

Class Notes on

INTRODUCTION TO PROPHETIC LITERATURE

Dr. Cyriac Valiyakunnumpurathe

Paurastya Vidyapitham, Vadavathoor,
Kottayam.

INTRODUCTION TO PROPHETIC LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Prophecy is a method of communicating the words of Yahweh to the people of Israel through signs, symbols and words. This study of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament begins with the meaning of the prophecy, its evolution in the ancient world and in the Bible, methods used in the prophetic literature and the historical and theological background in which the prophecy is written or uttered. After this short introduction, the study concentrates on the division of the prophets and their historical background with a theological message. This is only a short introduction of the prophecy of OT, with the hope of further detailed description.

1. WHAT IS PROPHECY?

A Prophet is an interpreter of the law and he uses the mode of communication through the prophetic formula which was used in the Ancient Near East.¹ Prophets of ANE played a significant role in the political and religious life of the Mesopotamian community.² Terms used to refer to these figures include *apillu* (meaning one who answers), *assinu* (male cult prostitute), *nabu* (diviner) and *baru* (one who sees).³ These names appear in the Mari literature of the ANE. These terms and the role of the prophets are transferred to the Prophets of the Old testament (OT), but in a different perspective. Therefore, the idea of prophecy is not the contribution of the Biblical period, rather it was existed prior to that.

The beginning of the prophecy in the Bible is seen in Deut 18:5 where Moses is presented as the prophet (*Nabi*), “I will raise up a prophet like you from the midst of you”. The life of Moses in the Exodus story (Exod 3-Josh 6) is presented as the prophet to the people

¹ Ancient Near East (ANE) is defined as the cultural and religious contexts of the ancient Sumerian and Babylonian periods, which is about 3000 BC-1850 BCE. The culture of these period was centered around the regions of Babylon and Assyria, which is now known as Iraq and Iran or Persia.

² The word ‘Mesopotamian’ is derived from the two Greek words, *meso* and *potamus*, meaning between two rivers. The Hebrew equivalent to this is *aram naharaim*. The two rivers are Euphrates and Tigris and therefore the civilization of Mesopotamia lies between Euphrates and Tigris.

³ James D. Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, Louisville, 2015, 3.

who interpreted the law of Yahweh before the people of Israel. There is no mention of the visions that Moses had in his life, nor the foretelling of the events that befalls on the people, rather Moses interpreted the law and became a covenant renewer between Yahweh and the people. He is the one who received the Law from Yahweh (Exod 20), when the people breached the stipulations of the covenant, he interceded before Yahweh and renewed it (Exod 32). As the covenant renewer he initiated the work of the Ark of the Covenant, which is the symbol of the presence of Yahweh in the midst of the people (Exod 35-40). He is the one who led the people of Israel towards the land of Promise. Therefore, Moses is the first prophet and his prophecy consists in the interpretation of the law by preparing the ground for the ongoing role of the prophetic leadership when entering in the land beginning with Joshua.⁴

The books from Joshua to Kings are known as the ‘Former Prophets’ and the so-called Prophets are known as ‘Latter Prophets’. This distinction clearly emphasizes the role and nature of the prophecy in the Bible. The Former Prophets are those who follow the same role of Moses, interpretation of the law, while the Latter Prophets deal with the interpretation of the history of the people of Israel through theological concepts. In this sense, the ‘Former Prophets’ explains the law in the historical situations of the people of Israel.

The historical situations of the people of Israel is summarized as following. People entered the land of Promise by the leadership of Joshua through Jericho (Josh 6). They confiscated the land belonged to Canaanites, Hittites and Hivites through the war or through peaceful infiltration (7-9). After their entrance to the land Joshua divided the land among the twelve tribes of the people of Israel⁵ through the medium of Ephod (Josh 14) and lot (Josh 18:1-10), thereby the people of Israel was settled in the land. At the same time other nations were not sent from the land and therefore, Joshua insisted the people not to mingle with them nor go after any other gods (Josh 23). In this way Joshua interpreted the first commandment, “You shall have any other gods other than Yahweh” (Exod 20:1). The main focus of Joshua was to establish the uniqueness of Yahweh in the land of Promise.

⁴ Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 5.

⁵ The concept of the ‘Twelve Tribes’ emerged from the ancient system of the city states in Babylon, where there were groups of people comprising of 12 or 6, united together under the roof of a sanctuary, where they adore their gods. This system also developed in the ancient Greek culture and it is known as ‘amphictyony’.

The same focus of the Former Prophets is seen in the books of Judges and Samuel. People went after other gods forgetting Yahweh who saved them from the hands of Egypt and liberated from the slavery of them (Jud 2:10). They went after the gods of Canaan, Baal and Ashera, and worshipped them by making the sanctuaries for them. The anger of Yahweh kindled against them and they were under the rule of the kings of Canaan, which became a slavery for them. The people of Israel cried out before Yahweh and He gave saviors to them and they were known as 'Judges'. The word שופט (*shofet*) has two meanings, one is the in the secular usage as 'judge' and the other is in the religious usage 'savior'. The book of Judges explains the different war that Israel had in the earlier life, and how the other nations confiscate the land of Promise and the people became slaves. These are indeed, historical, and the book of Judges explains how the people of Israel survived from their afflictions. It also explains theologically the reason behind the catastrophe of the land, which is related with forgetting of the uniqueness of Yahweh and serving other gods of Canaan. Judges 3-16 explain at length different events related with the suffering of the people even in the land of Promise and the salvation brought by Yahweh. These events interpret the Law of Yahweh and thereby the book of Joshua and 1Sam 1-7 are considered as the 'Former Prophetic books'.

The kingship of Yahweh is the fundamental theme of the OT. Yahweh is the King of Israel (Exod 15:18) who is worshipped in the land of Promise. He is the one who leads the people to His own sanctuary (v.17). The kingship of Yahweh is realized in the sanctuary when He is worshipped. Absence of the true worship leads to the absence of kingship (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 20:25). In this background there emerged the concept of human kingship which should be in accordance with the mind of Yahweh (1Sam 8:7). At the same time there existed the anti-kingship ideologies prevailed in the land (Judg 9:11-15; 1Sam 8:10ff), which explains how a king should not be in the land of Israel. Deuteronomic the law of the Kingship (Deut 17:14-20) envisages the quality of a human king is that he is the interpreter of the law and a covenant renewer.

The kings played a significant role in the religious as well as the political regime of Israel. He was the one who unified the people of Israel as a nation, for example, David and Solomon are the figures of unification (2Sam 2: 1-5; 5:1-5). This is effected through the cult centralization, an entire theme of Deuteronomy (12:1-7), which is realized through the confiscating of the land of Jebusites in the hill country of Zion which is known as Jerusalem (2Sam 5:10-15). Hence Jerusalem centered religious life of the people of Israel began with the inception of the monarchy in Israel. This has become the background of

the political life of the people of Israel. Deterioration in the religious life created a demising of the political life of the people. Therefore, both religious and political life of the people go hand in hand with each other. Kings played a role in both realms of the culture, a great example is Solomon who is at the same time performed as both priest and king in the dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem, whose prayer is attested in 1Kings 8. In this circumstance there comes the role of prophetic figures who are part of king's officials. Their role is significant in the coronation ceremony of the king. Samuel acted as both a priest and a prophet in anointing the king Saul (1Sam 10). Nathan is the prophet who was in the court of David (2Sam 12) and Solomon (1Kings 1:34) along with the priest Zadok. The role of Elisha is actualized in the coronation of an Israel king Jehu (2Kings 9). Therefore, the primary role of the prophets is to officiate the coronation ceremony. Coronation is the confirmation of Yahweh over the king that the people had chosen (Deut 17:14). In this sense the prophets are the representative of Yahweh in the land of Israel in relation to the king.

The second role of the prophet is to correct the king when he deviates from the precepts of the law and to lead the country into a unity. Here the prophets uphold the Deuteronomic theology of the Bible, which is centered on the uniqueness of Yahweh and the centrality of the Temple of Jerusalem. Absence of the unity is the fundamental cause of exile, which is symbolized through the loss of kingship, priesthood, land and the Temple. The main teaching of these prophets is the invitation to return to Yahweh (Jer 3:1.14.22;4:1;5:3;25:5; Ezek 33:9.18; Zech 1:3). This return will enable the restoration of the lost kingdom and priesthood, temple and the nation to the people of Israel. This ideology is clearly mentioned in the sayings of the prophets. Hence the role of the prophets is to create a nationalistic feeling to the people which will eventually lead to the beginning of Judaism.

2. DIVISION OF THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE

As we have already seen, the prophetic books are divided into Former and Latter prophets. The Latter prophets are again subdivided into Major and minor prophets. This division is based on the extensive of the prophetic literature, for the minor prophets are 12, whose prophetic sayings are not so extensive, while the major prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are extensive, consists of more than 40 chapters. Therefore, this division is mainly based on the nature of the book of prophecy. The prophets are

again divided into pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic prophets on the basis of the Babylonian captivity which was in 587 BCE. Moreover, some of the pre-exilic prophets are speaking on the theme of the Assyrian invasion that befall on 722 BCE, when the northern part of Israel is taken to captivity. The exilic prophets, Isaiah 40-66, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel strengthens the people who are in exile to become faithful to the One Yahweh and to the nation of Israel. These prophets prepare the people for a new exodus from Babylon to Jerusalem. The post-exilic prophets focus on the restoration of the nation and the Temple, kingdom and priesthood. This will be created through the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem which was extinct due to the Babylonian exile. Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are mainly known as the post-exilic prophets whose sayings are directed to form a new people of Israel and Judaism.

3. LITERARY AND NON-LITERARY PROPHETS

Prophets are classified into literary and non-literary prophets, the former refers to the written prophetic messages of the prophets and the latter to the non-written prophets who are action oriented, Elijah and Elisha are the main non-literary prophets. There is a considerable difference from the history of the people of Israel and the prophetic literature of this period. The latter gives importance to certain important aspects of the history with a view on the theological themes of the books of the Bible. In this way, the history speaks of the historical facts and realities of the period while the prophetic literature gives a theological explanation to the events that led to the two great catastrophes of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions in 722 and 587 BCE respectively.

The prophets and prophetic literature are different. The prophets are the charismatic leaders with theological and sociological inquiry.⁶ Moses, Ahia, Eilaija and Elisha were considered to be the charismatic leaders who had a considerable position in the court of the kings of their representative era. They interpreted the Torah of Yahweh and acted according to it. Their main concern was to uphold the monotheism of the Judaistic religion. They are mainly individual prophets. These individual prophets had their specific role in relation with the monarchy. This role can be explained as theological, for the monarchy explains the history of the people of Israel, while the prophet who is related with the monarch signifies the theological position of the history of the time. In other words, the prophets interpreted the history in

6 Cfr D. L. Petersen, *The Role of Israel's Prophets*, (JSOT S 17) Sheffield, 1981, 10.

accordance with the faith experience of the Deuteronomistic redactor. The prophetic literature, on the other hand is a literary form. The prophetic tradition did not start with the preaching of an individual prophet in a particular historical setting, but the prophecy came into being only in course of the literary growth of a writing.⁷ This is a collection of short prophetic sayings, composed by the pupils of the prophet or by later redactors. These short sayings uttered in different circumstances or historical times could have been collected together which have independent existence. These collections were composed together and formed a literary structure and became the prophetic literature.⁸ Hence the prophetic literature has certain features, which begins with a superscription, then there are oracles of doom and salvation, exhortations of the prophet basing on the Torah of Yahweh, and finally there is the need for return to Yahweh. These features can be seen in most of the literary prophets with certain exceptions.

In the above background one may consider the composition of the prophetic materials. Most of the scholars propose the aspect of *ex eventu* prophecy. This means the prophecy after the event. The prophet interprets the events in the light of the covenant or law of Yahweh. In this way the prophetic literature can be composed only after the events of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, since most of the prophecies concentrate on these historical catastrophes.

4. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE

The non-literary prophets lived in the period of the early monarchy from the time of Saul to Solomon, in the pre-division of the land of Israel, and in the time span of the division of the united kingdom, from Jeroboam of Israel to Jehu of Israel and Rehoboam of Judah to Uzziah of Judah. The era is marked with significant changes in the realm of religion and politics. The kingdom of Saul became extinct because of the political reason since he was from a small tribe of Benjamin (1Sam 10:21). During that time the prevailing tribe was Judah and therefore there is all the possibility for David to become the king at the place of Saul. Moreover, Saul failed in exterminating the enemies of Israel, Philistines, while David, from the tribe of Judah could do the same (1Sam 17). In this changing context of the kingship from Saul to David, Benjamin

7 Cfr. C. Levin, "Zephania: How this Book became Prophecy", in *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts*, L. I. Grabbe-M. Nissinen (eds), Atlanta, 2011, 117-140.

8 Cfr C. Levin, "Zephania", 117-118.

to Judah, was initiated through a prophet known as Samuel. Samuel anointed both Saul (1Sam10) and David (1Sam 16) to be the kings of the united monarchy. After his death (1Sam 28), there came up another prophet Nathan in relation to David whose role is specified when David commits the sin of adultery (2Sam 12) and thereby profaned the kingship of Yahweh. The curse of Nathan to David has a far-reaching consequence on the whole history of Israel (2Sam 12:11-13). Scholars opined that it has become the cause of the division of the united monarchy and the subsequent exiles to Assyria (2Kings 17) and Babylon (2Kings 25). The role of Nathan in the consecration of Solomon (1Kings 1:34) shows the continuation of the reign of Davidic dynasty in the united monarchy. The role of prophet Ahia in 1Kings 11(vv. 29-34) is related with the division of the monarchy into two, one is guided led by Jeroboam of Israel and the other is by Rehoboam of Judah. This political situation lasted until the Syro-Ephramite Crisis⁹ in 734 BCE and the later to 722 when the Assyrians took away the land of Israel. So, the historical part of the non-literary prophets ends with the time of Jehu dynasty in the period of Jeroboam II.

During the Assyrian hegemony over Israel, the classical prophecies of the OT evolved, such as Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Michea. The main thrust of these prophecies were to divert the attention of the Israelites to turn towards Yahweh for help. The author of Kings used legends about Ahijah (1 Kgs 11:29–39; 14:1– 18), Shemaiah, (1 Kgs 12:21–24), Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:1–28), and anonymous prophets (1 Kgs 20:13–43). The narrative about two unnamed prophets and the altar of Bethel (1 Kgs 13) was probably passed on as a grave tradition (see 2 Kgs 23:16–18). Material about Isaiah makes up an extensive and relatively independent section of Kings (2 Kgs 18:13–20:19). Stories about Elijah and Elisha constitute nearly all of 1 Kgs 17:1–2 Kgs 8:15 and were most likely incorporated from a single written source. This legend cycle is held together by the transfer of Elijah’s mantle (2 Kgs 2:13–14) and Elisha’s completion of Elijah’s mission (1 Kgs 19:15–17). Prophetic legends and folktales cannot be used as historical sources,

⁹ This crisis has become the corner stone of the Assyrian invasion. After the division of the united monarchy, Judah had excreted power over the trans Jordan region, which is near to the land of Israel and Judah. This place was also interested to Israel and Damascus. Therefore, these two nations became united together against Ahas, who was the king of Judah. Ahas sought the help of Assyria by implanting the demands of Assyria in Jerusalem. Ahas inserted the gods of Assyria in the Temple of Jerusalem and thereby desecrated it. As a result of the union of Ahas with Assyria initiated the invasion of Israel. These whole incident is known as the Syro Ephramite crisis in 734 BCE and the result of it was the invasion of Israel by Assyria in 732 BCE.

except in an indirect way insofar as they reveal religious and social history.¹⁰ The prophetic activity of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-39 and Michea are traced back to the beginning of the Assyrian invasion over Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz of Judea.

The historical setting of the literary prophets is traced back to the time from Jeroboam II of Israel until the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 722 BCE, to the Assyrian invasion of Judah by Sennacherib in 701 BCE, to the destruction of Assyria by Babylon in 612 BCE, deportation of the land of Judah to Babylon beginning from 609 until 587 BCE. The prophetic mission of the exilic prophets begins with Jeremiah, Isaiah 40-66, Ezekiel and Daniel, whose mission is related with the problems faced by the people of Judah in the land of Babylon. The prophetic mission of the post-exilic prophets is concentrated on the reestablishment of the lost identity of Israel. The prophets urged the return of the people, reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (Hagg 1), purification of the exilic priesthood (Zech 3), the proclamation of the kingship of Yahweh (Zech 14:9-10.17-18) and the subsequent offerings in the Temple (Mal 1).

5. THEOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE PROPHECIES

The main theological thrust of these prophecies is concentrated on two theological themes that spread out all through the Bible, namely, the promise of Yahweh to David (1Sam 7:12-14) and the inviolability of Jerusalem. The promise to David is not a personal promise, rather it is a promise given to the entire dynasty of Judah, which is considered as the remnant community that will last long in the land of Israel, from whom Jesus the Messiah came. The hope for the return of all the Israel and a unified nation under the kingship of Judah/David is the main thrust of the prophecies (Am 9:11-15; Hos 3:5; Ezek 37; 48; Isa 65:1-5; 2:1-5; Mic 4-5). The tribe of Judah is given prominence in the Deuteronomic history of the Bible. Book of Genesis 49:9-10 gives a prominent role to Judah, Jud 1:1-10 explains Judah as the leader of the tribes of Israel who confiscated the land of Canaan and the land of Jebusites in Jerusalem. The selection of David in 1Sam 16:1-10 envisages the role of Judah/David as a remnant of the people of Israel. The same tribe goes to exile to Babylon and from there they emerged as a strong group of the remnant (Hag 1:14) who marched towards the land of Judah to rebuild the Temple.

¹⁰ Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 138.

The inviolability of Jerusalem is another theme presented in the prophecies of these periods. Jerusalem is not only the religious center of Israel, but also a place of unification of the whole Israel. Judah is identified as Jerusalem, because of the role played by the Temple in forming Judah to be a remnant. Prophet Ahia, when he performs the symbolic gesture of the division of the united monarchy, he sends message to the king Jeroboam saying that for the inviolability of Jerusalem and for the promise of David, I will set apart two portions (1Kings 11:29-39).

6. SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE

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11 Cfr D. L. Petersen, *The Role of Israel's Prophets*, (JSOT S 17) Sheffield, 1981, 10.

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short sayings uttered in different circumstances or historical times could have been collected together which have independent existence. These collections were composed together and formed a literary structure and became the prophetic literature.¹³ Hence the prophetic literature has certain features, which begins with a superscription, then there are oracles of doom and salvation, exhortations of the prophet basing on the Torah of Yahweh, and finally there is the need for return to Yahweh. These features can be seen in most of the literary prophets with certain exceptions.

7. METHODS OF PROPHECY

1. Prophets use different modes or means through which they communicate the message of Yahweh to the people of Israel. The prophets give the message of the historical time in a theological perspective. For example, the arrival of Pharaoh, Shisak to Israel during the time of Solomon was a historical event. The sole purpose of his coming was to confiscate the land. But the Prophet explains this event in a theological format, because of the sins of Solomon, as a punishment of Yahweh, there came up Pharaoh to Judah (1Kings 11). The same is true for the Assyrian invasion, which was a political affair in the secular history of the people of Israel, but for the Prophets it was a punishment for the sins committed by the kings, priests, prophets and the people. Therefore, the prophets are using the theological history to interpret the events in the secular history of the people of Israel.
2. The second method used by the prophets is the symbolic act.¹⁴ The very expression of this word Symbolic actions by a prophet in the ancient world represent a form of drama in which the prophet through his actions symbolically represents the actions or intentions of Yahweh in the world.¹⁵ For example, the son of Isaiah is presented as Shear Yashoob (שאר ישוב), in the context of the Syro Ephramite crisis (Isa 7: 3) which represents the theology of the prominence of Judah, a remnant will return. Likewise, the prophet performs the symbolic act of marriage with Gomer. This act is seen at the beginning of the prophecy of Samuel. The event of the dismissal of Saul from the kingship is presented through a symbolic action of tearing the tunic of

¹³ Cfr C. Levin, "Zephania", 117-118.

¹⁴ Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 68.

¹⁵ Cfr Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 13.

Samuel in to pieces (1Sam 15: 30). Likewise, the division of the united monarchy is symbolically pictured through the tearing of the clothe of the prophet Ahia into twelve pieces (1Kings 12). The breaking of the staff into two in Zech 11:5 denotes the breaking of the two kingdoms. Buying a field in Anathoth by Jeremiah is a symbolic act through which there is hope to the exilic people that they will return (Jer 34). Therefore, the Symbolic action is a method of interpreting the intention of Yahweh through signs and symbols.

3. Visions are another mode of the prophecy and through this the prophet is known as a visionary. Visions are different from dreams, for when a prophet is identified with the people of Israel he sees the visions, while a person sees dreams when identified with other nations.¹⁶ The prophetic literature make a literary form of the visions through their arrangements (Am 7-8) by using the same phraseology. The first type reports Yahweh as the source of vision: “Yahweh showed me” (Am 7:1.3.7; 8:1; Zech 3:1). The second type gives emphasis upon the visionary than upon Yahweh: “I saw” (Ezek 2:9; 8:2; Am 9:1; Zech 1:8.18). The third form introduces a conversation report: “he asked me” (Am 8:2; Zech 4:2).¹⁷
4. Oracles of doom and Oracles of salvation are other modes of prophetic literature. Oracles of doom are directed towards the foreign nations, while oracles of salvation are to Israel and Judah. The foreign nations are Edom, Moab, Ammon, Syria, Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, which share the borders of the land of Israel. Indeed, these nations are related to Israel, but do not share in the cult of Yahweh as a result they are termed as foreign nations. The doom proclaimed by the prophets over these nations (Jer 45-51; Am 1-2; Obd 1; Nah Zech 9:1-6) is a warning given to the people of Israel. Like these nations who went after other gods, if the people of Israel do the same crime they will be thrown out of the land of Israel. The oracles of salvation are centered on the return of the people of Israel, and the lost prosperity will be regained when they acknowledge Yahweh (Hos 5:15-6:3). Salvation is for the tribe of Judah where the whole Israel irrespective of any tribe will be united together to form one nation under the Davidic king (Hos 3:5; Am 9:11-15; Ezek 48; Isa 65:1-7).

¹⁶ This is true of the dreams of Joseph in Gen 38, since he is identified with the Egyptian people. Jacob on the other hand, sees a vision at Bethel (Gen 28) on his way to Haran.

¹⁷ Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 21.

Therefore, these oracles give a hope for the exilic Judah and a hope for the Messianic kingdom.

5. Exhortations are another form of the method of prophecy, which a prophet commands the people to do certain acts through the imperative forms (Am 5:7.8.14).
6. Messenger Formula introduces the message of the one who has appointed the prophet to speak out: “Thus says the Lord”. This type is mostly frequent in all the prophecies of Bible. Through this the prophet conveys the message that the authority behind the prophecy is not the whims and fancies of the prophet, rather this is the word of Yahweh (Am 3:1-6).
7. Word-event formula plays two primary roles: to introduce prophetic writings and to introduce new speeches within the prophetic books: “The word of Yahweh came to X”.¹⁸
8. Eschatological Day phrases are common in the exilic and pre-exilic prophets. For them the ‘Day of Yahweh’ is a day of judgement. This phrase refers to the future events, they introduce the chronological shifts in the context where they appear, and these shifts orient the reader toward the future.¹⁹
9. Messianic Promises: Prophetic literature in their original context does not refer to the messianic fulfillment, rather it speaks of the events that are typically related to the history of Israel. For example, Isa 7:14 speaks of the birth of a child whose name will be Emmanuel. The real context of the prophecy is the reign of Ahas of Judah to whom a son will be born and his name is Hezekiah. The ‘Emmanuel prophecy’ is primarily referring to Hezekiah and in the remote context to Jesus Christ, when it was applied to the NT period (cfr also Isa 53; 11; 9). The later reception history has seen something significant in these texts drew the attention of Christian interpreters to see parallels to the life of Jesus Christ.
10. Superscription is known as the title of the prophecy which indicates the historical background of the events that happened in the time of the kings of Israel and Judah and the name of the prophet, his provenience are also indicated in the superscription.

¹⁸ Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 19.

¹⁹ Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 22.

8. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPHECIES OF PRE-EXILIC PERIOD

8.1. JEHU DYNASTY IN ISRAEL- 841-722 BCE (2Kgs 9:1-17:4)

Dynasty of Omri was overthrown by another leader Jehu (841-814), who was anointed by prophet Elisha as the king of Israel (2Kgs 9:1-3). Joram, king of Israel after the death of Ben Hadad hoped that he might take Ramoth Gilead from Syrians. But he was wounded and returned. Jehu son of Nimsi had already taken the city by force. Elisha came forward and anointed him with oil and made him king over Israel. Jehu was the only king of Israel who was judged positively by the Deuteronomist. His main aim was to strike down the house of Ahab (Omriyade dynasty) and through him the words of prophet Elijah over Jezebel were fulfilled (1Kgs 22:20-26). Joram of Israel was killed during the war against Arameans (9:14-26), Ahazia of Judah was killed (vv. 27-28) and the prophecy of Elijah over Jezebel was fulfilled (vv. 30-37). According to Josephus, when Jehu came to Jezreel Jezebel adorned herself and stood upon a tower, and said, he was a fine servant that had killed his master. And when he looked up to her he asked, who she was and commanded her to come down to him. At last he ordered eunuchs to throw her down from the tower and being thrown down, she sprinkled the wall with blood and was trodden upon by horses and so died. Those who were ordered to bury the body of Jezebel they could not find the whole part of her body and therefore the prophecy of Elijah was fulfilled.²⁰

Jehu's vengeance against the house of Ahab happened in Samaria (2Kgs 10:1-17). There were seventy sons of Ahab were united in Samaria and with a joint effort Jehu's army killed them all. This happened in order that the prophecy of Elijah is to be fulfilled. Again, with a treacherous manner, Jehu called all the Baal worshippers in Samaria (2Kgs 10:18-31) and gave them priestly vestments. When they had received them, he went into the house of Baal with his friend Jehonadab and gave orders to make search whether there is anyone else other than the worshippers of Baal. Then Jehu directed the soldiers to kill all those worshippers of Baal and remove them from their territory. With these acts Jehu, king of Israel was considered

²⁰ Cfr. Josephus, 318.

good in the sight of Yahweh and his rule over Israel was allowed to continue for four generations.²¹

After Jehu, Jehoahaz son of Jehu took the government of Samaria and held it 17 years (802-786). He did not imitate his father, but was guilty of as wicked practices and was judged negatively relating with Jeroboam's sin (13:1-9). The king of Aram brought him low and by an expedition against him did so greatly reduce his force. He also took away from Jehoahaz great cities and many of them and destroyed his army. But the king of Israel entreated before Yahweh and begged Yahweh to deliver him from the hands of Hazael, king of Syria . Accordingly Yahweh accepted the prayer and his repentance and granted him deliverance from war. But the invasion of Assyria against the Arameans made the decrease of their power over Israel. As a result Jehoahaz defeated Ben Hadad of Arameans (2Kings 13:3.22.24-25).²²

Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son Joash who reigned Israel for 16 years (786-770) in Samaria (2Kgs 13:10-13). His reign was judged negatively relating him with the sin of Jeroboam. During his time prophet Elisha became sick (vv. 14-21) and the king visited him. It made the king a hope in the future war against Hazael, king of Syria, for Elisha predicted that with three wars Joash will subdue the Syrians/Aramean kingdom (vv.22-24).²³ During his time, Assyria reasserted itself under Adad Nirari III. The Assyrian king waged successful campaigns against Damascus and it marked the end of Damascus as a serious military force in 796. Ben Hadad was forced to pay tribute to Adad Nirari and Jehoash too had to pay him tribute.²⁴

Joash was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II whose reign was described to be prosperous and free of attack, since Assyrians could not force their power in Israel. This independence and prosperity were enjoyed by both Israel and Judah for 50 years until Tiglath Pileser III appeared to the throne of Assyria in 745 BCE. For this reason the overlapping reigns of Jeroboam II and Azariah were a time of peace and prosperity for some elements of the population, but also a time of challenging social change.²⁵ According to 2Kings 14:28, Jeroboam gained some influence over Damascus and Aramenian kingdoms. As a result, Israel could restore and solidify its boarder in north. Moreover the cultic installation of Bethel and

21 Cfr. Josephus, 319.

22 Cfr R. D. Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT (1200-63 BCE), (BE 13), Atlanta, 2014, 121.

23 Cfr. Josephus, 325.

24 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 122.

25 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 123.

Dan shrines had a second birth during his time and people were forced to make their worship in these sites. Even though there was a strong relation between Israel and Judah, Jeroboam did not encourage the people of Israel to worship the One God Yahweh in Jerusalem, instead he followed the religion of his predecessors in Bethel and Dan. Similarly the social and economic hardships were promoted during the time of Jeroboam of Israel and Azariah of Judah. The marginalized people had suffered a lot due to the unhealthy concentration of the wealth among the high class elite group. Each kingdom had a capital significantly larger than its other cities. Israel had several regional power centers represented by cities of smaller size in Dan, Gezer, Shimron, Hazor, etc.. The poor people acquired loans from the wealthy and its repayment was not successful and as a result debt slavery further increased the social gap between the rich and the poor.²⁶ There were also royal officials made up of important priests who exercised their power at the shrines of Israel. These all situations created chaos in the land of Israel and Judah which was explained by the prophets Amos and Hosea.

In Israel political chaos was at its heap. Pekah became the king of Israel (737). Assyria reduced Israel and Damascus as vassal states in 738. At this point Rezin, king of Damascus and Pekah, king of Israel formed an anti-Assyrian coalition. They wanted to include Judah to this coalition. But Judah was not attacked by Assyrians and had not become a vassal state. With the coalition of the kings of Damascus and Israel, they wanted to control over the house of Judah and appoint Tabeel as the king of Judah. Now the king of Judah was Ahaz. He sought the help of Assyria and paid tribute to him. Moreover, Ahaz made renovations in the Temple according to the Assyrian model. At this support Assyria attacked Damascus and Israel. Israel lost its territory in Transjordanian and good part in Galilee. Its ruling class was deported and so the kingdom of Israel was reduced to the central hill country.²⁷

Judah's alliance with Assyria was not proper or right in the eyes of Yahweh as well as before prophet Isaiah. So he denounces over the act and announces a saviour who will deliver Judah through the 'Immanuel Prophecy' (Isa 7: 1-14). This prophecy has its immediate fulfillment in the king Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz after the Assyrian invasion of Israel. The prophecy has its remote fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

With the event of the Syro-Ephramite crisis, Israel began to lose its power and Assyria invaded the territories of Israel's central hill country during the time of king Hoshea of Israel

26 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 126.

27 Cfr. Soggin, The History of Israel, 252-258.

in 722. Thus the dynasty of Jehu was destroyed and was taken as captive to Assyria. The cause of the exile, according to the Deuteronomist is the sin of the house of Jeroboam. He built two sanctuaries for the gods in Bethel and Dan and his successor Ahab fortified the city of Samaria with the gods of Phoenicia. Hence except Jehu, all other kings of Israel were judged negatively. In the vision of Isaiah it is prophesied that the tenth part will go to exile and remain one of them, Judah and it will be burned with fire and remnant will come out of it (Isa 6:11-15). This remnant is Judah after the Babylonian exile who came out from Babylon to rebuild the Temple which the kings of Babylon had destructed.

8.3. KINGS OF JUDAH DURING JEHU DYASTY

After the death of Ahazia (9:27-28), his mother Athalia reigned Israel (11:1-2). Since she was the daughter of Omri, she had followed the ways of the kings of Israel. But the legitimate successor was Joash, but because of his younger age he needed a regent and Athalia took over the charge.²⁸ She exploited the position of strength which her new position automatically gave her by eliminating all the heirs of the throne of David. She reigned for six years (842-837). She was negatively evaluated by the Deuteronomist.

On the seventh year of her reign Jehoiada, priest of Solomon anointed child Joash as the king of Judah. He set up guard of the city and Athaliah was brutally killed by the army organized by Jehoiada, priest of Joash (11:13-17). The priest made a covenant between the king and the people of Yahweh and they went to the house of Baal and tore the house and killed the priests of Baal (11:17-20). He was judged positively since he began the cult centralization in the land of Judah. The land was quiet for a long period after Athaliah. Moreover the reparation work of the Temple had begun during his period (12:1-16). Further, the attack of Hazael, king of Damascus against Jerusalem was stopped by giving the votive gifts to him by Joash (12:17-18).

The rest of the kings of Judah until the Assyrian captivity of Israel were Amazia, who fought against Edom. But his alliance with the king of Israel, Jehoahaz made the destruction of Jerusalem (14:1-14). Uzziah (783-742) also known as Azariah (15:1-7). During his reign there was a good condition for Judah, for the southern part was extended until Red Sea. Further, the relation between Israel and Judah was very good indeed. The boundaries of the two nations were very close to the traditionally attributed the empire of Solomon and

28 Cfr. Soggin, *The History of Israel*, 241.

David.²⁹ After Uzziah, king Ahaz (16:1-20) succeeded him to the reign and during his period there came up the Syro-Ephramite crisis (734) which resulted in the negative evaluation of his kingdom. After him, Jehu dynasty of Israel was invaded by Israel and Judah remained as a separate entity which is predicted by prophet Isaiah (Isa 6:11-16).

8.4. KINGS OF JUDAH DURING ASSYRIAN INVASION

8.4.1. JOTHAM (2KINGS 15:32-38)

There are two comments from the part of Deuteronomistic historian over the reign of Jotham: 1) He did good in the sight of Yahweh, but at the same time the high places were not changed and the people sacrificed on them (vv. 33-34). As a result of this there was the threat from the king of Aram and Pekah of Israel (v. 37). This proposes that the beginning of Syro-Ephramite crisis was traced back to the time of Jotham.³⁰ The cause of the animosity by Rezin and Pekah against Jotham was the latter's (Jotham) control over the Trans Jordanian part. For the Ammonites gave tribute to Jotham (2Chro 27:5). Besides, the connection between Judah and the Trans Jordan was prevalent during the time of David (2sam 19:32-41). The Trans Jordanian tribe Reuben had joined the family of Korah which was settled in Hebron (Num 16:1; 1Chr 6:55). Benjamins who had ties with Gilead strengthened the relation between Judah and Trans Jordan.³¹ During the time of Jotham, the kingdom of Judah was extended to the eastern Trans Jordan to the Ammonites (2Chr 27:5). This may also suggests the influence of Judah over the Moab.³² The main aim of the Syro Ephramite crisis was to prevent Jotham in controlling the Trans Jordanian area and so they opposing forces of Samaria and Aram planned to have Ben Tobeel as the king of Judah.³³

8.4.2. AHAZ (2KINGS 15:38B-16:20)

Syro-Ephramite crisis reached its zenith during the regnal years of Ahaz. Dtr Historian gives a negative overtone on the regnal years of the king (16:2b). His affinity with the kings of Israel is emphasized (v.3) and he was the one who practiced child sacrifice according to the

29 Cfr. Soggin, *The History of Israel*, 246.

30 Cfr Nelson, *Historical Roots of the OT*, 132; B. Oded, "The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephramite War Reconsidered", in *CBQ* 34 (1972), 153-165.

31 Cfr. B. Oded, "The Historical Background", 156.

32 Cfr B. Oded, "The Historical Background", 157.

33 B. Oded, "The Historical Background", 164.

customs of the Canaanites (v. 3c). There were high places for the sacrifice (v.4) as a result there came up against him the kings of Aram and Israel and they wanted to drag the kingdom of Judah by imposing Tabeel on the throne. But the king Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath pileser of Assyria and made an affinity with him (v. 7), by proclaiming himself as ‘your servant and your son’ and by offering him the gold and silver which was kept in the Temple (v.9). Because of this affinity he changed the altar of the Jerusalem temple according to the manner of Assyrian temples (vv. 11-18). The death of Rezin and the capture of Damascus by Tigleth Pileser, king of Assyria was due to the incessant plea from the part of Ahaz (v. 9). Isa 7:1-17 narrates a parallel but distinctive and much more theological story of Ahaz and the Assyrian crisis. This story expresses a salvation for Judah amidst these crisis. Isaiah foretells the impending birth of a son for Ahaz who will reestablish the throne of David (7:14). The attack against Damascus and Israel by the Assyrian army which caused the Israel’s fall according to Dtr H has a theological motive. This was to fulfill the promise of Yahweh to David and his throne in 2Sam 7:12-14.

8.4.3. HEZEKIAH (726-967) (2KINGS 18-20)

Hezekiah’s reign (728-700) had three important events, a religious reform, a war with Philistines and anti-Assyrian revolt (18:4-8). The evaluation of the Deuteronomistic historian was that Hezekiah did what is right in the eyes of Yahweh. He is related with king David. Moreover, there is no one like him among all other kings of Judah after him (18:5). Hezekiah demolished all the high places in the country, which his predecessors could not do. He destroyed all the pagan and syncretic cult and destroyed the relic of the נֶחֱשֶׁת or the fiery bronze serpent which was kept in the Temple which was attributed to Moses (Num 21:6-9) and restored and purified the Temple.³⁴ During the siege of Sennacherib of Assyria came against Jerusalem. Hezekiah gave tributes to him at Lachish and evaded the siege of Jerusalem (18:13-18). Hezekiah defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza (18:8) and thus succeeding in incorporating into kingdom some territories lost at the time of Ahaz. However, in giving tribute to Sennacherib of Assyria he had continued the pro-Assyrian policy of his father Ahaz.³⁵ But the deuteronomistic historian extolls him as the king of Judah on the basis of his attitude towards the Temple. Indeed, he was the son predicted by prophet Isaiah in his Immanuel prophecy to Ahaz (Isa 7:14).

34 Cfr. Soggin, *The History of Israel*, 245.

35 Cfr. Soggin, *The History of Israel*, 246.

2Kings 18-20 explain elaborately the regnal period of Hezekiah, beginning from the destruction of Israel by Assyria and Sennacherib, Assyrian king's march towards Judah in order to conquer. The episode ends with the enumeration of the death of Hezekiah and the promise given to the remnant Judah. Meanwhile, the narration presents the activity of Isaiah, the prophet during this period. The role of the prophet is most striking in this episode. After the threatening message from the king of Assyria, the king put on the sack cloth with his servants went to Isaiah and the prophet delivered the oracle which explains the defeat of Assyrian forces (19:1-7). The prophetic word is confirmed at the end of the narration when Sennacherib departed from Lachish and was murdered in Ararat (19:32) and Esarhaddon was replaced by him. Chapter 20 highlights the promise given to Hezekiah in his sickness and the tribe of Judah. Babylonian deportation is also mentioned but the author gives a hope in the remnant of Judah even in the Babylonian crisis. These events have a theological explanation in Isa 36-39.

The fall of Samaria to Assyria was held in the year of 722 when Shalmanasser V was the king of Assyria. This period has become the initial stage of Hezekiah's reign, 6th year of his accession. After Shalmansser came Sargon II (721-705). He moved towards Chaldean region, to Elam and seized the throne of Babylon with the Elamite support. Then he moved to Armenian side in 720 and also to Samaria. During his time the Philistian coast were subdued to the Assyrian policy. Sargon settled Arab groups in Samaria, defeated Pharaoh Osorkon IV and established the colony of Assyrians in the brook of Egypt. Sargon became the ruler of Babylon in 709 BCE. But his decisive move towards Judah is in connection with his capture of Ashdod region in 714 and during his time there was no march towards Judah in order to usurp the throne.³⁶

Sargon was killed in 705 and was replaced by Sennacherib who was expelled from the kingship of Babylon by Merodach Baladan, anti Assyrian. But Sennacherib defeated him in 703 and moved towards Judah to Hezekiah. During this time Hezekiah rebelled against Assyrian policies (18:1-8), He struck the Philistian in Gaza Ekron deposed the pro Assyrian king Padi and handed him over to Judah, the rebellious king of Ashkelon occupied Joppa.³⁷ He prepared to meet the trouble from Sennacherib by strengthening the walls of Jerusalem and to provide the water for the entire city he made a conduit or water stream from one end to the other (2Kings 20:20). In 701 Sennacherib marched against the allies of Judah, Tyre and Sidon

36 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 145-46.

37 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 146.

he defeated and exiled them to Cyprus. He received tribute from the Philistian cities and the neighboring nations which were joined to Judah. He encountered Egyptian forces at Eltekhah since Ekron asked for the help from Egyptian king.³⁸

The conquering of the neighboring nations and the cities that were under the control of Judah paved the way for the Assyrian army to capture the tribe of Judah. Sennacherib moved against the cities of Jerusalem (Mic 1:10-16), including Gath and Lachish. This made the Biblical author to produce two prophecies (Isa 18:17-19.36-39; 19:9b-35). Jerusalem was not captured, since Hezekiah paid tribute to him at Lachish (18:14-16), by taking the gold and silver from the Temple. By the attack of Sennacherib, Judah lost some of its property in Ashdod, Ekron and Gaza. A portion of Judah's people were exiled. Hezekiah had to pay a special exaction of booty and experienced an increase in his regular tribute. Sennacherib invaded Babylon and installed his son Assur nadin Shumi as the king. He plundered Babylon and burned it and his youngest son Esarhaddon became the king of Babylon after Shumi, who rebuilt Babylon.³⁹

9. PROPHECY OF AMOS

9.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROPHECIES

The title of the Prophecy of Amos provides a hint at the historical situation behind these prophecies in Am 1:1. The title explains the regnal period of the two important kings, Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam, son of Joash of Israel.

9.2. POLITICAL SITUATIONS AT THE TIME OF JEROBOAM II

King of Israel is mentioned with the name Jeroboam, son of Joash, who is identified as Jeroboam II and his regnal period was from 786-746 BCE. During the regnal period of Joash, grandson of Jehu, Armenians were totally ejected from Israelite territory, west of Jordan. Jeroboam II was one of the strong military figures of Israel's history. He made his northern frontiers in Hamath (2Kings 14:25). As the text suggests (2Kings 14:28) Jeroboam imposed his rule in Syria and Damascus and thereby there was a complete destruction of the city of Damascus and annexation of the Aramean lands in Trans Jordan. Moreover, he had control over the Moabite and Ammonites who were expelled from the Israelite territory. He succeeded in

38 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 147.

39 Cfr Nelson, Historical Roots of the OT, 151.

conquering all of Trans Jordan that had traditionally belonged to Israel as is indicated in 2Kings 14:3-25. There was a resurgence of the trade with Tyre and Sidon and as a result, there was the annexation of these territories to this kingdom. After effect of these war was the deterioration of Yahwism in the land of Israel. As a consequence, to the monarchical rule, the nature of the tribal society was lost and it destroyed the concept of the covenant as a relation between Yahweh and the people. Covenant has become a mere kinship ties and as a result covenant obligation has become a matter of cultic act . Because of this situation people expected the future of the society centered on the concept of the ‘Day of Yahweh’. Men recalled the intervention of Yahweh in the past, in exodus and in the wilderness tradition and thereby the expectation grew of a coming day when Yahweh would intervene in the struggles of the people of Israel.

Another development of his reign was the economic stability of the kingdom. The riches were now spread very unevenly between various social classes. The administrative system was patterned in the model of Solomon’s period for the taxation. There was egregious injustice and the division of the wealth and poor occurred in the land of Israel. The small farmers were to be at the mercy of the land owners. The greedy people acquired more wealth at the expense of the poor. These instabilities between the rich and the poor has violated the law of justice of the Deuteronomic code (Deut 24:10-22).

9.3. THE PLACE OF THE PROPHECY

Tekoah is a region west of Jerusalem, a desert place almost near to Bethlehem, in the tribe of Judah. Accordingly, this city has its antiquity that goes back to 750 BCE. The city is also mentioned in the writings of the same prophet, when he speaks of his life setting (Am 7: 14). In the prophecies of Jeremiah, the city is mentioned as the city destroyed by the Babylonians (Jer 6:1). The city is in the tribe of Judah and the Prophet being a Judean spokes against the people of Israel who are in the northern region of Israel.

9.4. STRUCTURE OF THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

The book begins with a prologue of the historical situations in which the prophet utters the words of Yahweh (1:1-2). Then the whole prophecy is grouped into seven sections through certain prophetic formulas.⁴⁰ The whole prophecy has an inclusion in 1:1 and 9:15.

⁴⁰ כה אמר יהוה . Am 1:3-2:16 (Thus says Yahweh)

These two pericope are dealing on the importance of Judah in the prophecy. Prophet, who is from the tribe of Judah speaks from Jerusalem to Israel of the north (1: 1-2) inviting the whole people to turn towards Jerusalem, the only sanctuary of Yahweh. In the concluding part (9;11-15) prophet enumerates the role of a new David king in Jerusalem in uniting all the people to Jerusalem. Thus, the prophecy functions as an inclusion.⁴¹ The whole prophecy is marked by three sayings of prophetic authority (1:2; 3:2-6; 7:11-13), where prophet explains his authority of the prophetic mission. The theological theme of Amos is presented in three forms, namely, the oracles (1:3-2:16), exhortations (3:1-6:14) and visions (7:1-9:15) and each section begins with notes on the authority of the prophet 1:2, 3:3-6 and 7:10-15. Thus the literature of the prophecy of Amos has three divisions.

9.5. THEOLOGY OF THE PROPHECY

The structure itself gives the theology of the book of Amos, that it enumerates the sin of the people of Israel in the context of the Assyrian invasion. The main sin of the people was the perversion of the cult of Yahweh and the social injustice prevailed in the land of Israel and Judah. The oracles (1-2) of doom elaborates the sins of the nations and the consequence of the sins, exile. The same fate will be for Israel and later for Judah. Israel will be exterminated from the land by the Assyrians, because of the social injustice and the cult aberrations (2: 6-16) and the sin of Judah is the breaching of the *Torah* of Yahweh (2: 4-5). In this instance, prophet urges the people to return to Yahweh to seek the way of righteousness and not of the evil (5:4.6.14). Meanwhile, the cultic aberrations are mentioned in the profane language: “father and son go to the same woman as a result they profane my name” (2: 7; 4:1-5). The visions also deal with the complete destruction of the people of Israel (7-8). At the end the prophet gives a hope for both Israel and Judah that the days are

2. שמעו את הדבר הזה. Am 3:1-15 (This verse begins with an imperative directed to all the people: hear the word

3. שמעו הדבר הזה. Am 4:1-13 (Here too there is an imperative)

4. שמעו את הדבר הזה. Am 5: 1-6:14

5. כה הראני אדני יהוה. Am 7:1-8:3 (Thus Lord God shown me) where it begins with a vision of the prophet. This section begins and ends with the same phrase: כה הראני אדני יהוה, which forms an inclusion to the unit and expresses the vision of the prophet.

6. שמעו זאת. Am 8:4-9:15 (Hear this).

⁴¹ Inclusion is a prosaic methodology, where the beginning and the end of an episode deals with one and the same thing, whether it can be phrases or certain words or themes.

coming when the people of Israel will repair the fallen tents of David (9:11-12). Moreover, the salvation of the people of Israel is also mentioned in 3:12 where the Assyrians are typified as a lion who devours a sheep. Yahweh is the deliverer of the people of Israel who delivers from the mouth of the lion. Therefore, the whole prophecy gives a hope for the returnees of the people from their evil ways.

10. PROPHECIES OF HOSEA

The order of the first six prophets in the Twelve in the LXX is different from the Hebrew Bible in most manuscripts and catalogues. In the LXX the “dominant” order is Hos, Amos, Mic, Joel, Obad, and Jonah, and this is their order in Vaticanus (B). The order in the Hebrew tradition is Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic.. gives the order of the Twelve in the Dead Sea manuscripts and in other manuscripts and Church Fathers. The “dominant” Greek order may be due to an attempt for greater accuracy in the chronological arrangement of the books.⁴² However, the list of the kings presented in the books of Amos and Hosea proves that Amos is prior to Hosea.

The period of Hosea’s activity is described in the superscription (1:1): In the days of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, the kings of Judah. But the regnal period of Jeroboam II is equated only with Uzziah which was a time of prosperity and peace from Assyrian invasion. At the same time during this period one may notice the anarchy prevailed in the land which the prophet Amos mentions. The time span of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah is compared with the later Israel kings, namely Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekiah, Pekaha, and Hoshea. Their regnal period is marked with the events of Syro-Ephramite crisis (732) and the Assyrian invasion of Israel (722 BCE). Therefore the prophecy of Hosea deals with the theological notion of the cause and effect of the Assyrian invasion. But certain authors provide the historicity of the prophecy tracing back to the period of king Jehu (842-815), since the prophecy condemns the kingship of Israel as well as the reference to Jezreel where Jehu killed the Omride king Jehoram (2Kings 10).⁴³

42 Cfr W. Edward Glenny, *Hosea: A Commentary Based on Hosea in Codex Vaticanus (Septuagint Commentaries)*, Leiden, 2013, 6.

43 Cfr Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 4.

10.1. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The prophetic book is divided into three parts according to the form of the text. Chapters 1-3 forms a symbolic action concerning the fate of Israel. Israel sinned against Yahweh by being the whoredom/prostitute by adoring other gods. The consequence of this is the complete destruction of the people of Israel. But Yahweh hopes for the return of the people when the whole tribes come together under the leadership of David, the king (3:5). This reality is expressed in terms of the marriage union, divorce and the return in these chapters, which is in the form of a prophetic symbolic act.

Chapters 4-14 is divided into two, chapters 4-8 and 9-14. Chapters 4-8 envisage three classes of the people against whom prophet condemns, namely the priest, prophets and kings. In some instance, the prophet directs his attention to the people of Israel (בני ישראל) at large. These chapters are culminated in 5:15-6:3, where there is a hope in the return of the perverted people of Israel. For Yahweh waits for them in the wilderness. Chapters 9-14 stress on the historical review concerning Israel's rejection of Yahweh. It begins with the feast of Sukkoth or Tabernacle (9:1-10) which is itself a feast of joy and abundance but because of the crimes of Israel it has turned to be the feast of nothingness. The peophet also mentions the different episodes of the Exodus events, like the events at Baal Peor, Bethel, etcc where the people rebelled against Yahweh (9:11ff). The prophet also condemns the people for not observing the Torah of Yahweh in selecting the kings according to the law of the king in Deut 17:14-20. Moreover chapters 12-14 present the oracles to return to Yahweh which are directed towards the Patriarchs especially Jacob. In all these prophetic materials the prophet condemns Israel for rejecting Yahweh and at the same time the condemnation is also to Judah since the latter also participate in violating the תורת יהוה (law of Yahweh). At the end of these prophecies the prophet urges the people to have a hope in the future Israel where all will be united together under one head (14:1-10). The central part of this second part is 11:5-7, where we have the nature of Yahweh as the One who has Kindness, "I am Yahweh and not man". Thus chapters 4-14 explains the symbolic act of chapters 1-3 in its historical context and the life situation of the people of Israel.

10.2. THEOLOGY OF THE PROPHECIES OF HOSEA

The theology of the prophecies of Hosea is similar to that of Amos, since both prophecies are written at the same time in the same historical situation. The sin of the people of Israel caused the destruction of the land and the subsequent deportation to Assyria.

Through the symbolic act of marriage of the prophet with a prostitute, the prophet explains that the same thing happened for Israel. Israel went after other gods forgetting Yahweh. The sons and daughter born from this marriage union, namely, *jezzrel*, *lohuhumah* and *lo ammi*, explain the nature of the life of Israel after their apostasy. The name *Jezzereel* means destruction and through it Yahweh will destroy the people of Israel. The word *lo ruhuma* means Yahweh will have no compassion over the people who have sinned against him. The name *lo ammi* emphasise the fact that through the sin the covenant is broken. The nature of the covenant is that Yahweh is the God of Israel and Israel are the people of Yahweh. This relation is broken and they will no more be the people of Yahweh. Moreover, the apostasy of the people created a great vacuum in their own life, for they had no prosperity in the land (2:7-10). But Yahweh waits for them in the wilderness until she comes back to Him (2:15) and the situation is different when she came back which is explained in the subsequent verses. The covenant is renewed and there is prosperity in her life. She makes the pledge that she will have no other husband than Yahweh. This return of the people of Israel is eschatologically fulfilled in the reunion of the whole nation under the one head David and under the one Kingship of Yahweh (3:5). The prophet explains the theology of the post-exilic period where the reunification of the whole Israel is possible. The succeeding chapters enumerates in detail the main crimes that people did in the land of Israel, the sins of priests, prophets and kings are grave, since they are the heads of the people, for there is no truthfulness, no faithfulness and no knowledge of Yahweh in the land of Israel (4:2). Moreover, these dignitaries have broken the covenant relation with Yahweh. The Exodus life of the people in chapters 10-13 are mentioned by saying that the nature of the people is that they prone to sin. Meanwhile, prophet urges the people to return to Yahweh, the one God.

11. PROPHECIES OF MICHA AND ISAIAH 1-40

11.1. HISTORICAL SETTING

The title of the prophecies of Micah and Isaiah indicate that the prophet prophesied in the eighth century, in the reigns of Jotham (759–43 B.C.E.), Ahaz (or Jehoahaz; 743–27 B.C.E.), and Hezekiah (727–698/9). During this period the Neo-Assyrian empire was rising to power, especially under Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.E.). His successor, Shalmaneser V (726–22 B.C.E.), attacked Samaria and after a three-year siege it fell to him or his successor, Sargon II (722–705 B.C.E.), who deported its inhabitants to Assyria (1:6). The

Assyrians invaded Syria-Palestine several times in subsequent years, above all in 701 B.C.E., when Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.E.) attacked Judah and reached Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18–19; Isa 37–38). It is this invasion that seems the most likely setting for 1:10–16, but as with other parts of Micah, the general nature of the language and the poetic allusiveness makes determining the setting tentative.⁴⁴ The incident of 701 was significant in the history of Judah. Israel at this time was completely extinct from the scene and now the Assyrians have become so strong and moved towards Judah to capture it. The king of Judah at that time was Hezekiah, who renewed the Temple which was desecrated by his father Ahaz. Hezekiah did not allow the army of Assyria to enter into the land of Judah. He sought the opinion of the prophet Isaiah and gave tribute to Assyria not as a vassal but to evade the destruction of the city of Judah. These events are theologically analyzed in the books of Micah and Isaiah. The book of Isaiah is divided into three units according to their content, namely Isa 1-39; 40-55; 56-66. Scholars conclude that these units are from different historical situations. The first part explains the history of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (701), the second part deals with the exilic situation of the people of Judah (587-539) and the third part is of the return from Babylonian exile (539 ff). These three different situations are later grouped into one prophecy under the name of Isaiah, since these books have a Zion theology that knits together the entire book of Isaiah.⁴⁵

11.2. THEOLOGY OF THE PROPHECIES

Prophets Micah and Isaiah are contemporaries, because they lived in the same life situation and their prophecies emphasize the inviolability of Jerusalem and the importance of Judah. Jerusalem is identified with its Temple and the people flow towards it and it will become the center of religion from where the law comes out (Isa 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-5). Both prophecies begin with the crimes of the people which the prophets Hosea and Amos delivered, social injustice (Isa 1; Mich 1:1-10). As a result, Yahweh will surely judge Israel and his judgement will be certain. The picture of Yahweh who comes out from the mountain to wage war (Jud 5) is developed as a metaphor for the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The prophecy of Isaiah deals at length the original nature of Israel for Yahweh loved Israel as a vineyard (Isa 5). Yahweh cared for the people of Israel but they did not heed to the voice of Yahweh. Unlike Micah, Isaiah explains the prophetic authority which he received

⁴⁴ Cfr P. P. Jenson, *Obediah, Jonah, Micah* (Theological Commentary), New York, 2008, 96.

⁴⁵ Maggie Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah* (SBL 155), Oxford, 2013.

from Yahweh, through a vision of the Temple (Isa 6). Through this vision Yahweh purifies the prophet who is the representative of the people of Judah and sends for a mission. His mission is related with the destruction of Israel and Judah and at the same time the prophet is to give hope to Judah in the circumstances of the crisis. Therefore chapter 6 of Isaiah explains the history of the people of Israel. Isaiah begins the prophecy during the time of the Syro-Ephremite crisis in 734 and he directs his sayings to prophet Ahaz of Judah not to make alliance with Assyria. But Ahaz did not heed to it and there the prophet delivered the 'Emmanuel Prophecy' (Isa 7:14) pointing to the succession of the king Hezekiah to the throne of Judah. Isaiah explains in detail the situations prevailed in the land of Judah after the crisis of 734, for the purpose of strengthening the people of Judah not to go after other gods and incur the punishment of Yahweh. In collaboration with Micha, Isaiah explains the details of the historical situations of the events in 701 when Hezekiah came to the throne (Isa 36-37) and the relation between Isaiah and Hezekiah.

The most striking parallelism between Micha and Isaiah is seen in the theology of Zion that is enumerated in both prophecies. Micha extend this theological theme in chapters 4 and 5, where we have the hope of return to Zion and Zion is considered as the place that is placed on heights. This section as we have already stated functions as the central portion of the Michaen prophecy, for it explains the hope for the future triumphed Judah and Jerusalem in spite of its evil doings. These chapters form a concentric structure where Jerusalem and Bethlehem become the centers of the promise of Yahweh. This analysis is due to the ideology of OT, Jerusalem is the place where the Temple is erected as the sign of Yahweh's presence and in the name of Yahweh. Bethlehem, on the other hand is the place of David who has unified the whole territory of Israel and founded a threshing floor for the Temple (2Sam 24:14). Hence the importance of both Bethlehem and Jerusalem are mentioned in this hope for the future Judah. From Bethlehem comes forth the new Davidic king and the lost Temple is reinstated in Jerusalem. These events took place in the Post-exilic period and thereby the oracle of salvation might have come from this period of history. These two prophecies are written in both prosaic and poetic structures.

12. PROPHECIES AGAINST ASSYRIA AND EDOM

12.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FALL OF ASSYRIA

The political background of Assyrian power came to its zenith in Judah after Hezekiah. During this period, Israel was under Assyrian hegemony and Sennacherib wanted to invade

Judah and as a result he destroyed the cities of Judah (Mic 1:10-16) was at the gate of Jerusalem. Babylon was also under the control of Assyria, for Sennacherib appointed Esarhaddon as the ruler of Babylon. Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh (697-642) as the king of Judah. Assyria dominated the Judah region during his time. Manasseh is listed among the vassal kings who provided forced labor for Esarhaddon to construct his palace in Nineveh (677-676).⁴⁶ He gave the name of his son Ammon which is related with the name of an Assyrian city No-Ammon, during the time of Ashurbanipal. Manasseh's reign was the time of advancement in enlarging the territory of Jerusalem. It was expanded to three times prior to it. During the time of Esarhaddon, the Assyrian army faced many challenges from Scythians and Medes. Egypt remained both a tempting target for Assyria and a source of trouble. In 671 Esarhaddon captured Egypt and he took the city Memphis and installed new rulers including Pharaoh Neco I (672-664).⁴⁷ Egyptian king Taharqa regained the city of Memphis after two years. On his way to Egypt because of this crisis, Esarhaddon died in Egypt and Assurbanipal became his successor and his brother Shamash-shin-ukin ruled Babylon. Assurbanipal invaded Egypt in 667 and defeated Taharqa and recaptured Memphis from him. Then he moved to Thebes, a southern city in Egypt with the name No-Ammon and captured the city. He appointed Psamtik I as the ruler of the delta area in Egypt. But he expelled Assyrian garrisons from Egypt with the help of Greek and Aegean rule and forced to enter into Judah by taking Ashdod.⁴⁸ Manasseh was succeeded by his son Ammon and he continued the same support to Assurbanipal. During Josiah's reign the relation between Egypt and Assyria was very strong. The disintegration between the sons of Assurbanipal, Assur-etel-ilani and Shin-sha-ishkun made the deterioration of the Assyrian power (623). After a year when there was no recognized king in Babylon, Nabopolassar (626-605), governor of the sea land seized power in Babylon, apparently representing a native Babylonian dynasty. He invaded Assyria and Medes and it strengthened the ally between Egypt and Assyria.⁴⁹ In 626 Nabopolassar defeated the Assyrian army outside Babylon and seized power. Meanwhile Egypt had become powerful under Psamtik I, it remained no longer a vassal state of Assyria but joined with Gyges, king of Lydia tried to attack Assyrian power. The emergence of Nabopolassar was a high time

46 Cfr J. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to Old Testament*, Princeton, 1969, 291.

47 Cfr Nelson, *Historical Roots of the OT*, 152.

48 Cfr Nelson, *Historical Roots of the OT*, 153.

49 Cfr Nelson, *Historical Roots of the OT*, 154.

for Egypt to be independent from Assyria. The support of Mede was so strong for Babylon and in 614 kings of Medes Cyaxeres took control of Assyria and Egyptian king also participated with him. Consequently after two years in 612, the Assyrian king Shin-sha-ishkun was defeated in a battle and the city of Nineveh was utterly destroyed.⁵⁰

12.2. PROPHECY OF NAHUM

The term נַחֻם (nahum) means 'comfort'. The prophecy aims at the historical situation of the Assyrian fall and therefore to Nineveh the prophecy is a threat while to Judah it is a comfort. The prophecy dates between the fall of Thebes in Egypt (664) and the fall of Nineveh (612). The historical aspects of the prophecy are given emphasis on the evil rule of Manasseh and the damage that is brought to the unity of Judah and Jerusalem. There is no indication of the person of Nahum except the epithet, Elkoshite. This place has various interpretations, such as the place in Nineveh or a place near Galilee.⁵¹ Some propose prophet Nahum as hailing from Capernahum, village of Nahum near the sea of Galilee. The prophecies stress that Nineveh's downfall is the act of Yahweh demonstrating Yahweh's power and justice as the master of creation. The people of Judah have sinned against Yahweh by associating with Assyrian policies. For this Yahweh had given them to the evil rulers for chastising them. Now the same Yahweh fights against the adversaries of the people of Judah since they belong to Yahweh. He will not allow them to be perished by the hand of Assyrians. So, the Assyrians are to be humiliated.

The prophecy consists of three chapters with a superscription in 1:1 that explains the prophet and his provenance. The first chapter emphasizes Yahweh's powerful vengeance against the city of Nineveh and at the same time His mercy towards Judah and its inhabitants. The second chapter explains how the city is plundered and the different stages of its capturing by the Babylonians is mentioned in a dramatic way. The third chapter is prophet's theological investigation to the capture of this great city in a theological point of view.

Why the need of this prophecy? This prophecy is inserted into the Sacred Scripture to show that Yahweh loved Israel very much. The destruction of Israel was inevitable, since they made serious crimes to desecrate the land and the Temple and Yahweh made Assyria as the agent of their destruction. Assyria was considered as a lion in Am 3:12, and the destruction was so serious for the Israel. Moreover, Assyria had become a world power in those days, no

50 Cfr Bright, A History of Israel, 315-316; Soggin, History of Israel and Judah, 272.

51 Robertson, The Books of Nahum, 32.

one could subdue them. In this context, the prophet urges the people to be faithful to Yahweh and be strong in the hands of Yahweh. The Israel is important for Yahweh, one who strikes Israel will be punished by the same mode by Yahweh.

12.3. PROPHECY OF OBADIAH

The prophecy provides no hint on the historical survey of the prophecy, no mention of the year and the name of the king of the period. Rabbinic tradition attempted to situate Obadiah with the northern Israelite palace official at the time of king Ahab (869-50). He assisted prophet Elijah and hid one hundred people of Yahweh. Reference to Phoenician city in v.20 provides a hint on his provenance from Zerephtha (1Kings 17:8-24).⁵² But both of these cannot be established because of the reference to Edom's destruction. The word Obediah (עבדיה) means 'one who serves Yahweh' and it is applied to twelve individuals throughout Israel's and Judah's history (1Kings 18:4; 1Chr 3:21; 7:3; 8:38; 9:44; 27:19; Neh 12:25). . The shortest prophecy of Obediah is related with the exile of Judah. The prophecy emphasizes upon the destruction of Edom who was a great threat to Judah during the invasion. When Babylon took Jerusalem, Zedekiah sought the support of the neighboring countries and regions, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, but they did not support him and the coalition was headed by Edom. Hence the prophecy gives the oracle of doom against Edom, and at the same time hope to Judah.

The history of Edom begins with Esau, brother of Jacob. Edom had a long-standing alliance from the time of David (2Sam 8:13-14; 2Kings 3:4-27) during the reign of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat (2Kings 8:20-22). But during the Judean king Amasia ben Jehoash made a counter attack against Edom which saw the fall of their capital Sela (2Kings 14:7; Ob 3). Azariah, ben Amasia enlarged Judah by taking Edom until the port of Eilath (2Kings 14:22). Nevertheless, Judah was never able to establish full control over Edom. Edom's relation with Judah is best identified in Babylonian siege of Jerusalem during Zedekiah's time in 586 BCE. 2Kings 25:4-5 indicate that Babylonians captured King Zedekiah ben Josiah as he fled from Jerusalem towards Arabah, which might suggest that Edomites played some role in preventing his escape or they failed to come to his aid. The punishment to Edom was during the time of Nabonidus, ruler of Babylon (556-537) mounted a heavy attack on Edom and destroyed the

52 Cfr M. A. Sweeney, Twelve Prophets, vol 1 (Berit Olam), Mennnesota, 2000, 280.

city of Bozrah and thereby the kingdom began to disintegrate. It came to an end in 312 BCE when Nabateans took over the entire region and had full control over them.

This prophecy is related with Jer 49:7-22, which the scholars identify with Ob 1-7.⁵³ The present form of the text of Obadiah is exilic or post-exilic text, since there is the hope for the future Judah who returns from Babylon. Scholars are of the opinion that the prophecy of Obadiah might have emerged due to a long process of redaction. Vv. 8-18, oracle against Edom was during the time of Ahaziah of Judah, later vv.1-7 and 19-21 was added to it during Nabonidus of Babylon.⁵⁴

13. EXILIC PROPHECIES

13.1. HISTORICAL SITUATIONS OF EXILE

The Hezekiah's rule created peace in Judah because he fostered the traditions of his father David by walking in the precepts of the Covenant. After him came his son Manasseh who was pro Assyrian and had high regard for the gods of Assyria in view of the political upheavals. He also desecrated the Temple of Jerusalem. His son, Amon came to the throne of Judah after him who followed the ways of his father and did evil in the sight of Yahweh. After him emerged his son Josiah to the throne of Judah who was an eight-year-old baby (2Kings 22). After his accession to the throne, in the fifteenth year he purified the Temple and eliminated all the cults of Baal and Asherah. His reign was marked by positive remarks, for he did good in the sight of Yahweh. During his time, the power of Assyria was declined, Babylon became strong nation in the Ancient Near East. Egypt also became strong and wanted to invade the cities of Haran. There came up a fight between the Egyptian king Neco and Josiah at Megiddo in 609 BCE and Josiah was brutally killed. After Josiah the land was shifted to the control of Egypt by the appointment of the sons of Josiah Eliakim (Jehoiakim), Shallum (Jehoahaz – Jehovah holds up) and Zedekiah. People of the land made Shallum as successor to Josiah. But, “he did evil in the sight of Jehovah” as narrated by Josephus. If it includes impurity in life, Jehoahaz restored lascivious rites of his grandfather's reign. This unusual move is because of the faction among the people of the land who favored Egypt. Neco deposed Jehoahaz after three months and replaced him with Jehoiakim, who presumably to comply with the policies of Egypt. He supported Egypt through the tribute paid by his opponents, people of the land.

53 Cfr M. A. Sweeney, Twelve Prophets, vol 1, 282.

54 Cfr M. A. Sweeney, Twelve Prophets, vol 1, 285.

Jehoahz was held captive by Necco at Riblah in northern Syria and eventually died in Egypt (2Kings 23:33-34).

Necho after the battle of Megiddo, marched towards Syria. Jehoahaz, who was crowned without the consent of Necho, was put in bonds. The first expedition of Necho II was incomplete and he returned to Egypt before encountering the Assyrians. Pharaoh appointed Eliakim replacing Jehoahaz and named him Jehoiakim – Jehovah sets up. Three years later, the second expedition started. Egyptian army under Necho II was defeated by Nabuchadnezzar in the great battle at Carchemish. This was the time of emergence of Babylonian or Chaldean empire against the Assyrian, after the fall of Nineveh. After this event Jehoakim switched his alliance from Egypt to Babylon, after Nebuchadnessar took the control of Ashkelon in 604 and it is said to have a deportation of the people of Judah to Babylon. But the threat of Egypt was great and consequently Babylonians made an attack against Egypt but was utterly defeated in 601. This made Jehoakim to transfer the tribute from Babylon. In 598 after the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jeoiakin (Jeconiah) became king and had to face consequence from his father's enemies, Babylon. There was no support from Pharaoh Neco II to Jehoiakin, but he was occupied with the Babylonian invasion of Egypt. Under the attack of Nebuchadnessar, Jehoikin surrendered completely in 598. Jeremiah speaks of the deportation during this time (Jer 52:28). Nebuchadnessar appointed Zedekiah (Mattaniah) as the ruler at the place of Jehoiachin, who was laid in prison in Babylon. Nebuchadnessar faced rebellion with Elam in 595 and this had weakened the power of Babylon. Meanwhile, Zedekiah sought the support of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Tyre and Sidon in a campaign against Babylon in 593. At this time Pharaoh Psamtik I came to the throne in Egypt which enabled to throw off the Babylonian hegemony (Jer 27-29). When the army of Nebuchadnessar tried to conquer Judah, Zedekiah and other chiefs escaped from Jerusalem through Jericho. But the king took hold of Zedekiah and was deported to Babylon by taking off his eyes (Ezek 17:13-18) in 589. About a month later Nebuzaradan burned the Temple, the palace and other structures in the city, tore down at least portions of the city wall and deported much of the populations to Babylon (Jer 39:1-10). In the following years Nebuchadnessar deported the people of Judah to Babylon and began the Babylonian exile which lasted for 50 years. The successors of Nebuchadnessar were Amal Marduk, who delivered Jehoakin from prison, and Nabodinus, the last ruler of Babylon before Cyrus conquered the city.

13.2. PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah is known as prophet of doom and prophet of hope. He announces the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the people of Judah. The main emphasis of Jeremiah's message is the fall of Jerusalem and he prepared the people to stay with Yahweh in performing His chastisement. His mission is explained in the call narrative of Jeremiah in 1: 10, to destroy and to rebuild. He announces the destruction and at the same time he prepares the people for rebuilding of Judah and Jerusalem. For him Babylon is the friend of Yahweh, while Egypt is the enemy of Yahweh. In the face of infidelity Yahweh promises his continued fidelity, therefore the rebuilding is possible. He gives the choice of life or death, salvation after destruction or salvation within destruction is the plan of Yahweh. Against the prophets of the land, Jeremiah prophesies the words of doom to the city. Hannaniah, the prophet spoke to the people that Judah will return after two years in view of the release of Jehoiakim from the prison of Babylon. But Jeremiah opposed it saying 70 years of chastisement for Judah is needed as the plan of Yahweh. The prophecy is divided into six sections, chapters 1-25; 25-29; 30-33; 34-36; 37-45 and 46-52. The first part (1-25) deals the lamentations or confessions of Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem and the crimes of the people that contributed it (11-20). The expression 'foe from the north' (4:5-6:30) is related with the arrival of Babylonians into the land of Jerusalem. The literature of this session is mainly lamentations and curses, often one may find the rays of hope in the language of Jeremiah. There are also 'Temple sermons' (7:1-8:3; 26"1-24) which might have occurred in 609 BCE at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim. It also consists of a collection of different oracles which the prophet might have uttered in different situations. This session concludes with the oracles of judgment and visions of hope of two baskets of figs (24:1-10) and the vision of the cup of wrath (25:1-38).

The second session (25-29) contains another version of the Temple sermon of Jeremiah and its effects. The symbolic action of carrying the yoke (27:1-22), the conflict with the nationalist prophet Hananiah (28:1-17) and in conclusion, the letter of Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon (29:1-32).

The third session (30-33) is an insertion to the prophecy of Jeremiah which emphasizes the theme of 'return'. This word (שוב) means not a physical return of the people, but it designates the restoration of the fortunes, which is the recovering of the losses through Yahweh's reversal of judgement. Exile is reversed by the return of the people to the homeland. The temple and temple cult are lost through judgement (7:1-15), the reversal is

the new piety apart from the Temple. The old covenant is broken and it is revered by the new covenant (31:31-34). The theology of election is dismantled (18:1-12) and now it is reaffirmed and confirmed (31:35-37). The Davidic king is dethroned and the dynasty is dismantled, but now Yahweh promises the emergence of a new David (30:9). Restoration of the priest is reaffirmed in 31:4). Jerusalem is threatened with ruin, but now its rebuilding is promised (30:18; 31:6; 31:38-40).⁵⁵ Therefore chapters 30-31 deal with the restoration of all the things that are lost due to the exile, and these chapters form the climax of hope in Jeremiah and the central chapters of the prophecy.

The fourth session (34-36) is a historical presentation of the events that happened during the time of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.

The fifth session (37-45) is traditionally known as Baruch's, the scribe of Jeremiah, narrative, which is known to be the suffering of Jeremiah in the last days of Judah. This is also a prosaic part which explains the historical events in the last days of Judah. Jeremiah was first incarcerated in the pit of the house of Jonathan (37:15-16). Later he was transferred to the court of Guard (37:21). He was thrown into the muddy cistern (38:1-6), but was rescued by an Ethiopian (38:7-13). After Gedaliah was brutally killed, Jeremiah was taken as captive to Egypt along with other people.

The sixth part (46-52) is the concluding session, which is in the form of oracles against nations, Egypt (46:2-28), Philistia (47:1-7), Moab (48:1-47), Ammon (49:1-6), Edom (49:7-22), Damascus (49:23-27), Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33), Elam (49:34-39) and Babylon (50:1-51:64). The final chapter is the historical appendix or an epilogue to the prophecy of Jeremiah.

13.3. PROPHECIES OF SECOND AND THIRD ISAIAH (40-55; 56-66)

The so called Second Isaiah (40-55) is known as the book of consolation. The prophet consoles the people of exile and gives hope to a future life in these chapters. The promise of Yahweh will be fulfilled is the central theme of the prophecy. The prophecy is in the time of exile, particularly, when the Babylonian rule was declined in the land, Cyrus the Persian exerted power over the whole land of Fertile Crescent. The first innovation of Cyrus was to send all the exiles to their own homeland to restore the cult of their gods. In this context the Judeans also went from the land of Babylon to Jerusalem. This historical event is

⁵⁵ T. Vallianippuram, *Jeremiah as a Prophet of Hope amidst the Calamity*, (TPI series 11), Bangalore, 2020, 374.

experienced in a faithful manner by the people of Judah, when the prophet wrote these prophecies. The liberation of Cyrus was considered as the liberation of Yahweh.

The main theological themes presented in these chapters are monotheism and the suffering servant.

1. It was during the exile, people felt the need of unity of the tribe of Israel. The identity of the people of Judah in this period was so strong and therefore they began to segregate themselves from the community of the Babylonians through customs and traditions, circumcision and the Passover celebrations are the main traditions of the people.
2. Moreover, the faith of the people increased, for they believed in the promise of Yahweh to Abraham that Yahweh will make a great nation. This nation spirit was so strong for the people in the exile.
3. Monotheism was prevalent at that time amidst the Babylonian polytheism. The idols are not gods, and they do not respond to the cry of the people. The prophet urged people to be faithful to Yahweh.
4. The remnant ideology was developed during the Babylonian exile. People of Judah considered that they are the heirs of the promised land. Inclining not to the gods of Babylon, a small group of Judah persisted in the faith of Yahweh and thereby they are chosen to go to their own homeland to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem.
5. Suffering servant is the unique theology of the Second Isaiah. There are four servant songs in 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9 and 52:13-53:12. There is a progressive revelation in these four servant songs about the servant, his mission, means and modality of executing the mission and the consequences of the mission.

42:1-4	Yahweh's intimate relation	Bring justice to nations	Spirit is given	Covenant to Israel
46:1-9	Chosen in the womb	Restore the remnant	Equipped with the word	Salvation to the ends of the earth
50:4-9	Lord awakens him day after day	Toungue of teacher	Voluntary suffering	Establish justice

52:13-53:12	Yahweh exalts the servant	Bear the sins of many	Vicarious suffering	He will make others righteous
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The third Isaiah (56-66) is a futuristic experience of the returnees to the land of Judah. This is in the context of the restoration, a theme mentioned in the Second Isaiah. The final experience of the people was a new heaven and a new earth in their return to Jerusalem (65:1-6). This ideology is presented throughout the entire OT, for the first heaven and earth are present in the book of Genesis which has become damaged due to sin. The same heaven and earth is reestablished when the remnant people returned to Jerusalem after the chastisement in Babylon. Hence the three books of Isaiah present before us the Zion theology that prevails the entire OT.

13.4. PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

The meaning of Ezekiel means 'God strengthens'. The prophecy is related with the time period of exile. The prophet who lived in Tel Abib in Babylon was a deportee to Babylon. He was among the priestly clan and from an upper society. He gets the call after the year of deportation. His ministry was between 597-580. He proclaimed the restoration wrought by Yahweh to the people of exile. A general structure of the prophecy envisages the nature of this concept. The prophecy begins with a certain vision of Ezekiel in the land of Babylon at river Kedar. Then the prophet explains through the vision the theological reason behind the exile to Babylon in 8:16. Twenty five men looking eastward in the Temple of Jerusalem adoring the sun god. This vision typifies both the political as well as the religious reason for the exile. Then the prophet turns his attention to the deportation scene beginning from chapter 9 until 11. It is not the people are deported, rather the glory of Yahweh is going out from the Temple of Jerusalem in various stages, until it reaches its apex in the Mount of Olives in 11:23. This scenery is explained in the context of the exile to strengthen the people of exile saying that Yahweh is with the exilic people and he has not abandoned us. The glory of Yahweh is gone to Babylon through mount of Olives and the same glory returns to Jerusalem through the same way in 43:3. These two instances form the inclusion of the entire prophecy and therefore, the prophetic sayings of Ezekiel is in the context of exile in Babylon. Meanwhile, the chapters from 12-39 prepare the people for their return journey from Babylon, reminding of their sins and establishing the power of Yahweh in the life of them. The final chapters are considered as eschatological, where we have the situations of

Yahweh's return and the restoration of the Temple (47) and the final reunion of the whole tribe of Israel, from Reuben to Benjamin, around the tribe of Judah where the Temple of Jerusalem is situated (48).⁵⁶ This reunification of the people of Israel in the eschatological time is expressed in terms of יהוה שמה (*Adonai shammah*) Yahweh is there, which is parallel to the concept of the Promised Land in Josh 13-19, whose center is 18:1-10. The ideology of the Promised Land is reflected here where we have Jerusalem as the center and all the tribes reunited around it. The concept of the new covenant in 36:26-28 is relevant for the exiles who had the tradition of the Mosaic covenant which was written on the tablets. But here the prophet strengthens the people by saying that the new covenant is to be written in the hearts of the people, a covenant with Yahweh which will not be broken and an everlasting covenant. The imagery of the true shepherd is striking for the people of Judah in their concept of Yahweh one who heals (34). The vision of bones in chapter 37 reminds the people that the bones are the exiles and the Spirit of Yahweh will give them strength to walk towards the land of Promise. The beginning of Genesis speaks of the Spirit that hovers over the waters and gives a life to move forward to the light (Gen 1:2; 8:1).

The prophet uses symbolic actions, visions and allegories to explain the prophetic hope to the exiles. Symbolic actions (4:1-3.4-8.9-17; 5:1-12; 12:1-16; 24:15-17; 37:15-23), Allegories (15:1-8; 16; 23;17; 19:1-9).

13.5. PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

The prophecies of Daniel is an apocalyptic literature, different from the other prophetic writings. Greeks became prominent after the decline of Persia in 450. Antiochus Epiphanes became powerful after defeating the Ptolemy of Egypt in Palestine. He was a Syrian and established a kingdom known as Seleucia who followed Greek culture. They considered king as God and be adored. He insisted the nation to adore the king as god. But this was not accepted by the Jews. The conflict between Jews and Greek is the background of the prophecy of Daniel.

The story of Daniel is told in the biblical book that bears his name. Daniel is an interpreter of dreams, a solver of mysteries, and a seer of visions. He is the Daniel of the lions' den, of the writing on the wall, of the giant golden statue, and of the cryptic future revelations. A young exile from Jerusalem after the Babylonian conquest, his insight and

⁵⁶ E. S. Gerstenberger, *Israel in the Persian Period: The Fifth and Fourth Centuries BCE*, (Biblical Encyclopedia 8), Atlanta, 2011, 374.

his skill as a dream interpreter enable him to become the chief wise man at the court of the great and fearsome ruler, King Nebuchadnezzar. Although the story of Daniel tends to lack the subtle nuances of character associated with the more developed biblical figures of David, Jeremiah, or Paul, it nevertheless remains a compelling and complex one, no doubt due in part to the sheer strangeness of the visionary chapters of the book, but also because it presents Daniel in those essentially human situations to which all persons can relate. Daniel is the model of the triumph of knowledge over ignorance and of steadfast faith in the face of oppression and mortal peril.

The Book of Daniel consists of two types of material radically distinct in form and content. Chapters 1–6 record a series of lively episodes about Daniel, his companions, and their life at the court of King Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. These “court tales” are purely narrative and are related in the third person. The narrative displays a clear chronological sequence and contains several editorial devices that connect the episodes. The focus of the court tales is on the present, and although there are instances where from the perspective of the Babylonian setting of the Book the attention shifts to a relatively limited exposition of the future, these instances always appear in the context of a second-party dream or vision that requires interpretation by Daniel. Chapters 7–12 on the other hand describe Daniel’s revelatory visions of the future and are properly called apocalypses. The visions are related in the first person, not the third, and involve interpretation by an angelic mediator. The perspective of the visions is meta-historical and their focus is firmly on the future. In these chapters there is no mention of Daniel’s life, his friends, or his situation in Babylon, and even the underlying chronology of the Book is pared down to a few brief statements that preface each vision.⁵⁷

The text of the Book of Daniel one finds in Hebrew Bibles is commonly called the Masoretic text (MT). MT Daniel is written in two languages, Hebrew, and a cognate language, Aramaic, which was the lingua franca of the Middle East from the Persian period well into Hellenistic and Roman times. The appearance of Aramaic is most unusual in the Hebrew Bible, however, and in fact only one other biblical book, Ezra, contains this odd mixture of two languages. Stranger still, in the Book of Daniel these two languages are not coincident with the two types of material, the court tales and the visions.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Lorenzo Di Tommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*, Boston, 2005, 4.

⁵⁸ Di Tommaso, *The Book of Daniel*, 6.

The disjunctive nature of this and other internal evidence suggests that MT Daniel is a composite work, the result of a complicated process of composition and redaction that incorporated what for its author/redactor 4 were both contemporary and older materials. In addition, it is widely held that it was not composed during the time of its sixth-century bce setting in the Babylonian Exile, but rather reached its present form around the year 164 bce, sometime around the end of the crisis precipitated by the actions of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The Book of Daniel, therefore, was the sun around which the planets of the Daniel apocrypha coalesced and revolved, and is the touchstone by which the form and content of the full corpus of these apocrypha may be identified, labeled, and understood.

Among the earliest and best-known of these Daniel apocrypha are the so-called Greek Additions to Daniel, which are part of the ancient Greek witnesses to the Book of Daniel but which are not found in MT Daniel. The Additions probably date from the second century BCE and likely were originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. They consist of the textually independent tales of Susanna and of Bel and the Dragon, both of which feature Daniel, as well as the lengthy interpolation between what in the Aramaic are verses 23 and 24 of MT Daniel 3, including the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children. The tales of Susanna and of Bel and the Dragon are encountered in various places in the Greek Bibles and in the ancient translations which were based on these Bibles, depending on the version consulted. As for modern translations, the Greek Additions are lumped together with the rest of the Apocrypha in most Protestant Bibles, but are included as part of the Old Testament in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles.

14. POST-EXILIC PROPHECIES

The post-exilic prophecies are the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Some scholars include the prophecy of Joel and Jonah and even to the third Isaiah (56-66) to this time. The Persian rule in the whole region has become strong. Cyrus the first ruler allowed all the nations to go to their own places to rebuild the temples of their gods. As a result, during the time of Darius, the remnant people of Judah set out their journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem. Post-exilic prophecies encourage the return of the people to reestablish the kingship, land, temple and priesthood, which was lost due to the Babylonian exile. The historical situations of this period is clearly marked by the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, though their arrival to

Jerusalem was later than these prophecies. Therefore, the main theological theme of these prophecies is the restoration of the Land of Israel and the subsequent beginning of Judaism.

Prophecies of Haggai are concerned with the restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem by initiating the people to build the Temple. The construction of the temple is the reversal of the fortunes which were absent due to exile.

This prophecy exhibits a period of king Darius, the Persian king who maintained the policy of his predecessor, allowing the people to return to the home land. The return is considered to be the second one in which Zerubbabel, along with Joshua the high priest led a march towards Jerusalem in 520 BCE for rebuilding the Temple. The situation of Jerusalem was very different at that time. There were the first returnees who could not rebuild the temple, instead they modified and adorned their own houses. Indeed, there existed a rift between the peoples of the land and the returnees over the question of the building project. The peoples of the land were those people who remained in Jerusalem during exile and who were mixed up with the foreign nation during the Babylonian rule of Judah. The exile had taken away only the high-class palace people and the priests. These peoples of the land wanted to be partakers of the building projects and it was rejected by the returnees. The motif behind is theological in the sense that only the people who were purified during the exile was proposed to build the temple. This theology can be seen in the building of the temple by Solomon who consolidated his reign by eliminating all other tribes from Judah (1Kings 2). Prophet Haggai refers to these situations in his prophecies and urges the people to rebuild the temple on its ruins.

Prophecies of Zechariah and Malachi are also of the same time span of Haggai. The main theological theme of the prophecy is the restoration of priesthood (Zech 3), land (9:1-9) and kingship of Yahweh (14:9-10). Scholars are of the opinion that there are three prophecies attributed to different authors in the prophecy of Zechariah, namely, chapters 1-8; 9-11; 12-14. But others are of the view that these three parts are to be taken together on the theological basis of restoration. The kingship of Yahweh is the climax of the restoration process. This is based on the theology of the ancient hymn of the OT, Exod 15, where we have the epithets of Yahweh as Creator, God of the Fathers, Warrior, who leads the people to the land and the King. Experience of Yahweh as the creator and warrior by the people of Israel is accomplished in the life of exile when they have realized Yahweh as their creator. This faith experience is developed when they entered into Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Before the building process, the purification of the

nation as well as of the priesthood is needed. Therefore, prophet Zechariah announces the liberation of the people saying, ‘return to me and I will return to You says the Lord’ (1:2). The return is a restoration of everything and the reception of the prosperity and abundance of the Promised land, which was also the theme of prophet Hosea. Then the prophet sanctifies the old priesthood, which was corrupted due to sin (Hos 4:2), through the priest of exile known as Joshua, the high priest (Zech 3). This vision explains the old priesthood through the image of filthy clothes and the new priesthood with the image of Ephod and crown. Thus, the priest is installed. Then the prophet initiates the sanctification of the nation by eliminating the enemies of the people, Philistine (9:1-9) and the kings of Judah and Israel (11:2-11). After this, prophet turns his attention to the restored Temple, where during the time of adoration of Yahweh the host (14:17-18), people proclaim the kingship of Yahweh (14:9-10). In this way the prophecy restored the covenant with Yahweh which is expressed through the sacrifice, a theme presented in the book of Malachi (1).

The post-exilic prophecies are concentrating on the new exodus event, which has become the basis of the exodus tradition of Israel. Jerusalem became the center of religion through which one is initiated into the life of the Promised Land.

CONCLUSION

The nature of the OT prophecy is a theological explanation of the historical events in the life of the people of Israel. Prophets are the spokesmen of Yahweh and they are interpreting the law of Yahweh. Three divisions of the prophetic literature cannot be viewed as divisions, rather they are knit together to form one unit. In this sense, one may consider the 16 prophets as one unit, they explain the historical events. The former prophets emphasized the theme of kingship, which was through David and Solomon. But this monarchical ideology was lost since these kings did not walk in the way of Yahweh. In all these circumstances, the prophets had a futuristic insight of a future ruler who will reign the entire world in unity (Zech 9:9-10). This ideology came into force at the end of the prophecy in Zechariah (14:9). They present the same theological insights of the Deuteronomic law, which gives importance to monotheism and unity of the tribes of Israel under the one head of David. The primary importance given to the tribe of Judah in all the prophecies tends towards a messianic hope in the Christianity. In this background, different versions of the MT, translated the prophecies in view of Messiah.

