

PATRIARCHAL "BENEDICTION" AND PROPHETIC BOOK

In my *Introduction to the Old Testament I* (1948), pp. 256-260, I have tried to sketch a form-critical description of the prophetic books as literary units. A better description, in many respects, is given by I. ENGNELL in several places of his stimulating works.¹⁾ He distinguishes between a *diwan*-type and a *liturgy*-type. The latter is e.g. found in the books of Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Deutero-Isaiah, while Amos, Hosea, "Proto-Isaiah", belong to the former. Jeremiah is described as a special case. The diwan-type is especially characterized by the use of the well-known pattern, prophecies of woe alternating regularly with prophecies of weal.

Without challenging this interesting attempt at a clear and formal description of a prophetic book, which I do not consider as excluding my own descriptions in my Introduction, but as a valuable supplement, I made some remarks in my paper, read to the meeting of Old Testament scholars at Leiden 1950, quoted below, which in their turn were not meant to supersede, but to supplement ENGNELL'S view.²⁾ What I intend to do now is of the same kind. I am never inclined to assume that views exclude one another. Of course in some cases

¹⁾ In my paper on the Leiden-meeting of Old Testament Scholars 1950 (Oudtestamentische Studiën VIII, p. 97) I quoted his *Gamla testament I* (1948) without giving the passages. I now find that his distinction between diwan- and liturgy-types has not been set out quite clearly in that book (p. 43, he parenthetically mentions NYBERG'S use of the word diwan as description of the book of Hosea, thus pointing out the ancestry of his own later work). His idea is clearly and programmatically set forth in *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok 1947* (the LINDBLOM congratulation volume), pp. 128ff. When that interesting paper appeared I was not able to quote it in my *Introduction*, which had already gone to the press.

²⁾ p. 97.

they may. But generally speaking our material is so varied that many explanations are possible. And that is also true in the present matter.

Looking at the books of Amos, I remarked that his book — as far as I see — reveals some symptoms of liturgy-type, of having been moulded on liturgical patterns. "It begins as a liturgy,³⁾ and it winds up in a liturgical benediction⁴⁾ of the land and the royal house of David . . . It was begun as an imitation of a liturgy, perhaps because it was a historical fact that the Master had begun his career by taking up the ritual of proscription of enemy nations and of the sinners in Israel, and turning it more radically against Israel as words of doom against the sinful kingdom. But in the course of the work on the book, in the course of time, the collectors lost the thread of the liturgy and did not find it again till they came to the concluding part."

A discussion with a colleague concerning the justification of my use of the word "benediction" in connection with Amos 9, 11ff. led me later to the combination of the whole book with the Patriarchal "blessings" at the end of Genesis and Deuteronomy. On the *corpora* I have also made some observations in my *Introduction* I.⁵⁾ Here I have definitely assumed a liturgical background as the explanation of the "Sitz im Leben" of the poems in question. In the beginning of the paragraph I have mentioned the connection between such lays and the belief that they have been words, uttered by a "patriarch", a chief, a king, or a poet, creating the future of their descendants.

To understand what I have to say of the relations between the prophetic books and the collections of "blessings" of the Patriarchs, it is necessary to recapitulate the characteristics of the notion of a "patriarch". This has recently been done in an admirable way by NYBERG.⁶⁾

In an article on "*Hoseaboken*", from 1941, in the *Uppsala Memorial Volume on the Swedish translation of the Bible from 1541*, he describes the patriarch as a mythical being, either a divinized *hero* or a local *numen*, or — mostly — a *hero* who has been identified with a local *numen* or from the beginning has been identical with it. It is a common feature in ancient Semitic belief, connected with the cult

³⁾ The paper attempted to exhibit the two first chapters as a sort of execration ritual of a type similar to the Egyptian execration texts.

⁴⁾ I use the word "benediction" of the concluding prophecy of weal, which I do not consider a speech by Amos, at least not in Bethel (cf. *Introd.* II, pp. 141ff.), because such a promise of a happy future without straining of the word may be called a "blessing". The following pages attempt to show, how such a blessing form-critically may be connected with another category of literature, which in its turn may offer a possible explanation of the forms of prophetic books.

⁵⁾ pp. 141ff.

⁶⁾ I refer to the quotations in my book *Messias — Moses redivivus — Menschensohn* (1948), pp. 63-67.

of the deceased ancestors, which at least among the Western Semites are called *°amm*, in Arabic esp. "paternal uncle", in Hebrew originally "ancestor" (cp. Gen. 25, 8 with Judg. 2, 10). Of such ancestors the first Father is of course the most important, and consequently *°amm* is "the parent" or "the "relative" in a concentrated religious meaning, viz. the tribal god or the divinized heros eponymos of the tribe. This appears in theophoric names as *°Ammi°el*, *°Amminadab*, *°Ammisur*, and in the Southern Arabic divine name *°Amm* found by NYBERG in two OT passages (Is. 2, 6; Hos. 4, 4), used of Yahweh.⁷⁾ But as the Ancestor is believed to live in the actual tribe the idea is extended to denote all who are related to one another, the tribal god and his people, and so the word *°amm* comes to mean "tribe", pl. "tribes", but also "relatives", which is the normal Hebrew meaning. The tribe is a product of a legitimate marriage between the divine ancestor and a woman, of course also a divine being, the first Mother of the tribe: All members of the tribe, living and dead, are children of this union, which — the first parents being divine — lives on through all ages and still augments and increases the genealogical tree of the tribe. The divine first mother sometimes also has her own individual name. But essentially she is only the personification of the tribe, the tribe as historical "collective", to express it in a "learned" way.⁸⁾

These ideas are also found in Israel, connected with the Hebrew Patriarchs.⁹⁾ But here we find differences, only to be explained by the Israelite religion. Israel was no tribe, but a "confederation" of tribes, led by the God of the Congregation, a god of another type than the gods of the common ancestor worship. Also his connection with the people was from the beginning different from that of the gods of other tribes. The God from Sinai had entered Israel's life through definitely historical events. He had, through the act of the Covenant at Sinai, become the God of the Israelite tribes. Through this relation the ancestor gods of the single tribes were pushed into the background. But certain features, e.g. the idea of the primeval marriage, remained as the explanation of the "symbolism" behind the marriage of Hosea. The divine status of the patriarchs recedes before the allpowerful Yahweh. But they are still, in the tradition, described as inspired creators of the destiny of their offspring, especially through the words which

⁷⁾ cf. his *Studien zum Hoseabuche* (1935), p. 27.

⁸⁾ Such ideas are found all over the world, and they live on in poetical expressions calling the native land "mother" ("Moder Svea", "Mor Danmark", etc.).

⁹⁾ Here I refer to NYBERG's article on *Abraham* in *Svenskt Bibliskt Uppslagsverk*. — In a document in which he speaks on ENGNELL's too generalized use of the so-called oriental royal ideology as basis of explanation of Israelitic life, he stresses the signification of these ideas, which represent the "desert traditions" of Israel over against the Canaanite king ideology.

they utter before their death when they pass on the national-religious blessing to their sons or to the people, like Jacob and Moses.

But the prophets are also *ancestors*. It is enough to remind of the fact that the disciples of prophets are called "*sons of the prophets*". The descriptions of Samuel, Eliah, Elisha express the authority exercised by the prophetic "*fathers*". It must be regarded as a fact to be acknowledged that the descriptions of the prophetic "*school*" as a sort of "*congregation*" or "*tribe*" with its founder as the inspired leader must be taken much more seriously than we have hitherto done. The prophet is a "*patriarch*". Especially in the case of Isaiah it is manifest that he acts as a creator of the new people which is to come to life when the judgment has passed over historic Israel. He and his sons are signs and portents from Yahweh who hides his face from the House of Jacob. Isaiah is to become the patriarch of the new people. He is to be what Yahweh offered Moses on the mountain of Horeb, when Israel had made the golden calf (Deut. 9, 13). The same promise is given to the prophetic Servant of Yahweh who like Moses bore the sins of his people (Is. 53, 10). This also explains why the patriarchs could be described as prophets, as Moses is described as a prophet, especially by the Deuteronomistic tradition.¹⁰) As patriarchs of their congregation the prophets are intimately connected with Israel as a whole. Not only Isaiah. Eliah and Elisha are "*the chariot and horseman of Israel*". Their words create the fate of the people. This needs no demonstration. The words of Yahweh furnish Jeremiah with creative power (Jer. 1, 10).

And this constitutes the connection between the "*blings*" of Jacob and Moses (Gen. 49 and Deut. 33) and the prophetic books. The two chapters are small prophetic books of a size like Obadiah. Deut. 33 represents ENGNELL's liturgy-type, and Gen. 49 apparently the diwan-type. But the reflections which I have recorded at the close of the paragraph on the patriarchal blessings in my Introduction lead me to the assumption that the liturgy-type is the "*primitive*" pattern, probably connected with benediction-ceremonies, e.g. as described by MOWINCKEL in his *Psalmenstudien* V.

At least to some extent, therefore, we have to take cultic rituals of such a kind into account in the complex of explanantions brought into action in the case of determining the "*literary category*" of the prophetic books.

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¹⁰) I hope to publish a study on the Deuteronomistic description of Moses, D.V. For the time being cf. my short note in *Vetus Testamentum* 1951, p. 58.