evidence throughout the book of Isaiah. The thematic and linguistic affinities between Isaiah and Daniel, not much noticed in the commentaries, at least justify taking this inquiry a little further.

To begin with the broad view, what is central to both books is a critique of the great empires. In Isaiah the empires are Assyria, Babylonia, Persia; in Daniel, Babylonia, Media, Persia, and the Greeks, to which list

15. A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923; repr. Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967), nos. 6, 8, 13, 15, 18, 36.

Qumranic and early Christian apocalyptic will add the Romans. Daniel therefore overlaps with Isaiah and takes the sequence further. In Daniel, written and circulated during the persecution of Antiochus IV about the year 165 B.C.E., the historical panorama is viewed from the perspective of the Babylonian exile in the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian period, and this perspective dominates the way later sectarian movements view the history and their place in it. This too is Isaianic, since the exile serves as the fulcrum of the book and the most important point of reference for its theological meaning. The interpretation in Daniel's third vision of the 70 weeks of exile, based on Jer 29:10, is dictated by a view of history according to which events are predetermined by divine decree. At this point the language is too close to Isaiah for it to be coincidental. Gabriel reveals that desolations are decreed, leading to an end that is foreordained:

After the sixty-two weeks an anointed one will be cut off and no one will support him. The people of the prince that is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. His end will be in a cataclysm, and towards the end there will be war. *Desolation is decreed*. He will make a strong pact with the many for one week, and for half a week he will put a stop to sacrifices and offerings. In the train of these abominations there will be one who creates desolation, until the *destruction that is decreed* is poured out upon the desolator. (Dan 9:26-27)¹⁶

Compare the following passages from Isaiah:

The Sovereign Lord Yahveh of the hosts will bring about *the destruction that is decreed* in the midst of the earth. (10:23)

I have heard (in vision?) *destruction decreed* by the Sovereign Lord Yahveh of the hosts over all the earth. (28:22b)¹⁷

16. There are several uncertainties in this passage and therefore in the translation offered. At 9:26 I have translated *wē'ên lô* with "and no one to support him," which is speculative but makes better sense than "and shall have nothing" (NRSV). "Cataclysm" translates *šetep*, lit., "flood"; the substantive does not occur in Isaiah but the corresponding verb (*štp*) is used frequently in contexts describing annihilating judgment (Isa 8:8; 10:22; 28:2,15; 30:28). "In the train of these abominations" translates *'al kēnap šiqqūšim*, (lit., "on the wing of abominations"), following NEB.

17. The verb *hṛš* (Niphal), "decree," appears only in these two texts of Isaiah and in Dan 9:26-27; 11:36. Note the unusual phrase *kālā wēneḥērašā* ("the destruction that is de-

At several other points in Daniel we hear echoes of Isaiah. In the first of the four visions (Dan 7:1-28), the throne room scenario is reminiscent of Ezekiel 1 but also of Isaiah 6, the vision of the heavenly audience chamber. In the vision of the Ram and the Goat (8:1-27), the description of Little Horn, a disparaging sobriquet for Antiochus IV, who ascends as high as the host of heaven, seems to have been inspired by the Isaianic poem about the fate of the king of Babylon, "Star of the dawning day, fallen to the ground" (Isa 14:12-15). This would suggest that the Daniel group read this chapter (Isa 14:3-23) as referring to the contemporary tyrant, a procedure familiar from the Qumran pesharim.¹⁸ In the third vision (Dan 9:1-27), Daniel's confession of sin, spoken in the name of Israel past and present (9:1-19), is similar in form and language to the communal lament of Isa 63:7-64:11 (Eng. 12). This kind of prayer, well-attested in the Second Temple period (e.g., Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 9:6-37), is also represented at Qumran in 4Q504, a text published by Maurice Baillet under the title "Paroles des Lumières" ("Words of the Heavenly Luminaries").¹⁹

Affinity with Daniel, and with the worldview of the apocalyptic sects of the late Second Temple period, is especially in evidence in Isaiah 24-27, somewhat misleadingly referred to as the "Isaian Apocalypse." In his discussion of the authorship of this section of the book, Bernhard Duhm remarked that Isaiah could as well have written the book of Daniel as Isaiah 24-27.²⁰ While there are significant differences compared with later apocalyptic writings — there is no periodization of history, for example, and no consistent dualism — several typically apocalyptic themes appear in this section. Judgment is passed on the whole world, not just on the unnamed city (24:1-13, 17-20), and is accompanied by cosmic disturbances (24:21-23); in the last days death will be abolished (25:8) and the dead will be raised (26:19), though not all commentators agree that this is to be understood literally; the motifs of the messianic banquet (25:6) and the final harvesting (27:12) are also adumbrated. One passage in particular deserves a closer

creed"), hendiadys, in Dan 9:27 and Isa 10:23; 28:22; also *'ad-kālā za'am* ("until the time of wrath is completed") in Dan 11:36b (cf. Isa 26:20). Similar language occurs in the Qumran texts, e.g., 1QS IV 25 *qēs neḥērāšā* ("the predetermined end").

18. See the remarks of Michael A. Knibb, "You Are Indeed Wiser Than Daniel: Reflections on the Character of the Book of Daniel" in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, ed. A. S. van der Woude. BETL 106 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 400-411.

19. *Qumrān Grotte 4, III* (4Q482-520). DJD 7 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 137-75.

20. *Das Buch Jesaja*, 172.

look. Following on a description of a state of general religious euphoria in the Jewish world inclusive of the eastern and western diasporas (24:14-16a), we come upon one of several instances in the book of the intrusion of an authorial voice:

But meanwhile I thought,
 "I have my secret! I have my secret!
 Woe to the unfaithful ones who deal faithlessly,
 who deal with an utter lack of faith!
 Terror, the trap, the deep pit
 await you who dwell on the earth!" (24:16b-17)

In biblical texts the Aramaic word *rāz* ("secret"), a loanword from Old Persian, occurs only here and in Daniel, where it functions as a key component of the interpretative process.²¹ The thing to be interpreted, the *interpretandum* or "the text," can be a dream in the head of a mad king, a dream he doesn't even remember (Dan 2:18-19, 27-30, 47; 4:6). It can be a ghostly message written on a wall (5:25), or a dream-vision featuring strange and fearsome beasts (7:1-14). It can also be a biblical text like the 70 years of Jeremiah (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10), the correct interpretation of which is revealed *for the first time* to the seer (Dan 9:2), just as the real meaning of Habakkuk is revealed *for the first time* to the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab VII 1-2). The true meaning of these "texts," encrypted in the mind of God, is inaccessible to the uninitiated reader. God it is who "reveals mysteries" (Dan 2:28) and "seals up mysteries and reveals hidden things" (4QHodayot^a 7 I 19). The encrypted message is the *rāz*, the key to decoding of which is communicated to a chosen individual in an ambient of prayer, fasting, penitential practices, and conversation with angels. On the reading of Isa 24:16b-17 proposed here, the Isaianic seer claims to be the recipient of such a message, in this case a message of judgment at odds with the prevalent mood of religious euphoria.

21. Dan 2:18-19, 27-30, 47; 4:6. NRSV "I pine away, I pine away" for *rāzî-lî, rāzî-lî* assumes a verbal stem *rzh*, "to be thin," "to waste away," but this seems incongruous in the context, and "I have my secret!" is supported by several of the ancient versions (Syriac, Lucianic, Symmachus, Theodotion, Vulgate) as well as the Targum. See my *Isaiah 1-39*, 352-57. In the Qumran sectarian writings, *rāz* is a key word of frequent occurrence (1QpHab VII 4, 8; 1QS III 21; XI 3-4; 1QH I 11-12; 1QM III 9; XIV 14; XVI 11, 16). See Otto Betz, *Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), 82-86.

A final example of this trajectory from Isaiah to Daniel and beyond can be found in the final verse of the book of Isaiah, a verse which has induced a feeling of dismay in several commentators:

They will go out and gaze on the corpses of those who rebelled against me; for neither will the worm that consumes them die nor the fire that burns them be quenched; they will be an object of horror to all flesh. (Isa 66:24)

This dantesque scenario of fire and corruption is replicated in several texts from the Hasmonean and early Roman periods, including early Christian texts. It does not appear in these terms in Daniel, but it is worth noting that the word *dērā'ôn* ("object of horror") occurs only here and in Dan 12:2 with reference to those whose final lot is shame and everlasting contempt.

This ideological alignment between the book of Isaiah in its development towards its final form and the book of Daniel strengthens the impression that the sealed book of Isa 29:11-12 is the "instruction" (*tôrâ*) and the "testimony" (*tē'ûdâ*) of Isa 8:16, but now to be read as a corpus of eschatological teaching intelligible only in the context of the apocalyptic worldview.

The Sealed Book in Daniel

These examples of what we may call Danielic themes and expressions in Isaiah, or Isaianic themes in Daniel, exemplify the kind of learned retrieval and reworking of existing prophetic material by means of which religious traditions were formed and consolidated. They also provide an appropriate preface to the theme of written and sealed eschatological prophecy in both books. The sage Daniel committed to writing the first of the four dream-visions together with its decoded meaning provided by an intermediary, the angelic interpreter or go-between in this interactive vision (Dan 7:1), but we are not told that he sealed it. This is the vision of the four beasts emerging from the sea, which draws on ancient mythic themes also represented in Isaiah — Leviathan, the dragon in the primeval sea; Rahab, symbol of oppressive Egyptian imperial power (Isa 27:1; 30:7). The vision of the Ram and the Goat, zodiacal symbols of Persia and Syria, respectively (8:1-14), also receives its interpretation in the course of an interactive exchange in the vi-

sion (8:15-25). We pick up several Isaianic echoes in this second vision narrative, beginning with Little Horn (Antiochus IV), who "magnified himself" up to the host of heaven, language which recalls the poem about the fate of the king of Babylon (Isa 14:12-15). At the conclusion of the interpretation given by Gabriel, Daniel is told to "keep the vision secret for it is for many days hence" (8:26). Though he had not been told explicitly to write it, writing is clearly implied throughout the vision sequence, and the only way to keep a written prophecy secret was to seal it. There is therefore practically no difference between keeping secret (Heb. verb *stm*) and sealing (*htm*). The eschatological meaning of the vision is repeatedly emphasized: Gabriel informs the seer that "the vision is for the end time" (8:17); it is reserved for the terminal period of wrath (8:19), the predestined time of the end (8:19). And he is told to seal it since "it is for many days hence" (8:26).

In keeping with the conventions of pseudepigraphy, the chronological frame of reference adopted by the writer, the "many days" of Dan 8:26, corresponds to the interval between the Neo-Babylonian period (ca. 550 B.C.E.) and the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.E.), a span of time therefore not far short of four centuries. The sealing of the vision narrative in the Neo-Babylonian period was necessary to explain why the momentous events mentioned in the vision remained unpublished and unknown during the intervening centuries. It also allowed the seer responsible for this *vaticinium ex eventu* to take the long view, to locate present situations and events of relevance to the sect in the context of a teleological view of history. He was thereby enabled to present a theological interpretation of events as foreseen and preordained by God, and thus to assure his associates of their eventual outcome in the destruction of the tyrant, an event which would come about by nonhuman agency (8:25). Locating the seer and his associates in the eastern diaspora in the last years of Babylonian rule served, finally, to underline the conviction of the conventicle in which the book was produced that they were the legitimate heirs of the "holy remnant" of the exilic period. This link with the few faithful survivors of the destruction of the Judean state and subsequent deportations is not confined to Daniel. It corresponds to the account of the origins of the Damascus sect in CD I 1-II 1, where the 390 years beginning with Nebuchadrezzar's conquest of Judah (CD I 5-6) corresponds to the period in Daniel 8 during which the book containing the vision remained sealed. We shall see that the same perspective on the exilic and postexilic periods appears in the Enoch cycle (1 En 93:8-10) and Jubilees (Jub 1:13-18).

In the third vision (Dan 9:1-27), Daniel is discovered poring over "the books" (*sēpārīm*, 9:2) and specifically over Jeremiah's prediction of 70 years exile (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). Since this vision is presented as taking place in the first year of Darius, therefore for the author at the very beginning of the period of Persian rule (cf. 5:30-31),²² the 70 years would have just run their course, thus facilitating their reinterpretation. The period of 70 years is extended to 70 times seven, therefore 490 years, parallel to the period during which the previous vision remained sealed.²³ On this occasion Daniel receives no instructions, but Gabriel tells him that the 70 weeks of years are decreed "to seal the prophetic vision" (9:24; lit., "vision and prophet"; hendiadys). Since the purpose of sealing is to authenticate, the point is that the truth and authenticity of both the vision and its recipient will be ratified only after the passage of 490 years, after which it will no longer be necessary to keep the written vision sealed. The author therefore revises the earlier interpretation of the 70 years in 2 Chr 36:22, according to which the 70 years came to an end in the first year of Cyrus; his calculation begins where the one in Chronicles ends (Dan 9:25). The period of 490 years was necessary to finish transgression, fill up the measure of sin, expiate iniquity, bring in righteousness at its conclusion, seal the prophetic vision, and anoint a holy place (9:24). The last phrase indicates the end of this long span of time with the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C.E. The implied negative judgment passed on the entire postexilic period down to the time of writing becomes explicit in Gabriel's exposition, where it is described as a time of distress (9:25),²⁴ and we find the same negative judgment in the historical perspective of the Damascus Document (CD I 5-6) and the Enochian Apocalypse of Weeks (1 En 93:9). This theologically inspired historiographical perspective will occupy us in a later chapter.

22. It will not be necessary to discuss the complicated and confused historical references in the book. The perspective is drastically foreshortened, since according to the author Belshazzar is the son of and successor to Nebuchadnezzar and is followed directly by Darius.

23. On the 70 years of Jeremiah and Daniel there is, unsurprisingly, a very substantial bibliography. I mention only John J. Collins, *Daniel*. Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 352-53; and Deborah Dimant, "The Seventy Weeks Chronology (Dan 9, 24-27) in the Light of New Qumranic Texts," in van der Woude, *Book of Daniel*, 57-76. She brings 4QPseudo Moses (4Q390) to bear on the discussion.

24. On the phrase *bēšôq ha'ittīm*, see Montgomery, 380-81; Collins, 356. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), 244, emends to *bēqēš ha'ittīm*, following LXX and Syr, an emendation which seems to me to be unnecessary.

The fourth vision (Dan 10-12), like its predecessor, takes place in an atmosphere of penitential prayer, the confession of sin, fasting, and abstinence (10:1-3; cf. 9:3-21). The vision is described as an authentic utterance (10:1) transcribed from a heavenly "Book of Truth" (10:21). This topos, no doubt deriving from the Mesopotamian Tablets of Destiny, implies a strong sense of predestination. In the Enochian *Book of the Heavenly Luminaries* (1 En 81:1-2) the angel Uriel instructs Enoch to read the heavenly tablets which contain the record of all human history, while in the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (1 En 93:2) the epitomized history from Enoch's birth to the actual time of writing is cited from the heavenly tablets. Likewise, at the outset of this fourth vision, Gabriel's detailed account of events from the Persian period to Antiochus IV draws on "the Book of Truth," which also contains the names of the elect (10:21; 12:1). The same idea is adumbrated in the census of the restored community in Jerusalem whose names are "recorded for life" according to Isa 4:3, and this idea of a saved community, an anticipation of the saints of the final age, a kind of realized eschatology, may well be behind the actual list of citizens of the new commonwealth in Nehemiah 7. The eschatological import of the vision in Daniel is, in any case, explicit: it is for the last days, and only a short time remains for its fulfillment (10:14). Every event in the progress towards this consummation happens at its preordained time (11:29). After the "time of anguish" (12:1; cf. Isa 33:2), the faithful people will be delivered and will enjoy astral immortality (12:1-3). Daniel is then instructed to write the vision and seal it until the end time, when all of this is to happen (Dan 12:4). The injunction is repeated by an interlocutor in a follow-up to this interactive vision, after which Daniel is dismissed now that the words of the vision are sealed until the end time (12:9).

The claim implicit in this presentation is one of remarkable audacity. The period from the Babylonian exile to the emergence of the Danielic sect is seen as a time of distress, spiritual blindness, and failure, a situation comparable to that of those unable to read the sealed book in Isa 29:11-12. It appears that, according to the author, the basic problem during this long period was lack of access to the revelation which he represents as having been sealed up in the early Persian period. The point is perhaps being made in Dan 12:4, where, by emending *haddā'at* ("knowledge") to *hārā'ā* ("evil"), we have the plausible reading "Many shall run to and fro and evil will increase." This would then find its explanation in Amos 8:12, "They shall run to and fro seeking the word of Yahveh but they will not find it."

The Danielic group sees itself as directly linked with those who survived the exile with their faith intact, those who, in another Isaianic borrowing, will be known in Qumran as "the penitents of Israel." It is this conviction which explains the juxtaposition of the diaspora tales in chapters 1–6 with the visions in chapters 7–12. The four Judean youths at the Babylonian court combined comprehensive learning with intense piety; they were "versed in all (aspects of) wisdom" (1:4), for God had given them knowledge, literary skill, and wisdom. Daniel, renamed Belteshazzar, as one of the group, shared in these endowments, but his insight into visions and dreams, illustrated in the following tales, set him apart (1:17). The language seems to suggest a small-scale representation of the *rabbîm* and *maskîlîm*, respectively, the Danielic sectarians and their leaders, as recipients of the revelations to follow.²⁵

The most impressive and, in its effects, the most significant borrowing from Isaiah in Daniel is the characterization of the group within which and for which the book was written as *maskîlîm*, "the wise among the people" (11:33). These are the ones who are gifted with supernatural enlightenment enabling them to understand what is really going on (12:10). They face persecution and death (11:33–35), but are consoled with the prospect of resurrection and immortality (12:3). In these respects they replicate the fate of the Servant of the Lord who, after suffering and death, will be greatly exalted and will see light (Isa 52:13; 53:11). The linguistic connections begin rather tenuously with the opening line of the Isaianic poem, "See, my Servant will achieve success" (52:13),²⁶ but it comes into sharper focus in the relation between the *maskîlîm* and the *rabbîm*, "the Many," a term which, in the Danielic context, in Qumran, and perhaps in early Christianity, refers to the author's fellow sectarians. The former will not only instruct the latter (Dan 11:32–33) but will vindicate them or lead them to righteousness (12:3) following the example of the Servant ("My servant will vindicate/lead to righteousness the Many," Isa 53:11b). How this is to happen we are not told, but the association of the Danielic sages with the Servant suggests that it would come about, in some way, through their suffering and the

25. In Dan 12:10 the *rabbîm*, who are to be purified, cleansed, and refined, are differentiated from the *maskîlîm*, and both are differentiated from the *rešā'im*, the reprobate. But in 11:35 all those who are to undergo the same cathartic process are called *maskîlîm*. The usage is therefore not entirely consistent.

26. *hinneh yaskîl 'avdi*, in which *yaskîl* ("will achieve success" or "will be wise") is from the same verbal stem as *maskîl(im)*.

death of those who had already fallen victim to persecution (Dan 11:33–35). In Daniel, therefore, the Servant of Isaiah 53 receives, for the first time, a collective interpretation.

Sealed and Secret Books after Daniel

Apocalyptic writings subsequent to Daniel which have survived from the Hasmonean and Roman periods — some even later — refer to secret books, sealed books, and heavenly books as the source of esoteric knowledge communicated to a chosen intermediary. Examples can be found in the Enoch cycle (1 *En* 81:1–2), *The Ascension of Isaiah* (9:22–23), and the *Odes of Solomon* (9:11). The book of *Jubilees* opens with the revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai of the tablets of the law together with a second revelation, "the law and the testimony." The relevant Qumran manuscript of *Jubilees* (4Q216 = 4QJubilees^a) is fragmentary, but this additional revelation is clearly referred to as *hattôrâ wêhatē'ûdâ*, using the same terms as in Isa 8:16: "Secure the testimony (*tē'ûdâ*), seal the instruction (*tôrâ*) among my disciples" (I 11–12; IV 4 corresponding to *Jub* 1:4, 26). The most interesting point is that in *Jubilees* the testimony and instruction consist in "what was in the beginning and what will happen in the future" or "an account of the division of all the days" (*Jub* 1:4). The reference is to the book of *Jubilees* itself as consisting in an account of events to the time of Moses followed by predictions, mostly unfavorable, of the future leading to the final epoch of history. This will witness a new creation, the erection of the eschatological temple, and the self-manifestation of God in Jerusalem (1:27–28). In this context, therefore, Isaiah's sealed testimony is in effect a transcription of the heavenly tablets containing these revelations, which itself is a transcription made by the Angel of the Presence or by Moses himself. The author of *Jubilees* seems, then, to have understood the sealed document confided by Isaiah to his disciples as an esoteric record revelatory of future events.²⁷

In most instances the sealed book contains the names of the elect and is to be opened or unsealed only at the end of time (4 *Ezra* 6:20–21; *Odes Sol.* 23:5–6). In one late text the seer observes the heavenly archivist taking the scroll out of its container, breaking the seal, and handing it to the En-

27. See Cana Werman, "The תורה and the תעודה Engraved on the Tablets," *DSD* 9 (2002): 75–103.

throned One (3 *En* 27:1-3). But the idea of apocalyptic as esoteric, book knowledge comes to clearest expression in the Ezra apocalypse composed in the late 1st century C.E. but purporting to come from 30 years after the fall of Jerusalem, therefore from 556 B.C.E. (4 *Ezra* 3:1). With the assistance of five amanuenses and fortified by a fiery liquid, Ezra reproduced in 40 days the 94 books destroyed during the sack of Jerusalem. Of these, 24 were the scriptural books available to all, worthy and unworthy alike, while the remaining 70 contained esoteric knowledge destined for "the wise among your people," a designation taken from Dan 11:33 (*maskilê 'ām*). These were to remain secret, and therefore presumably sealed (4 *Ezra* 14:44-48). The allusion is clearly to apocalyptic writings which, at least from the point of view of their esoteric nature and restricted readership, are considered to be on a higher level than the other writings made publicly available. This, too, corresponds to a common belief among apocalyptically-minded sectarian groups who tend to value nothing more than their esoteric doctrine.

It is hardly surprising that the Qumranites were intensely concerned with mysteries hidden from previous generations and now revealed to their founder and, through him, to the members of the community. Secrecy and esotericism are connatural with sectarianism. Josephus, for example, reports that the Essenes took an oath to guard the secrecy of their books and the names of the angels (*War* 1:142). In the rule books, hymns, and prayers from Qumran the authors speak with awe of God's wonderful mysteries (*rāzê pele'*) and the mysteries of his knowledge (*rāzê da'at*).²⁸ The community itself constitutes or encapsulates a "sealed mystery": "He who makes the holy shoot grow into the true planting hides its sealed mystery, unknown and unregarded." The community as God's planting is an Isaianic image,²⁹ and the mystery has to do with the understanding of history, the place of the community in the great scheme of things, the divinely predestined and guided flow of historical events, and their proximate consummation, "the mystery of the future."³⁰ These mysteries concerning the

28. CD III 18; 1QS III 23; IV 6; XI 5, 19; 1QH^a V 8; IX 21; 1QM III 9, etc.

29. 1QH^a XVI 10-11; cf. Dan 11:7; CD I 7. In Isa 60:21 the new people of God will be "the shoot that I myself planted, the work of my hands that I may be glorified."

30. This I take to be the meaning of *rāz nihyeh* rather than "the mystery of existence" as rendered by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; see 1QS XI 3; 1Q Instruction (1Q26); 1QMysteries and 4QMysteries^b. The expression also occurs about 20 times in 4QInstruction. See Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction*. STDJ 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

final consummation of history have been revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab VII 5-8). That the author of the *Hodayot* frequently claims to be the privileged recipient of God's wonderful mysteries and the one who mediates them to the members of his group (e.g., 1QH^a IX 21; X 13; XII 27-28) adds plausibility to the hypothesis identifying him with the Teacher of Righteousness.

Unfortunately, no pesher has survived on Isa 24:16a, the seer's exclamation about the secret (*rāz*) confided to him, but the passage immediately following (24:16b-17), pronouncing judgment on the faithless ones and disaster on the inhabitants of the earth, was appropriated by the Qumran sectarians. The alliterative *paḥad wēpaḥat wēpaḥ* ("terror, the trap, the deep pit") received its own pesher in the Damascus Document, where it is identified with the three nets of Belial, namely, fornication, wealth, and desecration of the temple (CD IV 14). The title *bōgēdīm* ("faithless ones") also served to characterize those who broke away and founded their own conventicle (or from whom the Damascus group splintered off), referred to in the Damascus Document as "the congregation of the faithless ones" (CD I 12), language typical of intrasectarian polemics.

The claim to be the privileged recipients of esoteric knowledge was central to the Qumran sectarians' self-understanding, and since they formed a learned, scribal, and priestly society, this knowledge was transmitted by means of texts. One unfortunately fragmentary text, 4QMysteries^b, appears to reflect a dispute between rival esoteric schools. One of these is said to be foolish since "the seal of the vision has been sealed up from you, you have not looked on the eternal mysteries, and you have not grasped (true) knowledge." The result is that "if you (try to) open the vision, it will be closed to you." Here, too, as it seems, the mystery (*rāz*) deals with knowledge about the past and future accessible only through divine revelation disclosed in vision to chosen intermediaries. We are also reminded that there may have been more of these small conventicles claiming esoteric knowledge and special revelations than the few we know about from the sources at our disposal.

In the first Christian apocalypse, the first of many, the heavenly scenario presents the Enthroned One holding a book with seven seals that no one in heaven or earth could open. When, notwithstanding, the seals are progressively broken by the Lamb that is Slain (a representation adopted from the so-called Animal Apocalypse, 1 *En* 90:8), the book reveals a sequence of disasters in store for humanity described in terms taken over

from the canonical prophetic books. After the breaking of the seventh seal, the seer is instructed to seal up what the seven thunders had spoken and yet not to write it down (Rev 10:1-4). However this is to be understood, at the end of the vision he is told not to seal the words of the prophecy since the time of the end, and therefore the time of ultimate disclosure, is near (Rev 22:10).

The complicated and hallucinatory scenarios in Revelation draw on a wide range of biblical texts, among which Isaiah is understandably prominent. The borrowings include descriptions of cosmic upheaval (Rev 6:12-14; cf. Isa 13:10; 34:4; 50:3), the attempt to survive the final judgment by hiding in caves and holes in the ground (Rev 6:15; cf. Isa 2:10, 19), and the consoling scene of God wiping away tears from every face (Rev 7:17; cf. Isa 25:8). The flight into the wilderness of the Woman Clothed with the Sun (Rev 12:5-6) is a special case since her flight resulted from a mistranslation in the Old Greek version of the Hebrew verb *mlt* (Hiphil) in Isa 66:7, which, in addition to the more usual meaning "escape," "take flight," can also mean "bring to birth,"³¹ one of the more interesting examples of the generation of new narrative from the assiduous reading of biblical texts.

The argument presented in this chapter may be summarized as follows. The cryptic saying in Isa 29:11-12 about a sealed book and its implied readers (or implied nonreaders) refers to the sealed document of Isa 8:16, understood as the book of Isaiah read and interpreted from an eschatological-apocalyptic perspective. As such, it indicates what kind of a "book" Isaiah is in its final form, that is, the form it attained by the time it began to generate independent commentary. It provides an essential clue to the shift from oral to written prophecy and from prophetic eschatology to apocalyptic eschatology, in other words, a kind of discourse and an assemblage of themes with significant affinities to the apocalyptic scenarios and images represented primarily by the book of Daniel. While agreeing that the apocalypticism of Daniel and Enoch is a more developed and complex phenomenon than anything in Isaiah or, for that matter, any of the other prophetic books,³² I maintain that there are enough indications

31. As in Isa 34:15, where *mlt* refers to owls laying eggs. See my *Isaiah* 56-66. AB 19B (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 302-3.

32. A point emphasized by John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1: *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 130-34.

in Isaiah, one or two of which I have mentioned, to demonstrate a development in its literary history in the direction of the apocalyptic worldview, a position which many critical commentators would accept. The two categories of potential readers, the competent and the illiterate, would then refer, respectively, to those who do not share the eschatological consciousness which alone renders the message intelligible and those for whom any kind of prophetic discourse is unintelligible. Neither has the key to crack the code, and so for both the offer falls on deaf ears.

And finally, if this is so, it must raise serious questions for the widely accepted view of canonicity as the outcome of deliberations and decisions emanating from the religious leadership, in this instance primarily the Jerusalem priesthood, and as embodying a self-consistent set of normative and authoritative beliefs. Apocalyptic eschatology is essentially a group phenomenon, and the groups which draw their spiritual sustenance from this view of reality are typically not at the center of power. On the contrary, they tend to reject either explicitly or implicitly the claims of the religious authorities and redefine the redemptive media according to their own lights. Hence a book like Isaiah, in the final form of which the apocalyptic worldview is clearly if unsystematically inscribed, does not fit this idea of normative and authoritative canonicity.³³ This situation clearly problematizes the canonical status of the book of Isaiah while raising some hard questions for the proponents of "canonical criticism" in general. Questions also arise about the role of Isaiah himself as putative author of the book, an issue which will occupy us in the following chapter.

33. See my paper, "The Formation of the Hebrew Bible Canon: Isaiah as a Test Case" in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 53-67.