

*Issues in Religion and Theology 10*

# Prophecy in Israel

Search for an Identity

*Edited with an Introduction by*

DAVID L. PETERSEN

FORTRESS PRESS | SPCK  
Philadelphia | London

First published in Great Britain 1987  
SPCK  
Holy Trinity Church  
Marylebone Road  
London NW1 4DU

First published in the USA 1987  
Fortress Press  
2900 Queen Lane  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania 19129

This volume copyright © 1987 by Fortress Press and SPCK.

Introduction by David L. Petersen, copyright © 1987 by Fortress Press and SPCK.  
H. Gunkel, *Die Propheten* (1923) 34–70 excerpted. S. Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien III: Kultprophetie und prophetische Psalmen* (1922) 4–29. M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (1963) 46–59, copyright © 1963 by Beacon Press. J. Ross, in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, 98–107, copyright © 1962 by Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson. J. Holladay, *HTR* 63 (1970) 29–51, copyright © 1970 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. J. Mays, *Int* 37 (1983) 5–17, copyright © by *Interpretation*. G. Tucker, *Quarterly Review* 1 (1981) 5–22, copyright © by The United Methodist Publishing House and the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owners.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Prophecy in Israel.

(Issues in religion and theology; 10)

Bibliography: p.

1. Prophets. I. Petersen, David L. II. Series.

BS1198.P75 1986 224'.06 85-45584

ISBN 0-8006-1773-8

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Prophecy in Israel: search for an identity.

—(Issues in religion and theology; 10)

1. Prophets

I. Petersen, David L. II. Series

220.8'2916'3 BS1505

ISBN 0-281-04275-6

Made and printed in Great Britain by Richard Clay Ltd, Bungay, Suffolk

## *Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel\**

---

JOHN S. HOLLADAY, JR.

---

The explosive emergence of the so-called "writing prophets" in the history of Israel is one of the great historical mysteries of Old Testament scholarship. The first, and in some ways one of the greatest of these figures, Amos of Tekoah, can hardly be dated much before 750 B.C., and the beginnings of the prophetic careers of Hosea ben Beeri, Isaiah of Jerusalem, and Micah of Moresheth all fall within the following decade and a half. From this time forward, with the single exception of the dark and bloody reign of Manasseh, there is a steady succession of prophetic literature, ending somewhere around the mid-fifth century B.C. Once initiated, this succession moves in what seems to the historian, operating with the full confidence of hindsight, to be an entirely logical and reasonably consistent fashion. Yet its origins are wholly obscure. Like Melchizedek, Amos seems to have been born without benefit of ancestors. (And it goes without saying that such an [apparently] "uncaused happening" in the historical sphere is as troubling to the modern historian as the thought of an ancestorless Jebusite king would be to the historian's colleague in the biology department.) But what sort of events would be deemed to constitute "sufficient historical causation" for the rise of the classical prophets of Israel?

The answer to this question clearly hinges upon the answer we are able to give to the logically antecedent question: what was the rôle of the prophet in Israel?<sup>1</sup> That is, what is it that he thought he was doing? How did he construe his position in Israelite society? On what secular institution, if any, did he model his activities? And how did his contemporaries regard him? Recent investigations have greatly clarified this aspect of the problem.

\* First published in *HTR* (1970) 29–51. Composed to honor Professor R. B. Y. Scott on the occasion of his retirement from Princeton University.

### *The Prophetic Office*

For all the prophets from Samuel on, that is, from the first "individual" prophet on,<sup>2</sup> there is but one answer to this question of the rôle of the prophet. He was the messenger of Yahweh, God of Israel.<sup>3</sup> He was "called" by Yahweh—the Hebrew נביא being exactly cognate with the Akkadian *nabī'um*, "the called one," found already in its feminine form in the Code of Hammurabi.<sup>4</sup> In other words, he is an officer of the heavenly court.<sup>5</sup> He was "sent" by Yahweh to "tell Saul/ David/ this people." He typically delivered his message in the form כה אמר יהוה, "Thus says Yahweh"—that is, in the typical letter form of his day.<sup>6</sup> And, although the evidence is not incontrovertible, he seems to take pains to distinguish his own words, his own interpretations from those of his divine master.<sup>7</sup> Although the term מלאך, "messenger," only rarely appears in the books of the pre-exilic prophets, and never (unless Isa. 33:7 is an exception) with the intended meaning "heavenly messenger,"<sup>8</sup> it is hardly a chance matter that the last prophet in the Hebrew canon styled himself (or was named (Malachi, "my messenger."

But we must be careful not to allow our own somewhat limited conception of "messenger" to color our understanding of the messenger in the ancient Near East. The messenger was an official representative of the sender himself.<sup>9</sup> The royal messenger stood in the court of the Great King,<sup>10</sup> participated in the deliberative processes of the court, received the declaration of the king's wishes from the king's own mouth, and then carried the tablet or sealed roll of papyrus to its destination—in the case of imperial state administration, to the court of the vassal king. Here, received in the manner befitting a representative of the Great King, he would break the seals, hold up the letter, and proclaim: "To PN<sub>1</sub>, thus (says) PN<sub>2</sub>: I am well, may your heart be at peace."<sup>11</sup> Now concerning the matter of . . ."<sup>12</sup>

As is well known, it was precisely in this manner that the day-to-day business of the great empires of the ancient Near East was carried on, and the occasional finds of great caches of diplomatic correspondence testify to the energy and care given to this essential function of the suzerain's rule. The third of the eighth-century Aramaic treaty inscriptions found near Sefire—a typical suzerainty treaty of this period—is illuminating in this regard:

Now (in the case of) all the kings of my vicinity or any one who is well-disposed toward me and (when) I send [יִאשְׁלַח] my ambassador [מְלָאכִי]<sup>13</sup> to him for peace or for any of my business or (when) he

sends his ambassador to me, the road shall be open to me; you shall not (try to) dominate me<sup>14</sup> on it nor assert your authority over me concerning (it). (And) if you do not do so, you will be false to this treaty.<sup>15</sup>

From this perspective a chronically misunderstood passage in Jeremiah snaps sharply into focus. In his condemnation of the *שְׁלִיחֵי* prophets (Jer. 23:9ff.) the prophet proclaims:

Thus says Yahweh of hosts concerning the prophets . . . Who among them has stood in the council of Yahweh<sup>16</sup> to perceive and to hear his word, or who has given heed to his word and listened? . . . I did not send [*שְׁלִיחֵי*] the prophets, yet they ran [i.e., ran as couriers]. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (23:15ff.)

If then, as Ross has demonstrated,<sup>17</sup> the function of the prophet, that is, as messenger of the heavenly court, remains remarkably constant from at least the eleventh century through the first part of the sixth century B.C.,<sup>18</sup> our problem seems to become more, rather than less, difficult of solution. What *is* the watershed between the classical prophets of the eighth century and their lesser-known forebears? Before we are in a position to answer this question, we must turn to a closer analysis of the "politics" of divine rule in ancient Israel.

### The "Politics" of Divine Rule

If the prophet is understood to be a messenger/ambassador of the heavenly Lord, what is the conceptual model in terms of which the heavenly lordship of Yahweh was understood? For the period of the twelve-tribe league, it appears that Yahweh, in terms of his governing function, was conceived under the rubric "king of Israel,"<sup>19</sup> a concept which plays so important a rôle in the struggle which accompanied the elevation of Saul to the kingship. His living rule of Israel was exercised through the charismatic office of the Judge—a figure strangely combining qualities of king, judge, prophet, and warlord.<sup>20</sup> This time-to-time rule sufficed for a time. "But when the people of Israel cried to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who delivered them" (Judg. 3:9, similar passages *passim*). The secular model here is that of the far-off suzerain sending a commander and contingent of troops to the succor of a beleaguered vassal.<sup>21</sup> Many of the Amarna letters—letters of Canaanite kings to their Egyptian suzerain during the

first part of the fourteenth century B.C.—illustrate this situation perfectly.<sup>22</sup> But what of the relation of Israel to her Suzerain after the establishment of the monarchy? How could Yahweh's free charismatic rule be exercised in the new situation of hereditary leadership? It is hardly a coincidence that prophecy arose simultaneously with the kingship. While we cannot take the full time here to make the demonstration, it is becoming increasingly clear that the prophet's primary function vis-à-vis the government of early Israel was to serve as the continuing agent of God's rule in Israel.<sup>23</sup>

With the adoption of the monarchy, Israel moved to vassal-kingdom status in the divine world order.<sup>24</sup> Far too much has been made of the unequivocal nature of the Davidic Covenant. From the outset it is clear that the individual king, even David himself, ruled only at the pleasure of Yahweh and at his direction. What has gone largely unrecognized, however, in this pattern of rule by the divine Suzerain is the official character of the prophetic messenger. Far from being a peripheral figure serving as a constant reminder of the old time religion of the twelve-tribe league, the prophet is the vital and essential living element in the divine government of the Kingdom of Israel.<sup>25</sup> He, and he alone, represents Yahweh's day-to-day interests in the governance of his vassal kingdom. Exactly as the envoy of the Pharaoh or the king of Assyria brought the word of the Great King to his vassal rulers in the city-states bordering his empire, so also the prophet was "sent" with the message of the Lord of Israel—couched in exactly the same form as a written communication from an earthly king: "To PN<sub>1</sub> say: thus says PN<sub>2</sub> . . ." or, more simply, the "address" is omitted and the prophet announces "Thus says Yahweh."<sup>26</sup>

The significance of this for the understanding of the difference between the pre-classical prophets and the "writing" prophets becomes clear when we ponder the implications of the often made observation that the pre-classical prophets were primarily "court-prophets," while the classical prophets were primarily "popular prophets." As a matter of fact, with the lone exception of the most legendary sections of the Elijah-Elisha cycles, there is not one single indication of a prophetic oracle being delivered to anyone outside of the royal court<sup>27</sup> prior to the time of Amos. Nor is there any indication that any of the pre-classical prophets uttered even one oracle against the whole nation or individual non-royal groups within the nation. Even in the Mount Carmel confrontation, where we would expect such a proclamation of the Word of Yahweh, the

prophet conspicuously speaks only his own words—and Yahweh answers, not by word, but by fiery deed.

Here, then, is the point of difference between the prophets of the ninth and tenth centuries and those of the seventh and eighth centuries. Stripped to its simplest terms, this mutation involves a dramatic shift of the primary *object* of the prophetic address *away* from the ruling houses of the twin kingdoms and *to* the people of Israel as a whole. In this respect Isaiah alone among the eighth-century prophets retains a close relationship with the ruling house—a circumstance undoubtedly reflecting both his conservative Judaeen background and his deep rootage in the Jerusalem cultus. Thus we are afforded an indirect witness to older patterns of prophetic conduct.

Now the question of the historian again intrudes: “What sort of circumstances would tend to bring about such a shift?” From the evidence at hand, it seems impossible to separate this sudden mutation in the rôle of the messenger of the Divine Council from the only slightly earlier shift in rôle of his secular counterpart—the imperial messenger. That is, we cannot separate this sudden rupture in the prophetic tradition from the dramatic shift in Assyrian imperial policy affecting Israel at precisely this time.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Assyrian Crisis*

During the preceding centuries of imperial rule in the ancient Near East, outlying territories were often ruled through vassal kings—appointed by the suzerain (cf. Samuel’s anointing first of Saul, then of David; Nathan’s rôle in assuring the succession of Solomon, etc.)—and dismissed by the suzerain (cf. Samuel’s message of Yahweh’s rejection of Saul, Ahijah’s condemnation of the House of Jeroboam, etc.). International communications were, naturally, between kings—between the Great King and his vassals.

From the ninth century forward, Assyria was the greatest military power in the fertile crescent, ruling through an intricate system of vassal-treaties with local kings, a highly developed messenger-ambassadorial service, regular military shows of strength through the subject lands, and a systematic campaign of extermination with regard to the mountain tribesmen who constantly threatened her northern flank. Rebellion was commonplace, and at first seems to have been treated simply and directly, continuing the earlier Egyptian and Hittite traditions.<sup>29</sup> The vassal king rebelled: the vassal king was eliminated. And either a compliant relative was placed on the throne or the entire house was eliminated and a new

dynasty established, with, in either case, a substantial boost in the annual exactions of tribute. The parallels between the diplomacy appropriate to this pattern and the pattern of prophetic activity in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries are obvious. Toward the end of the ninth century, however, and culminating in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the peoples of Syria-Palestine were suddenly confronted with a radically new mode of dealing with subject peoples.

This much of the Assyrian state policy during the middle decades of the eighth century is common knowledge: the terroristic activities of Assyrian soldiers, the gloating reliefs depicting siege, torture, and deportation scenes decorating the audience chambers of Assyrian kings; the wholesale deportations of entire population groups, of which the depopulation of Samaria in the eighth century and Judah in the sixth century (by the successors to the Assyrian technique) are only two of many. Thus, the whole terror psychology of Assyrian statecraft swung its focus of attention from master to slave, prince to peasant, king to citizen.<sup>30</sup> No longer was only the king and his court butchered or led into captivity. Now whole *countries* went into exile.<sup>31</sup>

But what of the day-to-day statecraft which accompanied this new mode of imperial rule; how did it differ from the older models, and, in particular, what possible effect could it have had upon Israelite prophetic traditions? We must present the material, which is massive, only in summary fashion. For present purposes, it will suffice to explore two major categories: (1) international treaty provisions; and (2) royal letters.

1. *Treaties* which from the fifteenth century B.C. on (at a minimum) have been made between the great king and his house and the vassal king and his house are no longer simply agreements between royal houses. Starting with the treaty of Shamshi-Adad V of Babylon (ca. 823 B.C.),<sup>32</sup> the treaty is consummated between the great king and the vassal king *and all of his people*.<sup>33</sup> Only a fragmentary section of the treaty-curses remains to this document, but the new dimension in some of these curses is readily apparent if we place them side by side with the older curse formulae. For example, a typical “blanket-curse” from a Hittite treaty of the late second millenium reads:

May the gods of the oath destroy Duppi-Tessub together with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his land and together with everything that he owns.<sup>34</sup>

Contrast the Shamshi-Adad formulation:

[May Marduk the great lord] . . . bring sickness upon you and dissolution for your people . . . through disease and famine may he overwhelm your people.<sup>35</sup>

This universal applicability of the treaty document is even more concretely illustrated in the Aramaic treaty inscriptions from Sefire (ca. 750 B.C.) recently republished by Fitzmyer,<sup>36</sup> the first of which begins:

The treaty of Bir-Ga'yah, king of KTK, with Mati'el, the son of 'Attarsamak, the king [of Arpad; and the treaty of the sons of Bir-Ga'yah with the sons of Mati'el; and the treaty of the grandsons of Bir-Ga'ya[h and] his [offspring] with the offspring of Mati'el, the son of 'Attarsamak, the king of Arpad; and the treaty of KTK with [the treaty of] Arpad; and the treaty of the citizens of KTK with the treaty of the citizens of Arpad . . .<sup>37</sup>

And the strikingly new note in Amos' prophecy, the threat of national exile, finds a nearly contemporary expression in the treaty-curses of the Ashurnirari V treaty with Mati'el of Arpad:

Just as this ram is [taken] away from his fold, will not return to his fold, will [no longer stand] before his fold, so may . . . Mati'ilu, with his sons, [his nobles], the people of his land [be taken away] from his land, not return to his land, he shall [no longer] stand at the head of his land.<sup>38</sup>

In this connection it is worthy of note that the major documents analyzed by J. Harvey in his article "Le 'Rîb-pattern,' réquisitoire prophétique . . .,"<sup>39</sup> the "Milavata letter,"<sup>40</sup> the "Indictment of Madduwattāš,"<sup>41</sup> the closely similar document concerning Mita of Paḥḥuwa,<sup>42</sup> and the Tukulti-Ninurta letter,<sup>43</sup> all represent indictments of *individual* rulers in contrast to the *rib-Gattung* in the classical prophets, which is pre-eminently a blanket condemnation of all Israel. On the other hand, the parallel between these "indictments" of rebellious vassal rulers and the heavenly *rib* in 1 Kings 22:17-22, in which *King Ahab* is condemned, can hardly be accidental.<sup>44</sup> Nor does it seem to be coincidental that, at about the time that Mati'el takes upon himself and his people—at the Assyrian behest—a treaty-curse involving wholesale exile from the land of Arpad, Amos should threaten the *people* of Syria and Israel with exile from their lands, Micah and Hosea should declare that "Yahweh has a controversy with his people" (Mic. 6:2; Hos. 4:1; 12:3[2]), and Amos, Micah, and Isaiah should all three use the characteristic *rib-Gattung* "call to witnesses" to testify against "the house of Jacob" (Amos 3:9ff.) and against "my people . . . Israel" (Isa. 1:2ff., cf. Mic. 6:1ff.).<sup>45</sup>

2. *State Letters and Royal Proclamations*: Here our resources are again limited by the chances of discovery to the Late Bronze Age and to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. and later. They thus bracket the period under discussion. Yet the contrasts are striking and strongly corroborate the pattern of development witnessed by factors previously considered.

In the correspondence unearthed at El-Amarna and similar materials excavated at individual Palestinian sites,<sup>46</sup> we have an invaluable collection of over three hundred and fifty letters—mostly either from the Egyptian king to his vassal kings or from these vassals to their overlord. The latter are in the great majority. Two letters of this large collection represent petitions from the citizens of a city-state to the Pharaoh.<sup>47</sup> Two others come from a vassal ruler and his city.<sup>48</sup> There are no letters from the king of Egypt to population groups.

In the some sixty royal letters or proclamations<sup>49</sup> from the archives of King Esarhaddon<sup>50</sup> (the archive as a whole ranges from ca. 722 B.C. to 609 B.C.), there are fifteen letters either to cities, countries, population groups or to one of these groups of people together with their vassal ruler or governor. There are probably four letters to the kings of Elam (on a parity basis with Assyria) and some forty-plus letters to various officers of the king. One of the most colorful of the letters to a population group, "To the non-Babylonians," well illustrates the manner in which population groups are now held to be directly responsible to the suzerain, and, incidentally, illustrates the equally blunt and direct manner in which these population groups were confronted with this responsibility:

An order of the king (Esarhaddon) to the "Non-Babylonian" inhabitants of Babylon: I am fine. There is a proverb often used by people: "The potter's dog, once he crawls into the (warm) potter's shop, barks at the potter." There you are, pretending—against the commands of the god—to be Babylonians, and what unspeakable things you and your master have devised against my subjects! There is another proverb often cited by people: "What the adulteress says at the door of the judge's house carries more weight than the words of her husband." Should you ask yourselves after I sent back to you, with seals intact, your letters full of empty and insolent(?) words which you had dispatched: "Why did he return the letters to us?" I am telling you that I would have opened and read whatever message my loyal and loving Babylonians had sent me but . . . [end broken].<sup>51</sup>

By its very nature, such direct appeal to population groups as a whole brought about a change in the function of the imperial

messenger. No longer was it sufficient for the letter to be read only to the vassal king and his court. As the Rabshakeh showed himself well aware (2 Kings 18:26ff.), such a procedure would have been tantamount to addressing the letter to the Dead Letter Office. Thus, alongside the older system of *private* official communications to vassals,<sup>52</sup> the Neo-Assyrian period witnessed the spectacular rise to prominence of the royal herald as an essential instrument of imperial government.<sup>53</sup> So pervasive was this practice, it would seem, that even the style of the introductory formula of the royal letters was conformed to the proclamation-formula: "*Amāt šarri* (or the Assyrian *abūt šarri*) *ana PN*,"—"Word/proclamation/edict of the king to PN."<sup>54</sup> Thus, the "*amāt šarri*" can be "fixed in [a man's] mouth."<sup>55</sup> It is proclaimed simultaneously before rulers and "before the people of the land" (*RCA* no. 174; cf. 2 Kings 18:17ff. and the nearly identical scene in the first of the Nimrud Letters,<sup>56</sup> dating only thirty years before the Rabshakeh's speech). It is spoken against rebellious cities (*RCA* no. 246); to rebellious army units (*RCA* no. 251); "to the Sealanders" (*RCA* no. 289); "in the assembly of the people" (*RCA* no. 344), etc., as well as to individual rebellious vassal kings or governors (*RCA* no. 282).<sup>57</sup>

Again, it can hardly be coincidental that this change in the conduct of the office of the royal Assyrian messenger is paralleled by a similar functional shift in the office of the messenger of the heavenly court in Judah-Israel. Nor are the reasons for this shift far to seek. The radical changes in the conduct of "secular" imperial government to which Israel was exposed in the later part of the ninth century and early part of the eighth century *necessarily* brought about tensions in Israelite thinking about the modalities of *divine* rule—tensions which were all the more quickly resolved in favor of the new model since this "democratization" of responsibility already had deep-seated parallels in the institutions of the twelve-tribe league.

Once indicated, the parallels between the rôle of the prophet in eighth-century Israel and the rôle of the royal herald in Neo-Assyrian statecraft are unmistakable. Since obedience is now demanded not only of the ruling house but of the entire people as well—the *nation* being held responsible for the action of its rulers—that which originally was of importance only to the royal court now was of life-and-death importance to the welfare of every man in the nation. Those things which formerly had been spoken only in private court-circles (the oracles of the court-prophets) and preserved, if at all, only in court-archives and in chronicles of the

kings (hence the rise of popular stories *about* the prophets) now *must* be spoken publicly (hence the preservation of the prophetic *logia*).<sup>58</sup> The new image of the prophet, that is to say, the new "secular model" from which he took his cue, is most strikingly preserved in the accounts of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (2 Kings 18:17ff.), where we encounter for the first time in *recorded* Israelite history the "new" form of messenger-speech. Brevard Childs' comments on this passage, although intended for another purpose, are highly appropriate to our present analysis:

The first speech of the Rabshakeh is interrupted by the protest of the Judaeans emissaries. They urge him to speak in the diplomatic language of Aramaic instead of Hebrew, which was being overheard and understood by the people on the wall. The biblical account reflects with remarkable accuracy elements of a scene which could hardly have arisen apart from genuine historical tradition. The crude answer of the Assyrian fits exactly into the setting of the disputation which has been sketched above. By their consternation, the emissaries only play into the hands of the experienced Assyrian negotiator. His role is not merely to communicate a message, but rather to persuade and agitate. He reacts immediately to the new situation, and far from complying to the request, appeals directly to the populace in an attempt to arouse support against Hezekiah's position.<sup>59</sup>

While Childs is describing *only* the Rabshakeh's activity—and it should be noted that the essential authenticity of both the Rabshakeh's mission and speech is vindicated by exceedingly close cuneiform parallels<sup>60</sup>—the description of the Rabshakeh's rôle is identical to that which one would ordinarily give of the classical prophets. That is, it "is not merely to communicate a message, but to persuade and agitate." As Amaziah reported to Jeroboam: "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words" (Amos 7:10b). Functionally, no distinction can be made between the Rabshakeh's proclamation of the "word of the king" at the great gate of the city and the seventh- and eighth-century prophets' proclamation of "the word of Yahweh" to a stubborn and rebellious people. Ironically, even the abortive efforts at silencing the messenger are parallel.<sup>61</sup>

One measure of the distance we are here removed from the sphere of *pre-classical* prophecy may be seen in the mere juxtaposition of two statements regarding the commissioning of two prophets—one of the tenth century and the other from the end of the seventh century:

1. And Yahweh sent Nathan to David. . . (2 Sam. 12: 1a)
2. The word of Yahweh came to [Jeremiah], saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says Yahweh. . . ." (Jer. 2:1-2a)<sup>62</sup>

*The Indirect Evidence for the Rise of Popular Prophecy*

In addition to the rather general observations made in connection with our analysis of the prophetic office, at least one other piece of internal evidence has already been mentioned. This is the ambivalent rôle of Isaiah. So far as we can tell, he alone of the classical prophets actively sought the ear of the king and spoke to him regarding both personal affairs and matters of state (Isaiah 7; 37—39). There are extremely close parallels here to the activity of the pre-classical prophets. Yet the burden of Isaiah's prophecy was, as the editorial heading to the Isaiah Book rightly notes: "Concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (1:1b). He is commissioned to "go, and say to this people. . . ." (6:9), to proclaim Yahweh's *rib* against his sons (1:2ff.) "until cities lie waste without inhabitant and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate, and Yahweh removes men far away" (6:11b—12a). There can be little question that in Isaiah we see a truly transitional figure—still clinging to the old patterns (much as one would expect of a prophet of his generation active in the Jerusalem temple)—yet forced by the winds of change into new and ill-charted modes of prophet behavior.

Another indication that the eighth-century prophets represent a radical break with their past is afforded us by Amaziah's (unavoidable) misinterpretation of Amos's oracles against Israel: "Amos has conspired against *you* in the midst of the house of Israel" (7:10b, emphasis ours). By the time of Jeremiah, no such misunderstanding of the prophetic message was possible. He is rightly accused not of *lèse majesté*, but of simple treason: "This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears" (Jer. 26:11b).

Thus, from two quite different types of "boundary-phenomena" we may quite properly, it seems to me, infer that Amos and Isaiah of Jerusalem each stand very close to the point of origination of "classical" prophecy, that is, prophecy "against the whole house of Israel." It yet remains for the deuteronomic historian to tell us *how* close.

The objection might well be raised against our interpretation of the pre-classical prophets as "court prophets" that such an interpretation merely derives from the nature of the source material for the history of this period. That is, if the deuteronomic historian's materials derive largely from "court histories," royal chronicles, propagandistic outpourings of the Solomonic court and the like, what else would one expect? Such sources would not be particularly

interested in accounts of "popular" prophecy. This argument could be very strong. Yet indications are not lacking in the Book of Kings that the editor is quite aware of the impact of popular prophecy. In particular, two little-noted editorial passages may be taken to be indications that the historian, despite his apparent silence regarding Amos, Micah, and Hosea, has a strong tradition concerning the origination of the prophetic speech against the nation.

1. In the account of Jeroboam II's reconquest of the original Davidic limits of the Northern Kingdom "according to the word . . . which [Yahweh] spoke by his servant Jonah ben Amittai, the prophet . . . from Gath-hepher," the reason given for Yahweh's support of an obviously unworthy ruler is that "Yahweh [had seen] that the affliction of Israel [by the Aramaeans] was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel. *But Yahweh had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven*, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam ben Joash" (2 Kings 14:25b—27, emphasis added). Here the editor seems to show himself aware of a tradition which maintained that, through the time of Jeroboam II, no blanket condemnation of Israel had yet been made by the prophets of Israel.

2. In the account of the apostasy of Israel during the reign of Hoshea and his immediate predecessors in the third quarter of the eighth century, the first summarizing statement of *general* prophetic condemnation of Israel and Judah occurs: "Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.'"<sup>63</sup> (2 Kings 17:13; cf. also vv. 14—18). This summary obviously must also be attributed to the deuteronomic editor, yet not only is it poles apart from his earlier notice relative to the reign of Jeroboam II, but, from this point in the narrative on, similar summarizing statements or allusions to total destruction appear with monotonous regularity: 2 Kings 17:22—23; 18:12; 19:25ff.; 20:16ff.; 21:10ff.; 22:15ff.; 23:27; 24:2.

Thus, in a sense, the deuteronomic historian has presented us with *termini ante quem* and *ad quem* for his traditions concerning the rise of what we now call "classical" prophecy. "Yahweh had not said," prior to the great victories of Jeroboam II, "that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven." While the military record of Jeroboam II is unfortunately too obscure to furnish us with any firm dates, a date of ca. 750 B.C. for the peak of Israel's resurgence cannot be far wrong.<sup>64</sup> And yet, by the time of



Hoshea's ascension to the throne (ca. 732 B.C.) "Yahweh [had] warned Israel and Judah by every prophet. . . ." One feels inclined to insert: "By Amos of Tekoa, by Isaiah ben Amoz, by Hosea ben Beeri, and by Micah of Moresheth."

*Summary*

The institution of the suzerain, or "great king," as it classically flourished in the ancient Near East, furnished an ideal theological model for Israel's understanding both of the sovereignty of God and of her peculiar relationship to him. As studies of covenant-theology, royal theology, prophetic oracle-forms, etc., progress, it is increasingly clear just how far-reaching the implications of this mode of conceptualization actually were. In this study I have attempted to investigate some of the ramifications of this understanding as they illuminate the changing nature of the prophetic office in pre-exilic Israel.

1. Prior to the expansion of the neo-Assyrian empire during the latter part of the ninth and first portions of the eighth century, imperial rule in the area of Syria-Palestine normatively was exercised through the agency of vassal or client kingship, each vassal being directly responsible to the suzerain for that area under his control. The vital link between suzerain and vassal was the royal messenger. Indeed, it could be argued that the viability and strength of the empire was in large measure directly proportional to the efficiency of its courier/ambassadorial system. During the period of the pre-classical prophets the theory of imperial government might be diagrammed as follows:

Suzerain ←→ (official messengers) ←→ vassal \* ←→ populace



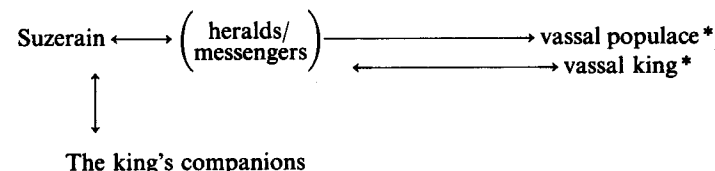
The king's companions  
("Those who see the king's face")

\* = the party directly eliminated in case of rebellion.

With the substitution of Yahweh for suzerain, the *sôd YHWH* for the inner circle of courtiers, and the court-prophets for the messengers, this diagram could equally well represent the theology of divine rule in ninth- and tenth-century Judah and Israel.

2. The genius of the neo-Assyrian modification of the above

scheme was that it placed the populace on a par with the vassal king, making the entire community responsible for its actions—and therefore the king's actions—vis-à-vis the central government. Messengers continued to go from king to king, but a new dimension was added to their activity. Now, as heralds, they also proclaimed the will of the suzerain to the people of the land. The double speech of the Rabshakeh outside the gate of Jerusalem may be taken as paradigmatic. By this democratization of responsibility, Assyria decisively undercut the potential for unilateral action on the part of the vassal king. Simultaneously, by imposing frightful and well-publicized penalties for rebellion—coupled with promises of soft treatment for populations refusing to join their ruler in rebellion—the Assyrian overlords so quelled the spirit of the populace at large that rebellion became a progressively less attractive option for either party. The new form of Assyrian rule may be diagrammed thus:



\* = parties directly punished in event of rebellion

The earliest certain application of this policy seems to be in the treaty of Shamshi-Adad V with Marduk-zakir-shum I of Babylon, ca. 823 B.C. By the time of the rise of popular prophecy in Israel ca. 750 B.C., it was well-established practice in the Syro-Palestinian corridor, as is witnessed by the various treaties of Mati'el, king of Arpad.

Given the historical priority of the change in Assyrian statecraft and the appropriateness of the new model of imperial rule as descriptive of the rule of God in normative Israelite theology during the seventh and last half of the eighth centuries B.C., there can hardly be any question of the causative factors involved in the transition from pre-classical (court) prophecy to classical (popular) prophecy. As the implications of the new secular order became apparent in early eighth-century Israel, a corresponding shift in Israel's understanding of the demands of divine obedience was made possible. Additional warrants for this evolution surely were provided by anti-monarchical sentiments still current among the populace. By the middle of the eighth century, the days of the pre-classical "court" prophet were at an end. Like the Rabshakeh

standing at the entrance of the city proclaiming "the word of the great king, the king of Assyria," . . . to the men sitting on the wall . . .," so also Amos proclaims: "Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken, O people of Israel. . . ." <sup>65</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 For both this point and important elements of the following analysis I am indebted to the observations of G. E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 63-64.
- 2 Cf. Wright's analysis of the origins of the prophetic office (*ibid.*) and the brief notice in "The Nations in Hebrew Prophecy," *Encounter* 26 (1965) 229ff.
- 3 Cf. the survey of previous discussion in C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967) 13ff.; and the essay of J. F. Ross, "The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (= chap. 3 in this IRT vol.).
- 4 W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2d ed.; New York: Doubleday & Co., 1957) 303. Note also the use of אֱלֹהִים in Exod. 31:1; Isa. 43:1; 45:3, 4 (all exilic), and the parallel use of *nabû(m)* in similar contexts—i.e., the appointing to a divinely ordained task—common in Akkadian royal inscriptions from the time of Sargon I on. Cf. W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (1959-); and M. J. Seux, *Epiphètes royales Akkadiennes et Sumériennes* (Paris, 1967) 175-79.
- 5 Cf. the citations in n. 2 and the discussion and references in Ross, "The Prophet," chap. 4 of this vol. Additionally, cf. nn. 10 and 63.
- 6 Cf. J. Lindblom, "Die prophetische Orakelformel," in *Die literarische Gattung der prophetischen Literatur* (UU Å; 1924:1; Uppsala) 97ff. More convenient, if less detailed, is his *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962) 103-4. Westermann's position (*Basic Forms*, 98ff.) fails to take seriously enough the long usage of this formula as a literary cliché precisely in the Syro-Palestinian area. After something like a millennium and a half of constant use as an epistolary introductory formula (taking the usage in the fertile crescent as a whole into account) it is simply academic to say, "One can see that the oral procedure for sending a message still lives in these formulas centuries after the first technicalization of the message through writing was accomplished" (*ibid.*, 104).
- 7 Cf. Jer. 23:25ff.; 28:6ff. Compare H. M. Gevaryahu's analysis, "The Speech of Rab-Shakeh to the People on the Wall of Jerusalem" (Hebrew), in *Studies in the Bible Presented to M. H. Segal* (Jerusalem, 1964) 96-97. (I owe the reference to B. Childs's citation, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT 2d Ser., No. 3 [London: SCM Press, 1967] 79 n. 27).
- 8 The "historical" reference in Hosea 12:5(4) is, of course, quite another matter.
- 9 E.g., 2 Sam. 10:1-5 (cf. *ABL* 1260 in L. Waterman, *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire* [henceforth Waterman's translations of *ABL* will be cited as *RCA* no. 000], part 2 [Ann Arbor, Mich., 1930] 376-77); 1 Sam. 25:39ff.; and 2 Kings 20:12ff. Further, cf. Ross, "The Prophet," in this vol., and Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 296-97.
- 10 In the royal Assyrian epistolary literature, for especially serious matters, the messenger of the king may be either a member of the king's bodyguard (<sup>u</sup>*mutir puti*) or, exceptionally, one of the king's "personal companions" (<sup>u</sup>*manzaz pāni*). Cf. E. Klauber, *Assyrisches Beamtenum* (Leipzig, 1910) 23ff., 100-101, 105ff.; and *RCA*, part 4, 22-23. *RS* 17.137 likewise demonstrates that *Teḫitešub* and *Tilitešub*, messengers of "the Sun," were highly placed members of the court, since their seals are placed on an international pact witnessed by, among others, the *Qardabbu* official of "the Sun" and the chamberlain of the king of Ugarit. Cf. J. Nougayrol, *Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit IV*, Mission de Ras Shamra IX (Paris, 1956) 107-8. Further, cf. n. 63, below.
- 11 This phrase, characteristic of "friendly" correspondence, is lacking in threatening letters, e.g., *ABL* 403, "To the Non-Babylonians," below.
- 12 Although the letter involved seems to have been a captured document, the description of the reading of such a document in the presence of a group of courtiers in *ND*. 2603 is illustrative of the practice. Cf. H. W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters, 1952- I," *Iraq* 17 (1955) 32-33.
- 13 The ubiquitous Northwest Semitic term for messenger, courier, ambassador in this context is equivalent to the ordinary Akkadian term <sup>u</sup>*mā šipri*, "messenger."
- 14 The messenger as alter-ego of the suzerain.
- 15 J. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefire in the Museum of Beirut," *CBQ* 20 (1958) 450.
- 16 The אֱלֹהִים הַיְהוָה, or Divine Council, was the royal court of heaven assembled in its deliberative function—a function vividly described in the vision of Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kings 22. Cf. the discussions cited in n. 5.
- 17 Ross, "The Prophet."
- 18 The separation of the אֲנִי־נָבוּ, under the rubric "salvation prophets," from the "judgment prophets" (so, e.g., Würthwein, quoted with approval by Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 77, 80) must be regarded as one of the curious by-products of recent research. If the "judgment prophets" are not אֲנִי־נָבוּ, what are they? Certainly such a distinction seems to be unknown either to the editor of the "B" material in Jeremiah (cf. esp. chaps. 28-29) or to the writer of the Books of Kings (e.g., 2 Kings 17:13 [Isa. 37:2]; 17:23; 19:2; 20:1 [Isa. 38:1], 14 [Isa. 39:3]; 21:10; 22:14ff.; 24:2).
- 19 Only so can one explain the adoption of the "Suzerainty Treaty" form as the model for Israel's covenant with Yahweh. Cf. G. E. Wright, "Reflections Concerning Old Testament Theology," in *Studia Biblica et Semitica*—Th. C. Vriezen dedicata (Wageningen, the Netherlands, 1966) 386.
- 20 For an introduction to the historical reconstruction developed here, see W. F. Albright, *Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, The Goldenson Lecture for 1961); Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 63ff.; and *idem*, "The Nations in Hebrew Prophecy," 225ff.
- 21 Note the presence of heavenly troops in the holy-war traditions. Cf. particularly the remarkable tradition concerning the "commander of the army of Yahweh" (שָׂרֵי צְבָאֵי יְהוָה) in Joshua 5:13ff., the participation of the stars in the conflict (Judges 5:20) with the forces of Sisera, the "sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees" (2 Sam. 5:24), and the wonder-story concerning the heavenly army (commanded by Elisha?) in the Elisha cycle (2 Kings 6:11ff.).

- 22 E.g., *EA* no. 244: "... Let the king know that ever since the archers returned (to Egypt?) Lab'ayu has carried on hostilities against me, and we are not able to pluck the wool, and we are not able to go outside the gate in the presence of Lab'ayu, since he learned that thou hast not given archers; and now his face is set to take Megiddo, but let the king protect his city. ... Let the king give one hundred garrison troops to guard the city lest Lab'ayu seize it." *ANET*<sup>2</sup> 485a.
- 23 Cf. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 63.
- 24 For the vassal status of the Davidic king, cf. R. de Vaux, "Le roi d'Israël, vassal de Yahvé," in the *Tisserant Festschrift, Studi e Testi* 231 (Vatican City, 1964) 119-33. For a précis of the study, cf. D. J. McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry," *C B Q* 27 (1965) 237-38.
- 25 Cf. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 63 n. 68.
- 26 As one might expect, the "address" has been stripped off in most contexts, being preserved mainly in narrative passages, e.g., 1 Kings 12:23-24; 2 Kings 20:5 (cf. Isa. 38:5); Jer. 2:2 (LXX omits), 28:13 (reflexes of this formula *passim*); Amos 7:15-16.
- 27 This category would, of course, cover "kings-designate" (e.g., 1 Kings 11:29ff.). If 1 Samuel 3 is insisted upon, it remains that the "House of Eli" is the ruling house of Israel at this time.
- 28 Wright ("The Lawsuit of God," 64) sees this movement from "court" to "popular" prophecy developing as a Northern Israelite theological reaction to the civil wars ensuing from the division of the kingdom and the events attendant upon the rise of the Omri dynasty. This almost certainly was a contributing factor to the acceptance of the new theology. Yet there is no compelling reason why this distress could not just as easily have been laid at the king's door. That is, God is punishing the people because of the king's sin (cf. the account of David's census in 2 Samuel 24, esp. v. 17). This was, in fact, the Chronicler's general point of view (Wright, *ibid.*, n. 69). That the people should be punished for their own sins would have been incomprehensible to a "true" monarchist. It remained for the new Assyrian techniques of world domination to provide a model by which God's righteous acts of judgment could be viewed in a new light.
- 29 While it seems to the present writer that this reconstruction is probable, it should freely be admitted that our present knowledge of the details of Assyrian history during the early years of the first millennium B.C. is extremely thin. Certain indications can, in fact, be cited in support of the argument that the innovations commonly associated with the Neo-Assyrian Empire (see below) had their roots in much earlier times. The question is, however, academic as far as the Israelite experience goes. Cf. n. 33.
- 30 *ABL* 310 furnishes a fascinating glimpse into some of the reasoning behind this policy. Sharruemuranni, in the course of a letter dealing with the acquisition of horses for the king, writes his master, Sargon, as follows: "... When the sheep did not come unto us, I sent the servants of the king my lord to the city of Kibatki. The people were terrified; (some) were put to the sword. When the city of Kibatki had been terrified, they continued to fear, (so that) they may be expected to send (tribute)" (*RCA* no. 310, rev. ll. 3-14). Further, cf. the carefully reasoned arguments of H. W. F. Saggs ("Assyrian Warfare in the Sargonid Period," *Iraq* 25 [1963] 145-54), to the effect that such "atrocities" were part of a carefully planned propaganda campaign of "high military value, and did not spring from some sadistic element peculiar to the Assyrian character" (p. 154).
- 31 The impact of this policy upon Judah-Israel is readily apparent in the Book of Amos. Exile, or the threat of exile, hangs heavy not only over Israel (4:1ff.; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; 9:4, 9) but over the surrounding nations as well (cf. esp. 1:5, but the emphasis upon exile throughout the oracles against the foreign nations [vv. 6, 9, 15] can hardly be disassociated from the same general Zeitgeist).
- 32 Cf. E. F. Weidner, "Der Staatsvertrag Assurniraris VI mit Mati'ilu von Bit-Agusi," *AJO* 8 (1932-33) 27-29.
- 33 It is not impossible, as was suggested in n. 29, that we are here dealing with a characteristically Assyrian practice of somewhat greater antiquity. Note already the (partial?) blinding of 14,400 prisoners by Shalmaneser I (1274-1245 B.C.), the mass deportation of the Babylonians to Assyria by Tukulti-Ninurta I shortly after 1235 B.C., and the (claimed) deportation of 28,800 Hittites by the same ruler (most recently, see J. M. Munn-Rankin in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 2, chap. 25. [fasc. 49] [rev. ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967] 10, 15-16, 20; the dates given are those of Munn-Rankin). However, this may be, such practices are clearly new in the Syro-Palestinian corridor, which, up to this time, has been dominated by Egyptian and Hittite patterns of rule. For the tenth through the early ninth centuries note, inter alia, the characteristic Assyrian name for Syria-Palestine (<sup>kur</sup> Ḫatti, "Hittite-land") and the Egyptianizing courts of David and Solomon (cf. esp. R. de Vaux, "Titres et fonctions égyptiens à la cour de David et de Salomon," *RB* 48 [1939] 403-5). Israel's international relations during this period have to do principally with Egypt, Tyre, and Damascus. Certainly there is nothing in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (859-825 B.C.) to suggest that he is imposing unusual treaty obligations upon his rebellious "Syro-Hittite" vassals, which included Jehu māru Ḫu-um-ri-i, "son of Omri." In fact, it may be suggested that it is just this strong and continued resistance to Shalmaneser III's attempts to establish his suzerainty over this area, with its long traditions of city-state and small kingdom independence, which led to modifications of the traditional *modus operandi*.
- 34 Treaty of Mursilis with Duppi-Tessub of Amurru (l. 20\*\*), cf. *ANET*<sup>2</sup>, 205.
- 35 Weidner, *Der Staatsvertrag*, 29 (ll. 16-17, 19).
- 36 J. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II," *JAOS* 81 (1961) 178-222; *idem*, "The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefire in the Museum of Beirut," *C B Q* 20 (1958) 444-76.
- 37 Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Inscriptions," 179ff. (I-A, ll. 1-4. Cf. also ll. 24ff., 30ff., 35ff.; I-B, ll. 1-6, 21, etc.). Compare the equally comprehensive introductory formula of the treaty between Ashurnirari V of Assyria and this same Mati'el of Arpad (754 B.C.): "... Mat'i'lu ... seine Söhne, seine Töchter, [seine] G[rossen], die Leute seines Landes, soveil ... [gap] sein [and], soveil ..." (cf. Weidner, *Der Staatsvertrag*, 17ff.; the restorations are certain: cf. ll. 6ff.). Cf. also the introduction to the somewhat later (672 B.C.) treaty of Esarhaddon "... with Ramataia, city ruler (E.N.U.R.U) of Urakazabanu, with his sons, his grandsons, with all the Urakazabaneans young and old, as many as there may be ..." (D. J. Wiseman, *The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* [London, 1958] 29-30, col. i, ll. 3-5).
- 38 *Obv.*, 1:16-20 (trans. W. G. Lambert in Delbert R. Hillers's *Treaty-Curses and*

- the Old Testament Prophets*, Biblica et Orientalia 16 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964] 34). Cf. esp. Amos 7:11, 17. From the context, it is clear that the references to the possible exile of the "Hurrian Men" and their families in the Late Bronze Age Hittite treaty K. Bo. I,1 (and duplicates—cf. *ANET*<sup>2</sup> 205–6) refer only to those two "Hurrian Men" (governors?) taking the oath with Mattiwaza, who went up to Hattiland with "only three chariots, two 'men of Harri' and two men-at-arms. . . ." This text, therefore, does not constitute a parallel to the Mati"el treaties, nor does it constitute an exception to the pattern of Late Bronze Age treaties outlined above.
- 39 J. Harvey, "Le 'Rib-pattern,' réquisitoire prophétique . . .," *Biblica* 43 (1962) 172–96.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 186.
- 41 A. Götz, *Madduwattāš* MVAG XXXI, 1 (Leipzig, 1928).
- 42 *KUB* XXIII, no. 72. Cf. O. R. Gurney, "Mita of Pahuwa," *The Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* (Liverpool) 28 (1948) 32ff.
- 43 Cf. references in Harvey, "Le 'Rib-pattern,'" 180–81.
- 44 Cf. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 64. In this connection cf. also Wright's analysis of the non-*rib* (in terms of his definition) character of Nathan's indictment of David: "The prophet stands in relation to the king, instead of to the whole people: the Mosaic covenant is not in view" (*ibid.*, 62 n. 66). In the light of Harvey's analysis, it seems clear that we are here dealing not with two different concepts (a "true" vs. a "false" *rib* category) but with one legal procedure that has undergone a historically conditioned shift in the ultimately responsible party/parties of the covenant (treaty) arrangement. To use a currently fashionable term, we are witnessing the "democratization" of responsibility for the fulfillment of treaty obligations.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 41ff.; esp. 44ff.
- 46 For the principal corpus, cf. J. A. Knudtzon et al., *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, VAB, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1907–15), and O. Schroeder, *Die Tontafeln von El-Amarna* (Leipzig, 1915). For further bibliography, cf. W. F. Albright, "The Amarna Letters from Palestine," *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 2, chap. 20 (fasc. 51) (rev. ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966).
- 47 *EA* nos. 59, 100.
- 48 *EA* nos. 139, 140 (from *Iirabiḫ* and the city Gubla [Byblos] to the king).
- 49 Cf. n. 54 below.
- 50 The Harper corpus, comprising 1471 documents, is most readily accessible in Leroy Waterman's *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire*, vols. 1–4 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1930–36).
- 51 *ABL* 403 as translated in A. Leo Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1967) 116. Cf. also B. Meissner, *AFO* 10: 242ff., and for the historical situation, Oppenheim in *JAO S* 61:266. The rhetorical effect of proverbial material, frequently encountered in epistolary literature of the ancient Near East, is sufficient reason for its use. Without going further into the problem at present, it may be suggested that similar elements of "wisdom" traditions in the prophetic literature—given the suasive and proclamatory character of that literature—are only what we would expect. By no means do they call for a systematic attempt to trace all roots of Israelite law and ethical concern back to

- some supposed *Sitz im Leben* in proto-Hebrew tribal or family wisdom traditions. Cf. the remarks of R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1965), xxvii–xviii.
- 52 Cf. *RCA* no. 282, ll. 15ff.
- 53 This by no means implies that the "royal messenger" and the "royal herald," as the terms are employed in this essay, are different individuals. This is determined by the nature of the communication. In delivering his first speech (2 Kings 18:19ff.) to the king's representatives, the Rabshakeh is acting in one capacity. The people on the wall are "accidental" eavesdroppers with respect to the reading of the royal message. But with the opening provided by the overwrought delegation, the Rabshakeh turns and makes proclamation of the suzerain's message to the men on the wall (vv. 28ff. using precisely a Hebrew translation of the "*amāt šarri*" edict-formula (see below).
- 54 This formula, despite the indications of R. H. Pfeiffer ("Assyrian Epistolary Formulae," *JAO S* 43 [1923] 26ff.), is almost invariable in letters of the king to his subjects (letters 273 [?], 543, 914, 926, and 1121 seem to be the only exceptions in the Harper corpus). Here Lindblom's instincts (*Die Literarische Gattung*, 102ff.) as to the diversity of roots—principally letter-openings and proclamation formulae—displayed in the formulae introductory to prophetic oracles is clearly to be preferred to Westermann's all-encompassing rubric "messenger-formula" (*Basic Forms*, 109–10 [the curious statement with regard to the Cyrus-edict should furnish historians of modern tradition-shifts with an interesting illustration of the perils of compounding an inaccurate citation by inaccurate translation]). That *amāt šarri* is an especially authoritative, compelling mode of address (equivalent to "edict of the king") is shown: (a) By the fact that it appears as an introductory formula only in the king's letters. *RCA* no. 308, an overbearing message from a royal princess presumably aping the royal style, is the only exception. Even the crown prince utilizes the standard introductory formulae: "*ana šarri beli-ia arduka PN* (etc.);" (cf. *RCA* 196–99 [Sennacherib to Sargon], 1001 [Ashurbanipal to Esarhaddon], or "*duppu PN*," "tablet of PN" [*RCA* no. 430]); (b) By the fact that, when the king addresses his letters to presumed equals (i.e., the kings of Elam), he invariably uses the introduction normally reserved for more personal or familial communication: "*Duppu PN*" (e.g., *RCA* no. 1151: "Tablet of Ashurbanipal the king, king of Assyria, to Indabigash, king of Elam, his brother . . ."). Cf. *RCA* nos. 214 (to a brother), 219 (to the writer's father), 896 (to the writer's mother), 1385 ("to the king, my brother . . ."). Cf. the insolent letter of Urzana, king of Mušāšir, to the palace overseer (*RCA* no. 409), where the introductory formula ("*Tuppa PN*") and the independent stance of the writer are wholly in accord with each other—and in clear variance to the expected deportment of a petty king with respect to a "great king."
- 55 *RCA* no. 282.
- 56 H. W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters, 1952—Part I," *Iraq* 17 (1955) 23ff.
- 57 In addition to the obviously proclamatory letters to population groups, other pertinent letters from the Harper corpus would include nos. 101, 194, 208, 516, 544, 571, 608, 615, 645, 685, 846, 890, 965, 1043, 1044, 1046, 1050, 1063, 1114.
- 58 In at least a few cases, and quite possibly in a great number, something more than simple oral tradition or loyal disciples seems to be involved. I hope to deal

with this aspect of the problem in some detail in a forthcoming study, "Prophetic *Sēper* as Prophetic Act."

- 59 Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 86.
- 60 For the first Nimrud Letter see the citation in n. 56 (a convenient extract is given in Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 80ff.). Cf. also *RCA* no. 685 (rev.): "Unto the fortress of Mushezib, of which the king my lord has written, we went thither together with Belsharusur, the bodyguard. I summoned the bodyguard official of the city. He took his stand (and) Belsharusur drew near (and) conferred with him. We have caused Mushezib to go forth unto the king our lord. . . ." Even the dual object of the address—to the king and to the common people—is attested. Cf. *RCA* no. 174, ll. 5–18: "In regard to the news of the land of Nagiu, of which the king spoke, saying, 'Send word,' a messenger has spoken to ["] Kibakkashshe and to ["] Dasukku as follows, 'The king has given the land of Ellipa to me and the land of Shungibutu to ["] Marduk-sharusur. It is established. Your cities are taken away. [If you want to make war, make war! Or let it be! I have nothing to do with it' (in the sense that 'It makes no difference to me').] After this manner he spoke before the people of the land." (Bracketed ll. 14–17 translated with G. Meier, *Lexikalische Bemerkungen*, *Orientalia* N.S. 8:305. Cf. also A. L. Oppenheim, *JAOs* 64:191.)
- 61 E.g., Jer. 38:4; Hosea 9:8; Amos 7:10ff.; Micah 2:6.
- 62 This bit of "autobiography" is missing in LXX. Cf., however, the essentially identical command given to Isaiah (6:9), Ezekiel (3:4–11), and Amos (7:15–16).
- 63 We should parenthetically note here that the designation "my servants" designates the bearer of the title as a high-ranking officer of a royal court, as the frequently found seals "PN, servant of the king" testify. Cf. the observations in n. 10 above.
- 64 Cf. John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 238ff.
- 65 Two colleagues, R. B. Y. Scott of Princeton University and A. K. Grayson of the University of Toronto, have read this study in various drafts and have offered many valuable criticisms. The final draft but one was also generously read and criticized by G. E. Wright. Any mistakes or failings in the present article are, of course, the writer's responsibility.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: The bibliography relative to the study of prophetic speech forms and the rôle of the prophet has expanded considerably in the interval between the initial submission of this study and the present. Two contributions in particular may be singled out for brief comment. James Limburg's, "The Root *רִיב* and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches" (*JBL* 88 [1969] 291ff.) underscores the point made in sections A and B of the present study with a fresh and, to me, wholly convincing study of the key legal terminology involved in the *rib-Gattung*. I find, however, that I simply cannot agree with the major conclusions reached by Klaus Baltzar in his stimulating "Considerations Regarding the Office and Calling of the Prophet" (*HTR* 61 [1968] 567ff.). Specifically, it seems to me that the source of a very serious misunderstanding arises from his downgrading of the rôle of the messenger: "[It is] . . . clear also that one should not go down too far in the hierarchy of offices. To point to the office of messenger hardly explains the claims which men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel made with respect to the rank of their office" (p. 570). With the

office of messenger thus eliminated, it becomes necessary to cast around for another appointive office on which the rôle of the prophet was modeled. Suffice it to say that no royal messenger was that lacking in authority (cf. the discussion of this point above and the additional references cited by Limburg, 304 n. 41). Even in terms of relative ranking in the Egyptian court, the King's Messenger (*lpwty-nšw*) was a very high ranking official indeed, as his titulary and the description of his duties indicate. Cf. the forthcoming study that Professor D. B. Redford and I hope to have ready in the relatively near future.