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Prophetic Discourse on "Israel"

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1. THE IDENTITY OF "ISRAEL"

In the Hebrew Bible, the name "Israel" designates two things: (1) the whole people of Israel (including Judah) as the people of God; (2) the political entity of the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) in contrast to the southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). In his *History of Israel*, Martin Noth, a renowned biblical scholar and historian of ancient Israel, tried to explain the double usage of the name "Israel" (Noth 1954, 9–15; ET 1960, 1–7). He located the first usage in "the language of faith" (Noth 1954, 169; ET 1960, 184) and thought that it was the original meaning of the name "Israel." The political and geographical usage, however, is—according to Noth—secondary. And the reason is because it covers only parts of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel and consists also of some foreign (Canaanite) elements.

Noth deserves the credit of having expressed the problem so clearly at the beginning of *The History of Israel*. His explanation and historical reconstruction, however, is highly problematic and fails to be convincing anymore (Kratz 2015a and 2015b; for discussion, see Crouch 2014; Weingart 2014). Outside the Hebrew Bible, the name "Israel" is first attested in the famous stele of Pharaoh Merneptah (around 1200 BCE) for a group of people somewhere in the land of Canaan. It is not attested again until the ninth century BCE, when Neo-Assyrian and Moabite inscriptions refer to the northern monarchy as Israel and/or Bit Humri (that is, the house of Omri, after the king that founded the capital city, Samaria). While the political and geographical usage is thus well attested, and is quite natural and easy to explain, the other usage of the name Israel is in "the language of faith." This biblical notion of "Israel," including Judah and designating the people of YHWH, is rather curious and requires an explanation. The question, then, for us is: When and under which circumstances did the notion of a unity of Israel and Judah as one people of the same God emerge?

For Noth, the Israel in the "language of faith" dates to pre-monarchic times, to the time of the "Conquest." Following the analogy of a Greek model of settlement, he saw the historical context as the "amphictyonic" organization of Israel's tribes. Since many can no longer embrace the historical hypothesis of a tribal amphictyony, we have to look for alternatives. Some think of the time of the "United Monarchy" under David and Solomon in the tenth century BCE, the splendid beginning of the monarchic period according to the Hebrew Bible. However, the idea of a united Davidic-Solomonic empire was recently questioned by archaeology and cannot be taken for granted anymore (Finkelstein 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006a). The same holds true for the alternative: the Josianic period (late seventh century BCE). The Tel Aviv archaeologist Israel Finkelstein, along with many others, tend to date the emergence of the pan-Israelite national identity of "Israel" to Josiah's reign. Yet we know as much, or as little, about the Josianic period as we know about the Davidic-Solomonic era. And what we know, or think we know, comes from (late) biblical accounts.

Another possibility for a political and social explanation is the time between David and Josiah—under the dynasties of Omri (first half of the ninth century BCE) and Jehu (second half of the ninth and first half of the eighth century BCE). In this period, the kingdom of Judah existed more in the shadow of the northern kingdom and was a kind of vassal to it. Temporarily, it was even connected to the house of Omri through marriage. Others think of the time of the destruction of Israel and Samaria in 722 BCE, when a number of refugees from Israel came into Judah. And still others of the time after 701 BCE, the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib under king Hezekiah, when the territory of the province of Judah was reduced.

Many scholars suggest a pan-Israelite movement in the seventh century BCE under Hezekiah or Josiah, and they combine this idea with the emergence of the book of Deuteronomy and its notion of a unified people of God as expressed in the centralization of the cult and the *Shema' Israel*: "Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our God, YHWH alone" (for the discussion, see Na'aman 2009; Finkelstein 2011; Finkelstein and Silberman 2006a; 2006b; Crouch 2014).

However, I am convinced that historical, political, and social circumstances alone do not explain the emergence of the inclusive identity of biblical Israel. They are a historical precondition, and may have stimulated or supported the process. But they are certainly not the main reason and driving force. Other peoples of the same region and in the same time—such as Ammon, Moab or Edom (of which we have relatively meager extant sources, yet enough in order to compare with the equally meager extant sources of Israel and Judah)—experienced similar political fates, yet, as far as we know, they did not end up with a new identity in the "language of faith." The new identity of "Israel" (including Judah) as the people of YHWH does not mirror accurately a historical reality of political or social unity. Rather, this identity is a theological concept that sets forth a new basis for

a national, political, and social unity of "Israel." This new identity is not primarily defined by factors such as monarchy, temple, geography or genealogy. The identity is rather defined by the relation between the people of "Israel" and its God YHWH. The pan-Israelite identity reflected in the Bible is built upon this theological category. We must therefore search for factors that can account for both YHWH's new identity and "Israel" as the people who belong to him.

2. THE END OF ISRAEL

In what follows I argue that it is not the historical reality or possibility of a united kingdom of "Israel" but rather the loss of the monarchy and Israelite identity in 722 BCE that led to the creation of the new identity of biblical "Israel." The historical caesura of 722 (and again of 597/587 BCE) must have been—at least in the eyes of some—dramatic, though more in mental or conceptual than in material terms. In fact, many other nations besides Israel and Judah experienced the downfall of their political and cultural system during the military campaigns of the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian empires against Syria and Palestine in the ninth to sixth centuries BCE Materially, there was some destruction, but everyday life went on as usual. We do not know how these other peoples—or indeed the majority of the population in Israel and Judah—thought about these events. What we do have is the literature preserved in the Bible, which has its own way of interpreting the historical events of that period.

Let us first consider the Arameans as an example (see Niehr 2014; Younger 2016). What exactly became of the Arameans in Syria subsequent to the Assyrian invasions remains a mystery. Launched much earlier than those against Israel and Judah, these campaigns always concentrated on individual city-states, while other political actors—like Zakkur of Hamath or the kings of Sam'al/Yadiya—temporarily profited from the Assyrian presence by pledging themselves as loyal vassals. In this way, the end of political sovereignty for one did not necessarily mean the immediate end of another. Under Assyrian hegemony, whether with or without a local king, most aspects of life continued as before. The patron god Baal or Hadad survived the Assyrian invasion, both in the Aramean capitals still under his rule and in contractual coalitions with the gods of the Assyrian empire. We do not find in Aramaic sources the idea of a united people of Aram as the people chosen by the (one and only) god Baal/Hadad.

At the end of the eighth century (720, 701 BCE), and again in the early sixth century (587/597 BCE), Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem) would have followed essentially the same course as their neighbors. This was, indeed, not inevitable, but still quite natural and normal. What was the usual reaction in such situations? At the end of the eighth century BCE, prophets of the patron god YHWH in the kingdom of Israel probably saw destruction coming and then began their lamentation, while prophets in the kingdom of Judah, in the name of YHWH

no less, desired this destruction for Aram and Israel alike, who had conspired against Assyria and Judah. In this view YHWH of Judah and Jerusalem—with the help of the Assyrians and the god Ashur—was triumphant over Hadad of Damascus and YHWH of Samaria. Once the downfall of Israel had occurred, however, northern calamity meant danger for the south. Accordingly, Judah probably came to terms with Assyrian rule as soon as possible, which persisted until Assyria's own downfall and the ensuing campaigns of Babylon at the end of the seventh century BCE. Ultimately, the same events befell the kingdom of Judah.

Yet, as we can see in the biblical tradition and especially the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, other interpretations of the historical events and reactions also emerged following the fall of the northern kingdom. These included the relationship between Israel and Judah, which had the same patron deity, YHWH. During the monarchic period, YHWH and other deities manifested themselves in any number of guises, whether YHWH of Samaria or YHWH of Teman and probably YHWH of Judah and Jerusalem as well. It is quite understandable, then, that Israelites and Judahites would have waged wars and formed coalitions together in his name. With the downfall of the northern kingdom, however, the Assyrians defeated YHWH in Israel but did not conquer him in Judah.

Though not impossible or unusual, this constellation of events proved incomprehensible for some, leading to a reconsideration of YHWH's relationship to Israel. The nascent prophetic tradition (namely, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos) provided an explanation (Kratz 2015c). For this tradition, YHWH himself bears responsibility for the liquidation of his kingdom and his people, and this assertion in turn triggered the search for reasons in Israel's own behavior.

From the usual prophetic premonition of catastrophe, the biblical tradition developed a notion of retribution, the total judgment that YHWH would enact. From the usual lament over tumultuous circumstances came the denunciation and exposition of a judgment already effected in Israel but still impending for Judah. Due to the deep impression left by Israel's downfall and the prospect of Assyria's imminent southward expansion, the conception of YHWH's singularity and the people's oneness first emerged, at least explicitly, in the prophetic tradition and thereby overcame the historical and political opposition between Israel and Judah. In other words, the end of the kingdom of Israel was the beginning of "Israel" as the people of God in biblical tradition.

Proclaimed by the prophets in the name of YHWH himself, absolute judgment fell upon Israel (and Judah) so that the God of Israel could in fact survive. But what about the Israelites who had survived the catastrophe and resided in either the former territory of Israel (now the Assyrian province of Samaria) or in the diminished kingdom of Judah, where the patron deity YHWH continued to receive veneration? For those northern Israelites, biblical tradition

was forced to find a future for YHWH and his people beyond the existence of the monarchy. Revealed by the prophets and then projected onto both kingdoms' prehistory, that future was found in the unity of YHWH and the unity of his people. Although—or perhaps because—such a theological ideal never actually converged with historical reality, biblical literature stressed it all the more. Based on the prophetic message of an abrogated relationship to the divine, a foundation narrative for the people of YHWH—a *historia sacra* or "sacred history"—came into being. It was that relationship that helped achieve a positive perspective on the future.

To this end, individual narratives from the diverse domains of tradition and different times were all collected within Israel and Judah, and consolidated into distinct narrative cycles and historical works. In the process, disparate elements were transformed into a coherent narrative of YHWH's history with his people, Israel. Three narrative works bear witness to this development, which provided hope not only for the future but also for the present. Likely formed—as an outcome of the eight century and the prophetic tradition—over the course of the seventh century BCE, each offers a legend of Israel's origins that also clarifies its relationship to Judah: the legend of the kingdom's beginnings and those of the Davidic dynasty in 1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 2, the pre-priestly primeval and patriarchal narratives in Gen 2–35, and the exodus-conquest narrative in Exod 2–Josh 12. In this way, the myth of a united kingdom and of a united "Israel" before that kingdom were born (see Kratz 2000 [2005]; 2015a, 79–82, 112–14).

As already mentioned, all of this is rooted in the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible. How did this tradition, in which the idea of biblical Israel first appeared, come into being?

3. REMNANTS OF ISRAELITE AND JUDAHITE PROPHECY

The existence of prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible is surprising in certain respects. As far as we know, prophets in the ancient Near East did not write books (see Nissinen 2003; Stökl 2012; Kratz 2011; 2015c, 11–17). Once they had received their oracles, they conveyed them (either orally or in writing) through the medium of a professional scribe. Most of their oracles are lost forever; just a few were retained in letters and inscriptions and conserved in the royal archives. We know of them only through accidents of archaeology, which has brought them to light again, just like the Lachish ostracon no. 3, which quotes an authentic Judean prophetic oracle from around 587 BCE: "take heed, beware!"

With rare exceptions (such as the Neo-Assyrian prophecies and the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla), a formal prophetic literature never clearly developed there. With the decline of the ancient Near Eastern monarchies and their archives and inscriptions, the prophetic tradition also regularly came to a halt. All that has survived is the religiohistorical phenomenon of ancient Near Eastern prophecy,

which sprang up recurrently at various times—mostly times of crisis—and in various places in the Syro-Mesopotamian area.

The situation in the Hebrew Bible is different (see Kratz 2011; 2015c; 2016). Here, too, we find a few remnants, mostly fragments, of authentic prophetic oracles from the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. There is a debate in scholarship about what is an authentic oracle in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible and what is inauthentic and comes from later scribes. In fact, we have to admit—and this is more or less consensus in scholarship—that we do not have direct access to the *ipsissima vox* (the authentic voice) of the biblical prophets at all. Their utterings—spoken in each certain time for an individual historical situation—are transmitted in written form and in the form of prophetic books, which were not written by the prophets themselves but by later scribes.

This began with scribes picking up and writing down some of the prophets oracles, but adding interpretation to these oracles as well. Over time, scribes added more and more material within the framework of prophetic scrolls. Thus, the main question is not what might be inauthentic or a later addition but what can be proven as possibly authentic by means of internal literary analysis and historical analogy with ancient Near Eastern examples of prophetic oracles.

Some major criteria are form and genre (*Gattung*) of an oracle. Another important criterion is the conceptual question of whether or not an oracle fits with the political and social system of its time—even if it criticizes some grievances or is concerned about a coming military defeat. In other words, whether it is trying to stabilize this system or if it is working with a later conception such as the "prophecy of doom," the fundamental idea of the scribal tradition in the prophetic books according to which God (YHWH) himself, who once was worshiped for having established this system, is now willingly acting against his own people and destroys this political and social system.

Using the critical tools of analysing prophetic books, we thus find a few salvation oracles from the prophet Isaiah, which announce the downfall of Judah's northern enemies, Aram and Israel, originated at the time of the so-called Syro-Ephraimite War, around 730 BCE (Isa 7:4, 7–9; 8:1–4; 17:1–3). The same kind of prediction came from the prophet Nahum almost a century later, with reference to the downfall of Assyria. Oracles from both fronts of the Syro-Ephraimite War seem to have entered Hos 5:8–11. Genuine words of the prophet Hosea were collected in Hos 6:8–7:7 to bewail the imminent destruction of the Israelite kingdom, which came to pass in 722 BCE. The same incident occasioned parables (Amos 3:12; 5:2, 3, 19) and lamentations (Amos 5:18; 6:1ff; cf. 3:12; 4:1; 5:7) from the prophet Amos. These oracles, which are preserved only fragmentarily, portray the end of Samaria as ineluctable, regardless of whether they originally bemoaned and hoped to deflect it (from an Israelite perspective) or welcomed and, in a certain sense, helped to bring it about (from a Judahite perspective).

From the standpoint of those immediately affected come the oldest words of the prophet Micah in Mic 1:11–15, which probably reflect the Assyrian invasion of Judah around 701 BCE. The same is true for the original words of Jeremiah, which consist of lamentations about Judah's destruction in 597–587 BCE, reflecting the prophet's fullest and innermost sorrow (Jer 4:7, 11, 13, 19–21; 6:1, 22–23). In these "jeremiads," Jeremiah speaks, not YHWH. Utterly terrified by what he sees and hears befalling Judah, Jeremiah only hints at the cause. Clearly, though, a threatening war machine—the ominous "enemy from the north"—is marching toward Jerusalem, not the deity YHWH who wants to punish them for their transgressions.

Zephaniah's oracle on the "day of YHWH" (Zeph 1:14–16) is quite similar and aligns with the lament of Jeremiah. This oracle is rooted in the ancient Near Eastern tradition of hemerology, a cultural practice of connecting the success or failure of actions and events with favorable or unfavorable days of gods. Thus, the oracle says that it is the time of wrath and anger (and not the time of salvation), but gives no reason or explanation. It describes the situation as it is, maybe in order to conciliate YHWH and motivate him to stop his wrath and the disaster that is occurring.

When all was said and done and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were destroyed, the prophets lost their social setting and with it their significance. A few did speak on occasion. Some, like Hananiah (Jer 28:10–12), maintained the tradition and told of triumph over the enemy in the name of the God YHWH. Others raised their voice again only when the new rulers of the land and keepers of the temple became clear. Dated to the second year of King Darius (presumably Darius I), two oracles have survived that call for reconstruction of the temple and announce the advent of YHWH's glory (Hag 1:1, 4, 8 and Hag 1:15b+2:1, 3, 9a). During the time of the Second Temple, we hardly hear of prophets any longer, though the absence in the sources does not necessarily indicate an absence in reality (cf. Neh 6:7, 10–14; Zech 13).

These are just a few examples of the fragmentary remnants of authentic oracles from prophets in the two kingdoms and later provinces of Israel/Samaria and Judah/Yehud. How did they find their way into the prophetic books and what was their contribution to the construction of biblical Israel?

4. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PROPHETIC TRADITION

A good example of how prophetic oracles became a prophetic book and shaped the notion of biblical Israel is Isa 8 (for what follows see Kratz 2011, 49–70; 2015c, 40–45; also de Jong 2007; 2011; for a different view, see Williamson 2013). At the beginning stands a rather cryptic prophetic slogan, dating to the end of the eighth century BCE: "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens," with which

YHWH entrusted Isaiah of Jerusalem (Isa 8:1, 3). This slogan derives from Egyptian military rhetoric of the Eighteenth Dynasty, where we find two imperatives *'is ḥ'ḳ* 'haste, make prey' used as nouns (Morenz 1949); see, for example, in the Biography of Amhose of Nekheb relating the Nubian rebell (Hallo and Younger 2003, 6): "His majesty carried him off as the prisoner of war, and all his people being *easy prey*." In Isaiah the expression promises Judah a victory over its enemies, a coalition of Aram and Israel.

The prophetic slogan was transmitted in two different scenarios. Once it appears as the inscription on a tablet that Isaiah is to prepare: "Then YHWH said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, 'The spoil speeds, the prey hastens'" (Isa 8:1). The writing on the tablet is a symbolic act that wants to make the message public and at the same time has a magical function bringing the message into reality. In the following scene, the same prophetic slogan appears in connection with the birth of a child: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then YHWH said to me, Name him 'The spoil speeds, the prey hastens'; for before the child knows how to call 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria" (Isa 8:3–4).

These two scenes support the policy of King Ahaz, who, as we know from the books of Kings, appealed to the major power, Assyria, for help against the coalition of Aram and Israel and paid tribute to it (2 Kgs 16:5, 7–9). The prophet indicates that the liberation of Jerusalem from its northern enemies through Assyria is YHWH's work. In the present text of Isa 8:1–4 the two scenes are narrated one after the other and are connected by the shared expression. The first-person report by the prophet—most likely the same Isaiah who gave the book his name—conforms to what one would also expect from any ancient Near Eastern prophet. If we had only these four verses, it would never occur to anyone to think that they formed the oldest part of the book of Isaiah and represent the beginning of the idea of biblical Israel.

By way of comparison we may take an example from ancient Near Eastern prophecy, an oracle of the god Dagan of Terqa, which similarly occurs three times in letters from the archive from the Old Babylonian city of Mari (see Nissinen 2003, 28–29, 30–31, 34–35). It reads: "Beneath straw water runs." The saying is directed against an alliance of the king of Mari with the king of Eshnunna, a city on the Tigris. It is repeated in a varying form by three prophets who had appeared at the court of Mari, as a warning against the alliance. The first derives from it an exhortation to the king to obtain another oracle first. Second, a prophetess finds in it the political advice that the king should mistrust the king of Eshnunna and his flattering speeches. Finally, the third promises the king of Mari unequivocal victory. There is no difference in the substance: Dagan of Terqa desires peace, not through an alliance but rather through victory. But the prophets, or the letter writers who forwarded the prophets' words, formulated the divine message (except

for the basic metaphor "Beneath straw water runs," which occurs in all three versions) in various ways—in their own words as much as in those of the god Dagan of Terqa. As far as we know, no prophetic book arose from this.

Isaiah's saying "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens," in contrast, became the starting point of a prophetic writing. The two scenes of the first-person report, which prophesy that Judah's enemies will fall to Assyria, take on a surprising twist in what follows:

> YHWH spoke to me again: Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore, YHWH is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck. (Isa 8:5–8)

The "River" is the Euphrates; its "mighty flood waters," which "overflow all its banks," are the Assyrian armies, which are marching from east to west and from north to south. After Damascus and Samaria, they will reach Judah and Jerusalem themselves. What has happened here?

The text is evidently formulated in hindsight. It presupposes that the original prophetic saying has come true and that Assyria has overrun the enemy in the north. The tribute to the Assyrian king must therefore have paid off, ensuring the liberation of Judah from its northern enemies. This must have been how the king and the majority of Judeans—presumably including the prophet Isaiah—took the announcement of the end of Samaria in 732 and the end of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, at least as long as the kingdom of Judah still stood.

But the scribes who made the first edition of the book of Isaiah saw it differently. For the original oracle of Isaiah, the end of the kingdom of Israel primarily meant that the God of Israel—YHWH of Samaria—and his institutions had fallen to the Assyrians. Responsibility for this event lay with the God of Judah—YHWH of Jerusalem—in whose name Isaiah had uttered the oracle "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens." Yet after 722, and especially in 701 BCE, when the threat arose that the Assyrian armies would advance on Judah, the scribes—against Isaiah's original intention!—drew the astonishing implication that YHWH had determined judgment not only against Israel but also against Judah and Jerusalem. They held fast to the God of the prophet, and as a consequence gave up not only on the enemy in the north but also on their own people in Judah.

Thus, the violent impression made by Assyria's progress into Syria-Palestine resulted in the fact that the scribes who were responsible for the codification and transmission of the prophetic tradition saw less significance in the local differences and rivalries between Israel and Judah. Most scholars assume that there was a natural sense of a (genealogical, religious, or political and social) unity between

the two monarchies of Israel and Judah long before the destruction of Samaria in 720 BCE, dating from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries BCE or even earlier (see Weingart 2014; Crouch 2014). This assumption, however, has no other basis than the biblical narrative about the twelve tribes chosen by YHWH as the people of God and passages in the prophets related to this narrative. Therefore, if there is no other (external) evidence for such a common sense of unity (*Gemeinbewusstsein*), we cannot easily argue on the basis of this assumption. In fact, I see no evidence for it. Thus we have to look for the factors, which led some of the intellectual elite in Israel and Judah (not all of them and certainly not the whole population, as usually suggested) to the conclusion that Israel and Judah are to be treated as a unity.

The explanation offered here is the common experience of the political events under Assyria, combined with reflection of the fact that both Israel and Judah worshiped the same deity und suffered the same fate under this God. In YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Jerusalem the scribes discovered the same God, and in Israel and Judah they discovered the one people of God, which elsewhere in the original composition of Isaiah is called "Israel" (Isa 5:7; 9:7). That is how the people "Israel" came to be the object of "the language of faith" throughout the Hebrew Bible. The prophet of salvation—the historical Isaiah—became in biblical tradition a prophet of judgment, whose book has a single motto: "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all" (Isa 7:9; cf. 30:15).

Thus the transition from prophetic oracle to prophetic book is connected with a far-reaching reinterpretation of the historical prophet in the biblical tradition. This reinterpretation explains the downfall of both kingdoms—first Israel in 722 BCE, then also Judah in 587 BCE—as an act of God, his judgment on his people. Correspondingly, the books of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible contain almost exclusively prophecies of judgment. And even where the books speak (once more) of God's salvation (as, for example, in the second half of the book of Isaiah, Isa 40–66), the act of salvation is always preceded by divine judgment. But even the proclamation of the end implies a new beginning: it forces a rethinking of the future. God's judgment on his people, and the faith that the prophets of the prophetic books demand, set new standards for the people of "Israel" in relation to God as well as among human beings.

Any number of examples might be given for these new standards set for "Israel" by the prophetic books. Just two will have to suffice here: Hosea's criticism of the cult and Amos's social criticism (see Kratz 2011, 273–379; 2015c, 45–50). Only a few fragments have survived from the authentic oracles of these two historical prophets, dating to the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel (the end of the eighth century BCE; see section 3 above). These fragments—which would have been immediately comprehensible in their own day—no longer make it possible to judge whether they originally related (in the interests of Israel) to a survival of the northern kingdom or (in the interests of Judah) took their stand

against the enemy in the north. The biblical tradition, as preserved in the books of Hosea and Amos, set this lack of clarity aside and discovered in the oracles of both prophets an accusation against, and judgment on, "Israel," understood to mean the one people of God. In the reasons it offers for the disaster, however, the tradition gives different accents to Hosea and Amos.

In the book of Hosea the people are reproached for a false cult. YHWH's dictum is: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). It is not obvious from this what was "false" in the Israelite cult or why YHWH suddenly no longer wanted the usual sacrifices. The later scribes explained the matter by implying that it was not YHWH who was worshiped in the Israelite cult but Baal and the "other gods," so that the sacrifice was therefore not acceptable to YHWH. At any rate, YHWH demands more than regular sacrifices and thus puts the relationship between God and people, founded on and mediated by the cult, on a new footing. What is demanded is complete commitment to God and the knowledge of God, which renders everything else of secondary importance. This does not lead to a new ordering of worship or community; yet the demand does have in it the potential to relativize traditional religious norms, if not to destroy and then remake them, with divine rather than human needs in mind.

In the book of Amos, social critique dominates. This has been attached to the prophet's old metaphors, which originally simply foresaw a great disaster coming on Israel: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel be rescued" (Amos 3:12). In other words, they will *not* be rescued but will be totally consumed by the lion. Attached to this is a saying that was originally directed only against the upper class in Samaria; it has now has been generalized and turned against the people of Israel as a whole: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed"—as if all Israelites spent the whole day lolling on divans. In order to make it quite clear who has brought on this disaster—and that it is a punishment from God—the tradition adds a word of judgment that is directed against the material basis for the evil: "I will tear down the winter house as well as the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end, says YHWH" (Amos 3:15).

What on the face of it seems just a small-scale polemic against luxury turns out, on closer inspection, to be an innovation in social and legal history. The social and legal inequalities that have always existed and always will exist come to be explained as the reason for YHWH's judgment, and this turns them into sins of the whole people of biblical "Israel" against God. "Justice and righteousness" (Amos 5:7, 6:12; cf. Isa 5:7) become God's main demand, which he makes primarily for himself but also for human beings among themselves—through the

prophets and, later, in the law of Moses. We cannot derive from this a comprehensive domestic reform program and foreign policy in order to solve the problems of this world. Yet, presented with a divine demand, the old standards of justice and righteousness in the human polity acquire a higher value and become a possible means of changing the world: "No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt 6:24; see also Luke 16:13).

CONCLUSION

Our objective here has not been to give a full picture of the phenomenon of prophecy in Israel and Judah and the growth of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (on this, see Kratz 2015c; 2016). Rather, we explored how the notion of biblical Israel first appeared in prophetic literature and how this idea emerged (Kratz 2015b, 274–76). Here, a remarkable metamorphosis took place: the end of the kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE became the "end of my people of Israel" (Amos 8:2), including Israel and Judah. This was the starting point for the biblical tradition in the prophetic literature as well as in the narrative books, the legal tradition and finally also the poetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. The prophetic discourse on "Israel" was followed by the biblical narrative, the *historia sacra*, which (re)constructed the history of this people of "Israel," God's people. Both prophets and narrative were finally followed by the Mosaic discourse, which spelled out the prophetic standards of justice for biblical Israel in terms of the divine law.

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