

THE REDACTION OF THREE GREAT PROPHETS AS A REACTION TO THE CRISIS OF BABYLONIAN EXILE¹

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Introduction: a Sociological Model for Semantics of Crisis in the Hebrew Bible.

In a sociological book named “Krisensemantik” (Semantics of Crisis), A. Steil has shown that the concept of crisis had entered European languages especially from the second half of the 18th century, mainly in the context of socio-economic and ideological upheavals that led to the French Revolution.² The semantics of crisis is in the context used to develop different ideological models to respond to the collapse of the old order. A. Steil identifies three attitudes that he characterizes in parts by names derived from the religious tradition: the Prophet, Priest and Mandarin.

The *prophet* uses the crisis to develop an eschatological and utopian discourse. The collapse of the old order announces the advent of a better world and a new society that will no longer know the injustices or malfunctions of the past. The crisis is seen here as a necessary time to prepare for the new. The attitude of the *priest* is characterized by the idea that the crisis of society requires a return to its origins, to the institutions founded by the

¹ This article is a translation (by P. Joseph Titus) of the author's article, which was originally written in French and was first published in Thomas Römer, “La rédaction des trois grands prophètes comme réaction à la crise de l'exil babylonien,” *Trans* 42, (2012) 69-80.

² A. Steil, *Krisensemantik. Wissenssoziologische Untersuchungen zu einem Topos moderner Zeiterfahrung*, Opladen, 1993.

divine action. Facing the crisis, the priest builds an idealized and mythical past. The *mandarin* develops an analytical discourse, seeking to understand and describe the reasons that caused the disaster. The mandarin finds answer in the historiography, in the construction of a chronology explaining the present. For the mandarin, the crisis must be explained.

These three positions, developed to explain attitudes towards the disappearance of the old order in the 18th century, can in my opinion be used for a sociological approach to the formation, during the Persian period, of the first two literary compositions at the origin of the Hebrew Bible: the Law and the Prophets.

The Hebrew Bible, a Crisis Literature

Indeed a major part of the writings in Torah and *Nebiim* can be characterized as a "crisis literature,"³ because their redactors understood the destruction of Jerusalem in 597/587 and the "Babylonian exile" as a kind of break. For the emerging Judaism, which is mainly constructed from a diaspora situation, the idea of exile becomes a mythical concept which provides to the Babylonian *Golah* the legitimization to form the "true Israel."

It has been objected from time to time that the presentation of events of 587 as a major disaster was more an invention of biblical scholars of the twentieth century than the echo of a material reality.⁴ There is no doubt that the idea of the "empty Land" and of the exile of all the Judeans is an ideological construction of certain biblical texts (also contradicted by others).⁵ That being said, according to recent archaeological works, conducted by O. Lipschits and others, the Babylonian period is characterized by an important decrease of population. Estimation of the number of people deported were recently again revised upward now from 20 % to more than 60% of the Judean population. Judean territory

³ See for more details T. Römer, "L'Ancien Testament. Une littérature de crise," *RThPh* 127, 1995, 321-338.

⁴ P. Guillaume, "Jerusalem 586 BC: Katastrophal?," *BN* 110, 2001, 31-32.

⁵ H.M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the "Exilic" Period*, Symbolae Osloenses, Oslo, 1996.

seems to have known significant destruction (especially in urban areas) and the remaining population is clustered mainly in the territory of Benjamin, in the Judean mountains (O. Lipschits proposes the number of 40,000 people).⁶ There is no doubt that Jerusalem, certainly largely destroyed, lost its status as capital and that the administrative center had been transferred to Mizpah which has kept this status during the first half of the 6th century BCE.

These remarks are sufficient to show that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army led to an economic and political crisis in Judah, but it has also created an ideological crisis. Indeed, most of the court people and the affluent parts of the population, to whom we owe the writing of the various documents, and who were at the origin of the Torah and of *Nebiim*, were among the Babylonian Golah, that they remained in Mesopotamia or returned to Judah from the early 5th century. It is to these groups that the schema outlined in the opening can be applied.

Priest, Mandarin and Prophet: the Origin of the Torah and Nebiim

The priestly work (P), which opens in Gen 1 and ended in the first part of the book of Leviticus⁷ corresponds very well to the attitude of the "priest." P builds indeed a story of worship and rituals that are all rooted in the time of origin, before entering the country and before the foundation of the political institutions. During the times of origin are established the Sabbath, the circumcision and the worship and the sacrifices. Since these rites do not depend on a royal power or installation in a particular country, they can manage the loss of royalty and political autonomy. If the ritual of Yom Kippur in Leviticus

⁶ O. Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.," in O. Lipschits et J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003, pp. 323-376. See id., *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

⁷ For the current debate around the Priestly work, see S. Shectman and J.S. Baden (eds.), *The Strata of the Priestly Writings. Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, ATHANT 95, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009.

16 was the original end of the P document, as proposed by M. Köckert⁸ and C. Nihan,⁹ one could indeed understand the aim of P as a "relativization" of the events of 587, since the worship and regular purification of the community and the sanctuary offer the possibility to restore the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and appease God's wrath through sacrifices.

Literary production of the Deuteronomistic milieu, commonly called the "Deuteronomistic history," can be identified with the position of the Mandarin. If the authors of this story are to be found among the court members and probably among the high standing scribes, one understands why they publish books from *Deuteronomy* to *Kings* as forming a chronological sequence, offering, as already noticed by M. Noth, an etiology of the cataclysm of 587.¹⁰ The Deuteronomistic History, which certainly had several editions,¹¹ is arranged at the end of the Babylonian period in such a way that exile is already announced by Moses in Deuteronomy and it offers a sort of reading key for different periods of the history of Israel and of Judah - especially with interpretive discourse that delimitate the different periods of history. Before his death, Moses predicts the deportation and return to Egypt if the people do not respect the Treaty of Yahweh (Deut 28:58-68). Before his death, Joshua insists on fidelity of Yahweh who entirely fulfilled his promises (Joshua 23), but in the second part of his testament, he mentions the possibility of deportation if Israel does not act according to God's laws. In the farewell speech in 1 Sam 12, which concludes the period of the Judges, Samuel recalls particularly the desire of people to be governed by a king, which he interprets as a rejection of

⁸ M. Köckert, "Leben in Gottes Gegenwart. Zum Verständnis des Gesetzes in der priesterschriftlichen Literatur", *JBTh* 4, 1989, 29-61.

⁹ C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT 11/25, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, above all pp. 361-382.

¹⁰ M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (1943), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlichen Buchgesellschaft, 1967³; English translation: *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOT S.15, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991².

¹¹ See the discussion of the different hypothesis and my own position: T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, London: Continuum, 2005.

Yahweh. Nevertheless, he considers the possibility of a serene monarchy provided that the king and the people follow God's commandments. In the case of non-compliance with God's will, Samuel, who is portrayed as both prophet and judge, announced to the people the judgment of Yahweh. In the opening prayer of the temple in 1 Kings 8, Solomon immediately considers the possibility of exile and deportation of the people far from home and transforms the temple into *qibla* for a remote population (8:47-50). The last major speech of 2 Kings 17 explains the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE. But this recall announces at the same time the fall of Judah whose behavior is considered similar to the big brother of the North (2 Kings 17:19). The end of Judah, the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Judean population are reported in 2 Kings 24-25. In these chapters, however, there is no more conclusive speech but only a notice on the King Jehoiachin who sees his condition of the exiled in Babylon improved significantly (2 Kings 25:27-30). The remark of 2 Kings 25:21: "So Judah went into exile out of its land," creating the concept of the empty country of all its inhabitants during the exile is better understood from the perspective of a member of the Golah than that of someone who would have remained in Palestine. Unlike the books of Chronicles that end by the Edict of Cyrus and the perspective of a restoration, the Persian period is not directly presented in Deut - 2 Kings. The final restoration of Jehoiachin (which is perhaps a later addition) is sufficiently vague and does not provide a clear interpretation of the history of exile, as shown by the different interpretations/readings of this passage, from the simple report of a historical fact to the hope of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.¹²

¹² See for the discussion on 2 Kings 25:27-30: T. Römer, "La fin du livre de la Genèse et la fin des livres des Rois : ouvertures vers la Diaspora. Quelques remarques sur le Pentateuque, l'Hexateuque et l'Ennéateuque," in D. Böhler, I. Himbaza et P. Hugo (eds.), *L'Écrit et l'Esprit. Études d'histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Adrian Schenker*, OBO 214, Fribourg-Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005, 285-294; D. Janzen, "An Ambiguous Ending : Dynastic Punishment in Kings and the Fate of the Davidides in 2 Kings 25.27-30," JSOT 33, 2008, 39-58; J. Wöhrle, "Die Rehabilitierung Jojachins. Zur Entstehung und Intention von 2 Kön 24,17-25,30," in I. Kottsieper, R. Schmitt et J. Wöhrle (eds.), *Berührungspunkte. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, AOAT 350, Münster : Ugarit-Verlag, 2008, 213-238.

Within the books Deut - 2 Kgs, the prophets occupy an important place. However, they do not announce a better future. In Deut 18:15-20, Moses is installed as the first of the prophets, in charge of announcing to the people the divine instructions, and in 2 Kgs 17 the prophets appear as mediators and preachers of the Torah. It is their rejection that, according to 17:13-15, is the cause of the disaster. Another perspective is emerging in the texts of the Second Isaiah, such as Isa 43:16-21: "Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise." This text is, according to J.-D. Macchi, an insertion of the 5th or 4th century in the Isaian corpus ¹³; it develops, as Isa 65:16-25, a semantics of the crisis that aims simply at the "forgetting" of it. The "first things" (*r'šnwt*) here refer to different divine judgments and especially to the destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁴ It is therefore an anti-Deuteronomic interpretation of the crisis of exile since it invites to forget the divine judgment in developing an eschatological discourse, which emphasizes the break with the past.

This raises the question of knowing how this discourse is connected to the discourse of the Deuteronomic history. Indeed, in the Hebrew canon, its books (except Deuteronomy, but Joshua-Kings) is as much a part of *Nebiim* than the book of Isaiah, which in the most manuscripts, is the direct following of the books of Kings.

¹³ J.-D. Macchi, "Ne ressassez plus les choses d'autrefois", Ésaïe 43,16-21, un surprenant regard deutéro-ésaïen sur le passé," *ZAW* 121, 2009, 225-241.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 235 ff.

The Deuteronomistic History and the Formation of the "Three Great Prophets"¹⁵

Unlike the *Dodekapropheton* which received special attention in the last decade, the question of the relationship between the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been hardly raised. While the Twelve are clearly arranged in a chronological idea, making the reader to follow the time from the monarchy to the Persian period and ending in Mal 3 by an eschatological note, the organization and redaction of the "Three" are much less clear. Isa, Ezek and Jer, all three, seem to have undergone complex and unique editorial processes that make difficult the comparison of the three scrolls or the location of their(s) producer(s)' environment.¹⁶ However, for material and economic reasons, it is hardly possible to postulate a fully independent process of formation and of redaction for each of three books. The system of the titles of the Three already shows the willingness of a certain chronological arrangement. Isa 1:1 situates the Isaian visions (*hzwn*) between the kings Uzziah and Hezekiah, Jer 1:1-3 dates the words (*dbrym*) of Jeremiah between the kings Josiah and Zedekiah while the opening of the book of Ezekiel locates the prophet and his visions (*mrîwt*) among the exiles in Babylon and introduces a dating system from the exile of King Jehoiachin (Ezek 1:1-3) that suggests, as for the arrangement of the Twelve, a chronological progression, but at the same time constructs the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity as a kind of pivot. How then is made the link between these books and the Deuteronomistic History?

Jeremiah as Complement to the Deuteronomistic History

There is no doubt that of the three Major Prophets, Jeremiah is the most "Deuteronomistic" book, although interpretations of

¹⁵ This research is inscribed in a French-German project "COREGRAP", led jointly with Prof. Uwe Becker of the University of Iena and who tries to understand the literary production of *Isa* and *Jer* in the Persian period, and the links and differences between these scrolls.

¹⁶ For an orientation in the complex researches on the prophetic books see J.-D. Macchi, C. Nihan, T. Römer and Jan Rükl, (eds.), *Les recueils prophétiques de la Bible. Origines, milieux et contexte proche-oriental*, Genève: Labor et Fides, 2012.

theological and stylistic similarities with the Deuteronomistic History elicit strong different interpretations. I also tried to show how Jeremiah had been conceived as a supplement to the Deuteronomistic work¹⁷ and I will confine myself here to a few indications : the link between Jer and the Deuteronomistic history is reflected in the conclusion Jer 52 which largely corresponds to 2 Kings 24:18-25:30. This last chapter also marks another difference of Jer in relation to Isa and Ezek, which both end with an eschatological perspective (Isa 66:22-24 : the new heavens and the new earth; Ezek 48:35: the new Jerusalem, which will be called "Yhwh-shamma" while the book of Jer relates at last as in 2 Kings 25, the permanent exile of King Jehoiachin). As in the Deuteronomistic history, exile seems in Jer the main focus of reflection: Jer 1:3 constructs an inclusion with Jer 52, where the term *glh* appears four times (52:15, 27, 28, 30). By the frame, 1:1-3* and 52, the destruction of Jerusalem and its exile become the main issue of the book. Links between Jer 1:4-9 and Deut 18:15-20 have often been studied.¹⁸ They apparently want to ascribe Jeremiah in this line of prophets in the same manner of Moses, even to consider Jeremiah as the last of the prophets sent by Yahweh (since the book ends with the exile). Moreover Jer 1:16 takes up again the first part of the oracle of the prophetess Huldah in 2 Kings 22:16-17 and the link between Jer and 2 Kings 22 reappears in an obvious manner in Jer 36. These links often analyzed, find their best explanation in the willingness to put the two discoveries and readings of the books in parallel with each other. Let us recall also that the speech on the Temple in Jer 7 which carries a certain number of parallels with 1 Kings 8 and the

¹⁷T. Römer, "The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah as a Supplement to the So-Called Deuteronomistic History," in D.V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (eds.), *The Production of Prophecy. Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud*, Bible World, London-Oakville: Equinox, 2009, 168-183.

¹⁸Cf. among the recent publications S. Grätz, " 'Einen Propheten wie mich wird dir der Herr, dein Gott, erwecken'. Der Berufsbericht Jeremias und seine Rückbindung an das Amt des Mose", in A. Graupner and M. Wolter (eds.), *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions*, BZAW 372, Berlin-New York: W. de Gruyter, 2007, 61-77 ; C. Nihan, " 'Un prophète comme Moïse' (Deutéronome 18,15) : Genèse et relectures d'une construction deutéronomiste", in T. Römer (ed.), *La construction de la figure de Moïse - The Construction of the Figure of Moses*, Transeuphratène Suppl. 13, Paris : Gabalda, 2007, 43-88.

announcement of the destruction of the temple by Yhwh himself, because of the non-respect of his prescriptions, corresponds to the explanation given at the end of the books of Kings. Although both versions of Jer (reflected by LXX and MT) have integrated materials that are opposed to the Deuteronomistic vision (especially the biography of Jeremiah 37-43), one can imagine that the book of Jeremiah had been conceived in the same milieu as the Deuteronomistic history and that it belonged, at first, to a "Deuteronomistic library" in the context of scribal activity in the Second Temple.

The Book of Isaiah as a "Suite" and Counterpoint to the Deuteronomistic History

Isaiah shares with Jeremiah the fact that it contains a literary parallel to the book of Kings: 2 Kings 18-20 corresponds to Isa 36-39.¹⁹ According to most scholars, it is the passage of 2 Kings 18-20 which had been afterwards inserted in Isa 36-39. The episode of the Babylonian ambassador in Isa 39, however, could have been first composed in the context of Isaiah's scroll to provide the "Proto - Isaiah" with a conclusion which ends with the announcement of the Babylonian exile.²⁰ In a way, the stories in Isa 36-39 interrupt the link between Isa 35 and 40 ff, Isa 35 already introducing the theme of the message of salvation of Deutero - Isaiah in the same style and vocabulary than Isa 40 ff. Or either Isa 35 was added later than 36-39, or 36-39 have been conceived in parallel with the book of Kings when the Isaiah scroll had been integrated into the same library as Josh- Kings and Jer to mark clearly the distinction between the Proto - and Deutero - (and Trito -) Isaiah and ends the period of Judean kings by the Babylonian exile (this means they wanted to mark the difference between the two main parts of Isaiah book). At the same time, the beginning of Isaiah had been reworked so as to

¹⁹ F.J. Gonçalves, "2 Rois 18,13-20,19 par. Isaïe 36-39. Encore une fois, lequel des deux livres fut le premier ?", in J.-M. Auwers et A. Wénin (eds.), *Lectures et relectures de la Bible, Festschrift P.-M. Bogaert*, BETHL 144, Leuven : Peeters-University Press, 1999, 27-55.

²⁰ It is the hypothesis of U. Becker, *Jesaja - von der Botschaft zum Buch*, FRLANT 178, 1997, 222.

form a sort of sequel to the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, although there is obviously a rupture on the timeline.²¹ Isa 1:4 and 28 open the book with the theme of abandonment of Yahweh by his people. The expression 'zb yhw^h is absent from Tetrateuch (Gen - Num) but present in all books from *Deuteronomy* to *Kings* and is used for an explanation for the divine judgment.²² In the later prophets, this topic is limited to Isa, Jer²³ and to a single occurrence in the book of Hosea²⁴ (the book of Ezekiel speaks exclusively about Yhwh abandoning Israel). The fact that the theme of abandonment of Yhwh frames the book of Isaiah (see the end in 65:11) can be an indication of a will to make it compatible with the Former Prophets. In the same sense, the evocation of the destruction of the Judean cities by fire in Isa 1:7 takes up again in 2 Kings 25:9.²⁵

In the canonical arrangement, the narrative of the release of Jehoiachin from his Babylonian prison, which is told simply and without divine intervention, does not constitute an absolute end. Rather, it raises questions to which the reader might find (first) answers in Isaiah. The issue of the continuation of the Davidic dynasty was undoubtedly an important question during the Persian period. Thus, the announcement of an ideal king to come in Isa 7:13-25; 9:5-6 and 11:1-5 can first be understood as referring to the coming of a new David. However, the texts of Deutero - Isaiah correct this expectation by introducing the Persian King Cyrus as the Messiah of Yahweh, showing that the final restoration of Jerusalem (66:10-13) can be done without the king of the lineage of David. It is in the same perspective that

²¹ E.A. Knauf, "1-2 Rois," in T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi and C. Nihan (eds.), *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, Le Monde de la Bible 49, Genève : Labor et Fides, 20092, 384-393, especially 392.

²² Deut 28:20; 29:25; 31:16; Josh 24:16.20; Judg 2:12-13; 10:6.10; 1 Sam 12:10; 1 Kings 9:9; 19:10.14; 2 Kings 1:16; 21:22.

²³ Jer 2:17,19; 5:19; 16:11; 17:13; 22:9.

²⁴ Hos 4:10.

²⁵ W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, HThK.AT, Freiburg 2003, 69. See also K. Schmid, "Une grande historiographie allant de Genèse à 2 Rois a-t-elle un jour existé ?," in T. Römer and K. Schmid (eds.), *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Ennéateuque*, BETHL 203, Leuven : University Press, 2007, 35-46, particularly 44.

we should be read Isa 55:3 ("Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David."), where the promise of an eternal covenant made with David (2 Sam 7) is transferred to the people.²⁶ The "Zionist" perspective of Isaiah who joined the Dtr assertion of the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem is thus decoupled from the need of an eternal Davidic dynasty.

The Book of Ezekiel as "Synthesis" between the Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah and Isaiah

Although the prophet Ezekiel is immediately located in the Babylonian Golah pronouncing oracles in favor of this Golah, the book is clearly structured in such a way that the destruction of Jerusalem will appear as the pivot. The first part (1-24) of the book covers different types of texts announcing the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, and providing the reasons for this destruction. After the oracles against the nations (25-32), the third part of the book containing the oracles of restoration of the people of Jerusalem is introduced by the arrival of a survivor who announces the fall of Jerusalem (33:21-22). Thus, the destruction of Jerusalem is the event prior to the proclamation of a new Temple in a new Jerusalem. Despite the impression of a certain homogeneity at the level of the language, the book of Ezek also has undergone a complex history of redaction, in which some editors intervened to make it compatible with the Deuteronomistic history and the scrolls of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Thus, the first divine oracles are addressed to the prophet after the initial vision concerning the rebellion of the recipients and their fathers: "He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day" (2:3). The theme of rebellion,²⁷ as we have seen, also opens the book of Isaiah (1:4-5), and it appears also at the

²⁶ So for example C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kapitel 40-66*, ATD 19, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, 228.

²⁷ F. Smyth-Florentin, "Un prophète au milieu d'eux," *ASEign* 45, 1974, 28-32.

beginning of the book of Jeremiah immediately in Jer 2:5 after the vocation of the prophet (mentioning as Ezek 2:3, the "fathers"). So the Great Three Prophets are paralleled with a central theme of the Deuteronomistic history.²⁸ Inside the book of Ezekiel, the theme of the rebellion of the fathers prepares the large "historical" summary in Ezek 20²⁹ which also establishes a point of contact with the Deuteronomistic history and some Deuteronomistic texts of Jeremiah.³⁰ In late passages of the Deuteronomistic history, Israel's rebellion does not begin with the installation in the country, but already with the exodus from Egypt, as in 2 Kgs 21:15, "because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their ancestors came out of Egypt, even to this day." (see also Deut 9:7, 1 Sam 8:8; Jer 7:24-25; Jer 11:7-8). Ezek 20 goes beyond in a certain way this concept, by evoking already to the disobedience of fathers in the land of Egypt.³¹ Ezek 20 is certainly not the work of the same redactors who revised the Deuteronomistic History during the exile. The language and some themes (insistence on Sabbaths) rather find parallels in the priestly literature and especially in the Holiness Code. One may conclude that the book of Ezekiel has been first the property of a group of priestly scribes who, at one point, tried to make this scroll consistent with the Deuteronomistic history. This idea is confirmed by the use of the phrase "the Land that I swore to give to your ancestors" which concludes the speech of Ezek 20 (in v. 42) with the announcement of the installation of all Israel around the sacrificial cult on the mountain of Yhwh. The term "oath" is here expressed by the terminology *nšî yd*, typical

²⁸ For the parallel between *Isa* 1 and Deuteronomistic history, see above. *Jer* 2:5b finds its closest parallel in 2 Kgs 17:15. For Ezek 2:3: *mrd* appears repeatedly in *Kings* to describe the revolt of the Judean kings.

²⁹ Throughout HB, verbs *mrd* and *pš* appear together only in Ezek 2:3 and 20:38.

³⁰ J. Lust, *Traditie, redactie en kerygma bij Ezechiël. Een analyse van Ez., XX, 1-26*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren 65, Bruxelles: 1969; F. Sedlmeier, *Studien zur Komposition und Theologie von Ezechiel 20*, SBB 21, Stuttgart, 1990.

³¹ J. Lust, *Traditie, redactie en kerygma bij Ezechiël. Een analyse van Ez., XX, 1-26*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren 65, Bruxelles: 1969; F. Sedlmeier, *Studien zur Komposition und Theologie von Ezechiel 20*, SBB 21, Stuttgart, 1990.

for the priestly milieu (cf. Exod 6:8; Num 14:30; Neh 9:15-16) while the Deuteronomistic texts use only *nsb*. Nevertheless, the theme of the divine oath (and especially the oath promising the country) is one of the expressions of the books of Deuteronomy and of Joshua.³² In the book of Ezekiel, 20:42 prepares 47:13-14 where the final restoration is described as the fulfilment of divine oath: "You shall divide it equally; I swore to give it to your ancestors, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance." In the Deuteronomistic history, the land promised to the fathers had been given at the time of the conquest and this gift had found its true accomplishment with the construction of the temple under Solomon. In the end, in 2 Kgs 25, the country is taken from Judah (as already announced in Deut 28) and more recent texts suggest the possibility of a return to the country, especially Deut 30:4-5.³³ In Ezek 48, the restoration of worship and the settlement in the New Jerusalem appears suddenly as the definitive realization of a divine promise which is repeatedly asserted at the beginning of the Deuteronomistic history.

Different but Compatible "Semantics of Crisis"

There is no doubt that each of the Three Prophets has his own profile and it is very difficult to imagine that the Three were, from their first edition, "edited" by the same group. E. Ben Zvi thinks who attributes the edition of Nebiim to a limited group of "literati" installed in Jerusalem during the Persian period.³⁴ The great stylistic differences which exist between these books do not speak, in my opinion, in favour of such a hypothesis. E. Ben Zvi is right to recall that the number of intellectuals working in the Temple in Jerusalem in the Persian period would be relatively

³² T. Römer, *Israëls Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, OBO 99, Freiburg (CH)-Göttingen, 1990, 10-15, 135-250, 352-367.

³³ Which is perhaps the only text evoking a return. The passages of Deut 4:29-31 and 8:46-51 speak only of improving the situation in exile.

³⁴ E. Ben Zvi, "Observations on Prophetic Characters, Prophetic Texts, Priests of Old, Persian Period Priests and Literati," in L.L. Grabbe and A.O. Bellis (eds.), *The Priests in the Prophets. The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, SSOT.SS 408, London-New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 19-30.

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small. But were all these books written in Jerusalem? For some parts of Jeremiah, and perhaps also for the Deuteronomistic history, an origin in the Babylonian diaspora cannot be excluded. For Ezekiel, one can imagine an original scroll having emerged in Palestine, revised and edited by members of the Babylonian Golah at the time of their return to Judea (around 450).³⁵

The Three Prophets as well as the book of the Twelve and the Deuteronomistic history however must have been assembled within a single library, which resulted in a number of editorial interventions and also some arrangement of these scrolls. It is certainly not a coincidence that the book of Isaiah begins with the idea of a new name for Jerusalem: "Afterward you shall be called 'the city of righteousness,' 'the faithful city'" (1:26) and that the last verse of Ezek confers a new name on Jerusalem, beyond those announced in Esa 1 "And the name of the city from that time on shall be, 'Yahweh-Shamma'" (Ezek 48:35). The Three Prophets also portray a way to the restoration of Jerusalem. First, all the three take up again firmly the announcement of the destruction of the city, then, either as a conclusion (Isa 65-66; Ezek 37:40-48) or in the middle (Jer 30-31) to affirm its restoration and the reestablishment of the presence of Yhwh. This convergence regarding the legitimacy of Jerusalem as city of Yhwh is much more obvious than the answers to the question of monarchy and of the continuation of the Davidic line, which within a single book receives various answers. This emphasis on Jerusalem can be explained by the attempt of the leaders of the prophetic library to confirm themselves in the face of the religious centres and administrative competitors such as Mizpah, Bethel and Samaria, only the Mount Zion was chosen by Israel's God.

Conclusion

In short, the tripartite outline Priest - Mandarin - Prophet is a valid model to characterize the different types of discourse which were elaborated in the 6th and 5th centuries as a reaction to the

³⁵ C. Nihan, "Ézéchiél," in T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi and C. Nihan (eds.), *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, Le Monde de la Bible 49, Genève : Labor et Fides, 20092, 439-458, especially 450-454.

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destruction of Jerusalem and to the experience of exile. However, the "prophets" as a future second part of the biblical canon construct a discourse which is limited to the announcement of a time of salvation but which includes reflection on the disaster and juxtaposes different responses in relation to the future. On the literary side, the Great Three Prophets were revised at the time of their inclusion in the same library in order to construct a sequel to the Deuteronomistic history and to present each in its own way possible a continuation for this story with its mysterious end.

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