

# Autorschaft und Autorisierungsstrategien in apokalyptischen Texten

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# How the Prophets Became Biblical Authors and How the Biblical Authors Became Prophets

*Konrad Schmid*

Why do we have a Bible at all? Why has the Bible inaugurated two religions, Judaism and Christianity, that are still alive today? Why has the Bible been considered an authority over many centuries, even though various communities and individuals have understood this authority in very different ways?

There are, of course, many factors and forces that contributed to the survival of the Bible, Judaism, and Christianity,<sup>1</sup> but one of them is a specific understanding of biblical texts as possessing a quality that can be identified as “prophetic.” The Hebrew Bible’s prophetic quality is most prominently developed in the well-known remarks about the Hebrew scriptures in *4 Ezra* 14,<sup>2</sup> as well as Josephus’s remarks in *Contra Apionem* 1.8.<sup>3</sup> Both of them claim that the Hebrew Bible was written by prophets, or at least by prophetically inspired authors.

This concept of the prophetic or inspired quality of the Bible prevailed until the modern period in both Judaism and Christianity, and it still does so in some conservative circles of these religions. To be sure, even in modern historical-critical scholarship, the notion is not simply to be dismissed, since many scribal activities that augmented the biblical text and led to its “final” shape can in some way be characterized as “prophetic,” as especially Odil Hannes Steck

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Christoph Marksches, *Warum hat das Christentum die Antike überlebt? Kirchenhistorische und systematisch-theologische Antworten*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Forum Theologische Literaturzeitung 13 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Christian Macholz, “Die Entstehung des hebräischen Bibelkanons nach 4 Esra 14,” in *Die hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Erhard Blum (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 379–91; Michael Becker, “Grenzziehungen des Kanons im frühen Judentum und die Neuschrift der Bibel nach 4. Buch Esra,” in *Qumran und der biblische Kanon*, ed. Michael Becker and Jörg Frey, BThSt 92 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2009), 195–253.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Mason, “Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 110–27; see also Steve Mason and Robert A. Kraft, “Josephus on Canon and Scriptures,” in *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300)*, vol. 1 of *Hebrew Bible: Old Testament*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1996), 217–35.

argued: not only “oral prophecy,” but also “scribal prophecy” qualifies as prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand such qualifications of the Hebrew Bible as “prophetic”, it is also necessary to look into the early history of the development of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. The goal of this article is to elucidate this early history and its significance for the Bible.

## 1. What is prophecy?

The phenomenon of prophecy was not limited to ancient Israel and Judah. Furthermore, identifying which texts may or may not qualify as “prophetic” depends on one’s definition of prophecy. Manfred Weippert offered the following definition in 1988:

“Ein(e) Prophet(in) ist eine Person männlichen oder weiblichen Geschlechts, die 1. in einem kognitiven Erlebnis, einer Vision, Audition, einem Traum o.ä., der Offenbarung einer Gottheit oder mehrerer Gottheiten teilhaftig wird, und 2. sich durch die betreffende(n) Gottheit(en) beauftragt weiss, die Offenbarung in sprachlicher oder metasprachlicher (Symbol- oder Zeichenhandlungen) Form an einen Dritten, den eigentlichen Adressaten, zu übermitteln.”<sup>5</sup> (“A prophet is a man or a woman who 1. accesses the revelation of a deity or deities through a cognitive experience such as a vision, an auditory sound, a dream, etc.; and 2. is commissioned by the respective deity or deities to convey the revelation to a third party – the actual audience – in linguistic or meta-linguistic [symbolic actions] form.”)

This definition raises a number of noteworthy points. First, its reference to “deities” makes it applicable to polytheistic contexts. Second, in line with its ancient Near Eastern horizon, it explicitly includes female prophets,<sup>6</sup> who are prominently attested in Neo-Assyrian prophecy, but also present to some extent in the Bible. Third, it includes “wordless” prophecy of the sort observed for instance in 1 Sam 10:5–6, where enthusiastic and dancing groups are prophets who convey no *textual* message. Fourth, it permits future-oriented pronouncements to remain an open matter, defining prophecy mainly in terms of the character of the messengers. However, it should be stressed that biblical prophecy,

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Odil Hannes Steck, *Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis: Wege der Nachfrage und Fährten zur Antwort* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Manfred Weippert, “Aspekte israelitischer Prophetie im Lichte verwandter Erscheinungen des Alten Orients,” in *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum: Festschrift für K. Deller*, ed. Gerlinde Mauer and Ursula Magen, AOAT 220 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 287–319, 289–90; repr. in *Götterwort in Menschenmund: Studien zur Prophetie in Assyrien, Israel und Juda*, FRLANT 252 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 87–103 (89–90).

<sup>6</sup> See Jonathan Stökl and Corrine L. Carvalho, eds., *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013).

from very early on, has been *interpreted* as future-oriented, even in cases where the original prophecies pertained to the present or past more so than the future (cf. e.g. Isa 9:1–6).

Following Weippert, particularly in Mesopotamia, we can identify two main geographic areas where prophetic records were found: namely, in Mari (stemming from the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and in the library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh (dating mainly to the seventh century BCE).<sup>7</sup> What is the main difference between these texts and biblical prophecy? While many points could be adduced here, Jörg Jeremias identifies the central feature in the mode of perception and reception as what differentiates biblical prophecy from non-biblical prophecy. Jeremias argues that only in ancient Israel and Judah do we encounter the notion that prophecy pertains not just to one specific historical situation, but rather to multiple situations in the present and the future, even in the distant future.<sup>8</sup>

Prophetic records from Assyria, for example, were no longer applicable as soon as the historical situation to which they pertained had passed. The tables on which these records were inscribed were neither updated nor transmitted further. After the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BCE, they were buried in the palace's ruins until the rediscovery in 1851 by Sir Austen Henry Layard.

Israel's prophecy is different in this respect, and that was apparently the case from its beginning: Its prophecy was considered to possess a quality transcending time and history and pertaining to a multitude of historical situations. Very early prophetic texts already witness to this quality of Israelite prophecy, and this notion continues into the latest stages of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible.

## 2. The specifics of biblical prophecy: Two sample cases

This feature of Israel's prophecy shall be illustrated by means of two examples, one from the early period (eighth century BCE) and the other from a late period (third century BCE) of the Hebrew Bible.

The first example is from the prophecy of Amos. He was the first prophet in Israel whose oracles ended up in a book, and from early on his prophecy was deemed relevant for later periods and audiences, beyond his own time. Apparently, the tradents of Amos' prophecies were convinced that the judgment announced by the book of Amos was not completed by the events of 722 BCE,

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<sup>7</sup> See Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison*, CHANE 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Stefan M. Maul, *Wahrsagekunst im Alten Orient: Zeichen des Himmels und der Erde* (Munich: Beck, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Jörg Jeremias, "Das Proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," in *Hosea und Amos: Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheten*, FAT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 20–33.

when Samaria fell. This view is even detectable from the superscription in Amos 1:1, which mentions “King Uzziah of Judah,” even though Amos’ prophecy was addressed to the northern kingdom:

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

In addition, the book offers some explicit views on Judah, such as in Amos 6:1:

Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, the notables of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel resorts!

I refrain from discussing the possible historical location of this text.<sup>9</sup> It is clear in any case that Amos’ written prophecy also pertains to Judah in this saying, which unexpectedly highlights “Zion” in a book that otherwise concerns Israel, not Judah.

Another indication of this understanding of an *ongoing and continuous* fulfilment of prophecy appears in the book of Isaiah’s reception of Amos’ prophecy.<sup>10</sup> In Isa 5:25–30 + 9:7–20; 10:1–4, a poem (“Kehrversgedicht”) can be identified that is held together by the common refrain “For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still” (cf. 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4). As several scholars have pointed out, this poem rests on the tradition of Amos and thus draws on the theme of judgment against Israel, reflecting its meaning for Judah.<sup>11</sup> Especially Isa 9:7–9 [ET: 8–10] is crucial for the relationship to Amos:

The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel; and all the people knew it – Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria – but in pride and arrogance of heart they said: “The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.”

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Erhard Blum, “Amos in Jerusalem: Beobachtungen zu Am 6,1-7,” *Henoch* 16 (1994), 23-47; Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Amos*, ATD 24,2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 83 n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> See also in more detail: Konrad Schmid, “The Origins of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden et al., JSJSup 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1166–85.

<sup>11</sup> See Erhard Blum, “Jesaja und der דבר des Amos: Unzeitgemäße Überlegungen zu Jes 5,25; 9,7–20; 10,1–4,” *DBAT* 28 (1992/93): 75-95; idem., “Jesajas prophetisches Testament (II),” *ZAW* 109 (1997): 12–29 (13–16). See also Christof Hardmeier, *Geschichtsdämonologie in der vorexilischen Schriftprophetie: Studien zu den Primärschriften in Jesaja, Zefanja und Jeremia* (Zurich: TVZ, 2013), esp. 83–85, who thinks more generally of allusions to Amos and Hosea. Uwe Becker, “Jesajaforschung (Jes 1–39),” *TRu* 64 (1999): 1–37, 117–52, casts doubt on the connections to Amos 4:6–12 because the composition-critical classification of this text within the book of Amos call into question placing this text in the eighth or seventh century BCE (here 127), see also Jeremias, *Amos* (see n. 9), esp. 46–56.



As the past tense verbal forms indicate (שָׁלַח “sent,” נָפַל “fell”), Isa 9:7 explicitly recalls a prophetic oracle that has already taken place. What does this mean? A prophecy against the northern kingdom seems to be in view, which the addressees of “Ephraim,” “Samaria,” and also “the House of Jacob” suggest. There are hardly any options other than the Amos tradition, and the reference to the earthquake in Isa 9:8 – a central concept for Amos – as well as later Isa 9:12 (ET: 9:13) point to Amos:

The people did not turn to him who struck them (וְהָעָם לֹא־שָׁב עַד־הַמִּכָּהוּ), and Yhwh Sabaoth, they did not seek.

This verse is full of allusions to the book of Amos. That the people do not “turn” to God refers to the refrain from Amos 4:6–12; that God “struck” Israel cites Amos 4:9 (הִכִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם בַּשֶּׁדָּפוֹן וּבַיֶּרְקוֹן) “I struck you with blight and mildew”); and the reproach that Israel had not “sought” God responds to Amos 5:4–6:

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek me and live (דְּרִשׁוּנִי וְחִי); but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing. Seek the Lord and live (דְּרִשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה), or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

The reason for the reference to Amos in Isa 9:12 is not difficult to determine: According to this verse, the judgment that Isaiah proclaims against Judah is not new, but extends and continues the judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel’s judgment is now – that is, after 722 BCE – affecting Judah as well.

The second example for the temporally transcendent quality of biblical prophecy stems from the book of Jeremiah and pertains to the reception of Jer 23:5–6 in Jer 33:14–16.<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah 33:14–16 appears within the larger context of Jer 33:14–26, a passage that exhibits striking peculiarities. Firstly, this section only appears in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah, not in the Greek translation. Since the Greek translation otherwise follows the Hebrew quite closely, it is safe to assume that Jer 33:14–26 was not left out by the translator into Greek, but was lacking in his Hebrew *Vorlage*. That suggests a late date for this text, possibly in the Hellenistic period – a point that a number of arguments can corroborate.

<sup>12</sup> See in more detail Konrad Schmid, “Die Verheißung eines kommenden Davididen und die Heimkehr der Diaspora: Die innerbiblische Aktualisierung von Jer 23,5f in Jer 33,14–26,” in *Schriftgelehrte Traditionsliteratur: Fallstudien zur innerbiblischen Schriftauslegung im Alten Testament*, FAT 77 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011; study edition, 2015), 207–221; see also Christiane Karrer-Grube, “Von der Rezeption zur Redaktion: Eine intertextuelle Analyse von Jeremia 33,14-26,” in *Sprachen - Bilder – Klänge: Dimensionen der Theologie im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld: Festschrift für Rüdiger Bartelmus zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Christiane Karrer-Grube et al., AOAT 359 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 105–21.

Secondly, and important for our present concern, the opening passage of Jer 33:14–16 very closely resembles Jer 23:5–6. Jeremiah 33:14–16 obviously refers to the earlier Davidic promise from 23:5–6.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, of the 42 words in 33:14–16, 22 of them are found in 23:5–6 in exactly the same order. But despite the verbal and thematic similarities, Jer 33:14–16 is anything but a mere doublet. Instead, it reinterprets 23:5–6, which becomes evident when we compare the two texts:

Jer 33:14–16

הַנְּהַיִּים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
וְהַקִּמְתִּי  
אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל־בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל־בֵּית יְהוּדָה:  
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּבָעֵת הַהִיא  
אֶצְמִיחַ לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדָקָה  
וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה בְּאֶרֶץ:  
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם תִּוָּשַׁע יְהוּדָה  
וַיְרוּשָׁלַם  
תִּשְׁכֹּן לְבַטָּח  
וַיִּהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא־לָהּ  
יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ:

33:14 The days are about to come, says  
Yhwh, when I will fulfil

the promise I made to the house of Israel  
and the house of Judah.

33:15 In those days and at that time I will  
cause for David  
a righteous branch to spring up;  
and he shall execute justice and righteous-  
ness in the land.

33:16 In those days Judah will be saved  
and Jerusalem will live in safety.  
And this is the name by which it will be  
called:  
“Yhwh is our righteousness.”

Jer 23:5–6

הַנְּהַיִּים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
וְהַקִּמְתִּי  
לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק  
וּמֶלֶךְ מְלִדָּה וְהַשְׂכִּיל  
וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה בְּאֶרֶץ:  
בַּיָּמִיו תִּוָּשַׁע יְהוּדָה  
וַיְרוּשָׁלַם  
יִשְׁכֹּן לְבַטָּח  
וַיִּהְיֶה שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא  
יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ:

23:5 The days are about to come, says  
Yhwh, when I will

raise up for David  
a righteous branch,  
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,  
and shall execute justice and righteous-  
ness in the land.

23:6 In his days Judah will be saved  
and Israel will live in safety.  
And this is the name by which he will be  
called:  
“Yhwh is our righteousness.”

There are significant differences between these two texts. For our purposes, the most important is the large addition at 33:14–15: “when I will fulfil the promise

<sup>13</sup> See also Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 471–72.

I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time ....”

What meaning does this addition imply? It allocates the fulfillment of the subsequent promise to a particular setting in the future: It will be fulfilled when Yhwh puts into effect “the good word” (אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַטּוֹב) “that he spoke to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”

Jer 33:14–16 differs from 23:5 in that the announcement is not just about *one* thing that is about to happen in 33:14–16. *First* God will fulfill his “good word” *and then* he will raise up a branch of righteousness for David.

But what is this “good word?” Jeremiah 33:14 does not refer to some generic, unspecified “good word” or promise. The use of the article in the expression אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַטּוֹב suggests that a specific promise is in view.

There is only one other instance in the book of Jeremiah where the expression אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַטּוֹב appears, and this is in 29:10 (אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַטּוֹב).<sup>14</sup> Here God’s “good word” refers to the bringing back of the deported ones, the diaspora:

For thus says Yhwh: Only when seventy years are completed for Babylon, will I visit you, and I will set upon you my good word (אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַטּוֹב) to bring you back to this place.

If Jer 33:14–16 is read in light of this clear reference back to Jer 29:10, then Jeremiah 33 states *that the diaspora must return to the land of Israel before the Davidic kingship will be restored*. This seems quite logical: The nation first needs to be reunited in its own land, and only then can the Davidic dynasty be reestablished.

What does this example say about the perception of prophecy in biblical times? Apparently, Jer 23:5–6 was a promise that went unfulfilled for many centuries. It was perhaps written in the aftermath of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, but there would be no Davidic ruler for many generations. Unavoidably, the question must have arisen: Was Jeremiah wrong? Was the Davidic dynasty in fact terminated forever?

The tradents of the Jeremiah tradition seem to have looked for a solution by studying the book of Jeremiah more intensely. In Jer 29:10 they found the promise to the diaspora and concluded logically that this promise would need to be fulfilled first, in order for Jer 23:5–6 to be realized as well. They thus combined the two prophecies of 23:5–6 and 29:10, which resulted in the text of Jer 33:14–16.

The underlying assumption was that a prophecy like Jer 23:5–6 remains valid despite evidence to the contrary. There were basically two strategies to cope with the apparent non-fulfilment of prophecies. The first was, obviously, to wait. The second was to search for hints in different prophecies to see why

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<sup>14</sup> See Yohanan Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté au retour de l'exil: les origines littéraires de la forme massorétique du livre de Jérémie*, OBO 118 (Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 40.

the fulfillment of others was delayed. In Jer 33:14–16, apparently both strategies were applied.

This hermeneutic continued to develop after the Prophetic Books were finalized and – to use the expression with caution – after they were canonically specified.<sup>15</sup> It is especially clear in the texts from Qumran and in the New Testament. Of particular relevance are the *pesharim*,<sup>16</sup> the prophetic commentaries from Qumran. The *peshet* on the book of Habakkuk offers a well-preserved example. The seventh column reads as follows (1QpHab 7:1–8):

And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to [to] the last generation, but he did not let him know the consummation of the era. And as for what he says: “So that / may run/ the one who reads it.”<sup>17</sup>

Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets. For the vision has an appointed time, it will have an end and not fail. Its interpretation: the final age will be extended and go beyond all that the prophets say, because the mysteries of God are wonderful.<sup>18</sup>

In this interpretation, two elements are particularly deserving of attention. First, the Habakkuk commentary from the second century BCE connects prophecies from Habakkuk to the time of the Qumran community, prophecies that the biblical text presents within the Neo-Babylonian period (ca. sixth century BCE). It explicitly follows the interpretation of Hab 2:2: “Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness.” The figure known as the Teacher of Righteousness may have been the Qumran group’s founder and leader, having lived in the mid-second century BCE.<sup>19</sup> What the Habakkuk commentary argues is that Habakkuk’s prophecies from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE actually concern

<sup>15</sup> See Steck, *Die Prophetenbücher* (see n. 4); idem, *Gott in der Zeit entdecken: Die Prophetenbücher des Alten Testaments als Vorbild für Theologie und Kirche*, BThSt 42 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 2001); Reinhard G. Kratz, *Prophetenstudien: Kleine Schriften II*, FAT 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> See James C. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Reinhard G. Kratz, “Die Pescharim von Qumran im Rahmen der Schriftauslegung des antiken Judentums,” in *Heilige Texte: Religion und Rationalität, 1. Geisteswissenschaftliches Colloquium 10.–13. Dezember 2009 auf Schloss Genshagen*, ed. Andreas Kablitz and Christoph Marksches (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 87–104; idem, “Text and Commentary: The Pesharim of Qumran in the Context of Hellenistic Scholarship,” in *The Bible and Hellenism: Greek Influence on Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Thomas L. Thompson and Philippe Wajdenbaum (Durham: Acumen, 2014), 212–29.

<sup>17</sup> Quote from Hab 2:2.

<sup>18</sup> Translation from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition, Volume One IQ1–4Q273* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 17.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion in Michael A. Knibb, “Teacher of Righteousness,” in *EDSS*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 918–21.

events some 500 years later than the biblical prophet himself. Second and relatedly, the Habakkuk commentary seems to assume that Habakkuk himself *did not know what he prophesied*, as the introductory sentence quoted here suggests: “And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to [to] the last generation, but he did not let him know the consummation of the era.” The content of the prophecy that Habakkuk received from God is about the eschaton, in which the Qumran community believed itself to be living. But apparently, Habakkuk did not know when this time would be: “...but [God] did not let him know the consummation of the era.” By contrast, this knowledge to which the prophets did not have access was given to the Teacher of Righteousness. To him God “made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets.”

This way of understanding the prophets appears in the New Testament as well. In Matthew’s Gospel, the story of Jesus’s birth is written along these lines, suggesting that the prophet Isaiah had foreseen and announced this birth and its miraculous circumstances:<sup>20</sup>

Matt 1:18–23: Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet [i.e. Isaiah]: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel . . . [Isa 7:14].”

In this passage, it seems clear that the Gospel of Matthew does not assume the prophet Isaiah to have known that Isa 7 actually concerns Jesus of Nazareth. As with Habakkuk in the Habakkuk commentary, the prophet Isaiah was a prophet who, in some sense unconsciously, spoke of true things but did not know about their fulfillment and timeframe. These points became clear only to the Gospel writer and his readers.

Clearly, this perception of biblical prophecy is of great significance for the nature of scripture and its post-canonical reception: The books of the Bible were and still are not understood just as historical documents pertaining to their time of origin, but they are considered relevant for the present of each generation studying them. That is why the Bible could become a canon, a status that is basically a phenomenon of its reception, not of its production.

At this time, an important remark is in order. So far, this article has only dealt with prophecy. But the Hebrew Bible is, of course, more than prophecy. What about the law, the psalms, and so on? It goes without saying that these parts of the Hebrew Bible have origins of their own and involve literary genres other than prophecy. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that from early on the non-prophetic literature of the Bible was conceived in the “prophetic” terms described in the samples above. That is, narratives, laws, songs, wisdom

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<sup>20</sup> See Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 1–7)*, EKK 1.1 (Neukirchener-Verlag, 1985), 98–111.

sayings, and so on were all considered by tradents as relevant for later times and thus as eligible for redactional updating and “prophetic” re-application. An apt illustration of such a perception of the psalter can be found in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> 27:11, which interprets the Psalms as “prophecy” by David:

He [i.e., David] composed them all through the spirit of prophecy which had been given to him from before the Most High.

Especially the tradition of biblical law came to be perceived as “prophecy.” Historically evaluating the Hebrew Bible’s legal tradition has shown that the earliest laws were not yet conceived as divine laws, but that this feature was first introduced by the literary kernel of Deuteronomy and was then re-applied to the other law corpora in the Bible.

However, to consider God as a lawgiver is unique within the Bible’s ancient Near Eastern context.<sup>21</sup> In the ancient Near East, kings and not gods are the legislators. If God is a lawgiver, who passes on laws of divine quality through Moses to Israel, then this notion entails the prophetic quality of Israel’s law – at least according to Weippert’s definition mentioned above.

In addition, the divinization of the law triggered the rise of legal exegesis and updating. The reason for that development is obvious: A divine law cannot simply be changed. Once it is in place, it can only be altered by means of legal exegesis. As Jean Louis Ska puts it: “the Law was of divine origin, and its validity was therefore ‘permanent’; it could not be abrogated. Consequently, a ‘new law’ was considered to be a form of an old law. It was both identical and different. In practical terms, only a new ‘updated’ formulation was valid.”<sup>22</sup> I would hasten to add that such updating, if valid, could only be of *prophetic* quality.

Similar qualifications could be made for the redaction of narrative material in the Hebrew Bible by means of divine promises (e.g., in Genesis), prophecy-like speeches or prayers in the so-called Deuteronomistic History, and the prophetic adaptation of sapiential terms and concepts discernible in apocalyptic texts.

At this time, it suffices to maintain that the composition- and redaction-history of the Hebrew Bible was significantly, albeit not exclusively, influenced by the texts’ being understood in terms of prophecy.

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<sup>21</sup> See Konrad Schmid, “Divine Legislation in the Pentateuch in its Late Judean and Neo-Babylonian Context,” in *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah*, ed. Peter Dubovský, FAT 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 129–53.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 52.

### 3. “The Law and the Prophets” as Moses’ prophecy and its exegesis

This process can be corroborated from another direction as well. That is, many texts from the first century CE and onward describe the “final” text of the Hebrew Bible as “Moses and the Prophets” or “the Law and the Prophets.” Here is a selection from Qumran and the New Testament:

1QS I 1–3: ... in order to seek God [with all (one’s) heart and with all (one’s) soul; in order] to do what is good and just in his presence, as commanded by means of the hand of Moses and his servants the Prophets ...

1QS VIII 15–16: This is the study of the law which he commanded through the hand of Moses, in order to act in compliance with all that has been revealed from age to age, and according to what the prophets have revealed through his holy spirit.

CD V 21–VI 2: And the land became desolate, for they spoke of rebellion against God’s precepts through the hand of Moses and also of the holy anointed ones. They prophesied deceit in order to divert Israel from following God.

4QDibHam<sup>a</sup> (4Q504) 2 III 11–13: For [the curses of your covenant] have clung to us ... which Moses wrote and your servants the prophets whom you sent ...

Matt 7:12: In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Matt 11:13: For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came ...

Matt 22:40: On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Luke 16:16: The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force.

Luke 16:29: Abraham replied: They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.

Luke 16:31: He said to him: If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

Luke 24:27: Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Act 24:14: I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets

Acts 26:22: To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place . . .

Acts 28:23: After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Rom 3:21: But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets.<sup>23</sup>

But how did this qualification of the Hebrew Bible as “the Law and the Prophets” or “Moses and the Prophets” come about? And what is its significance? The biblical foundation of this expression is to be found in Deut 34:10:<sup>24</sup>

וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים:

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yhwh knew face to face.

Besides highlighting Moses’ unique position in relation to other prophets, Deut 34:10 implies two further points as well. Firstly, Moses was a prophet; and secondly, there were many prophets after Moses, but none like him.

Many interpreters have noted that this statement refers to an earlier one from Deut 18:15:

נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כְּמִנִּי יִקָּם לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן:

Yhwh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall listen to him.

Deuteronomy 18:15 is part of the so-called Deuteronomic law on the prophets, and it promises a continuous line of prophets to Israel. Even though Deut 34:10 refers to 18:15, it significantly transforms the earlier text: Moses is no longer one among many prophets with equal or comparable standing, but rather the prophet par excellence, to whom none are comparable.

Deuteronomy 34:10 even quotes 18:15, which references “a prophet like me” that Yhwh “will raise up,” but 34:10 declares that no “prophet like Moses” has ever emerged.

Diachronically speaking, the development from Deut 18 to Deut 34 attests to the judgment of Moses as superior to all other prophets, but it nevertheless maintains that Moses still is a prophet. Indeed, the statement “never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses” clearly implies the prophetic character of Moses. He is incomparable, but he is still a prophet. This quality hinges

<sup>23</sup> See also Sifre on Deuteronomy 21:19; m. Rosh HaShanah 4:6; m. Megillah 4:1, 3, 4; t. Bava Metzi’a 11:23; t. Terumot 1:10.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon* (London: SCM, 1977), 80–95; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, “Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Eine Auslegung von Ex 33,7–11; Num 11,4–12,8; Dtn 31,14f; 34,10,” *ZAW* 102 (1990): 169–80; Thomas Römer, “Deuteronomium 34 zwischen Pentateuch, Hexateuch und deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk,” *ZABR* 5 (1999): 167–78; Thomas Römer and Mark Z. Brettler, “Deuteronomy 34 and the case for a Persian Hexateuch,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 401–19 (408). Gerhard von Rad, *Das fünfte Buch Mose Deuteronomium*, ATD 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 150, limits his observations to the short notice: “The evaluation of Moses as a prophet, even as a prophet without equal, is of course deuteronomistic” (translation mine).



upon the notion of divine law in the Pentateuch, which necessarily entails a prophetic promulgation of that law. Moses the promulgator needs to be a prophet if the law is divine.

However, the specific profile of Deut 34:10 remains unclear if this text is not put in relationship with the following chapter in the biblical canon, i.e., Josh 1, which belongs not only to a different biblical book, but also to a different canonical section, the *Nevi'im*. Only in conjunction with Josh 1 does Deut 34 establish the notion of “Moses and the Prophets” for the bulk of biblical literature.

The elevation of “Moses” to a prophet above all prophets corresponds to Joshua’s obligation to obey “Moses’ Torah.” Joshua is the first prophet to come after Moses, but, despite his prophetic status, he is not like Moses. He therefore receives no new laws, but obeys the Mosaic law. The Torah is Moses’ prophecy, and the prophecy of the subsequent prophets, starting with Joshua, is its exegesis.

At the end of *Nevi'im* in Mal 3, the book of Malachi alludes to Josh 1, effectively conjoining the literary complex of Joshua-Malachi as a redactional unit that is theologically subordinated as exegetical “prophecy” to the incomparable Mosaic “prophecy” in the Torah.<sup>25</sup>

Mal 3:22 [ET: 4:4]:

זָכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחַרְבַּב  
עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים:  
*Remember the Torah of my servant Mo-*  
*ses, the statutes and ordinances that I com-*  
*manded him at Horeb for all Israel.*

Josh 1:7–8, 13:

רַק חֵזֶק וְאַמֵּץ מְאֹד לְשֹׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת  
בְּכָל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי  
Only be strong and very courageous, being  
careful to act in accordance with all the To-  
rah that **my servant Moses** commanded  
you...  
זָכוֹר אֶת־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֲחִיכֶם מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי־  
יְהוָה לֵאמֹר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מְנַיֵחַ לָכֶם וְנָתַן לָכֶם  
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת:  
*Remember the word that Moses the servant*  
*of YHWH commanded you, saying,*  
*“YHWH your God is providing you a place*  
*of rest, and will give you this land.”*

<sup>25</sup> See Odil Hannes Steck, *Der Abschluss der Prophetie im Alten Testament: Ein Versuch zur Frage der Vorgeschichte des Kanons*, BThSt 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991).

#### 4. The Hebrew Bible as a Prophetic Text

It goes without saying that the Hebrew Bible is not exclusively a prophetic text in any kind of narrow sense. Nevertheless, in a wider sense, it is indeed a prophetic text or, at least, has always been *perceived* as a prophetic text. Unlike other texts, the Bible has not just been interpreted – that much would be true for other literary classics. But the Bible has been applied to different times and eras with the expectation that it can provide guidance and orientation for both communal and individual life. These applications rely heavily on processes of interpretation, and the dynamic of interpretation is rooted in the Bible itself.

This article has discussed some examples from the prophetic tradition that exemplify this dynamic, but the Torah itself contains a very general clue about its relevance in this respect: The most basic structure of the Torah shows that it does not only contain “law,” but “law” plus “interpretation.” Within the Moses story that occupies the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, one finds a peculiar perspective on the Torah itself, on the one hand, and its promulgation, on the other. From Exod 19 onwards, Moses gets all the laws from God on Mount Sinai. This huge text block that extends to Num 10 is introduced by Exod 19:3:

Then Moses went up to God; Yhwh called to him from the mountain, saying; Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites...

Moses indeed receives the laws, but he never conveys them to Israel. Only a few elements are said to have been passed on to Israel by Moses. The promulgation of the entire law to the people only takes place later on in the book of Deuteronomy, which covers the last day of Moses' life when Moses passes the laws on to the people through his farewell speech.

Deut 1:1: These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan.

So far the setting seems to be clear. But for any reader of the Torah it is immediately obvious that the laws which Moses receives on Mount Sinai are *different* from the laws which Moses passes on to the people in Transjordan, as is evident from comparing Exodus-Numbers, on the one hand, with Deuteronomy, on the other.

Apparently, the Torah itself reckons with Mosaic interpretation of the divine laws from Mount Sinai. The Torah does not hide this information, but it displays this situation to its readers by acknowledging that the laws from Sinai are different from the laws from the Transjordan. Nevertheless, the Torah considers the legislation on Mount Sinai and the legislation in Transjordan to be basically identical, which the double transmission of the Decalogue before both text blocks clearly shows.

The process of interpretation is thus already embedded in the text of the Torah itself. It is not a single law or text that has become canonical, but the law or text plus its prophetic exegesis by Moses in the case of the Torah.

This feature of the Bible has made its way into its reception history. The use of terminology such as “Moses and the Prophets” to denote the Hebrew Bible witnesses to this quality of the Bible, and the first-century CE texts from Josephus and *4 Ezra* 14 even develop a historical explanation about the overall prophetic origin of the Bible:

Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.8: For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times [of Israel’s history]; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...

Josephus’ theory is well-known and widely discussed.<sup>26</sup> He considers the Hebrew Bible to stem from the time period between Moses and Artaxerxes, which is the period of active prophecy in Israel. The Bible consists of Moses’ books, the prophets’ books, and four additional books that are not explicitly labeled as prophetic, but nevertheless still belong to the canonical time of prophetic succession. This ambiguity of the sapiential writings’ prophetic quality is the basis of later rabbinic discussions about the relation of the sages to the prophets:

*Seder Olam Rabbah* 30: Until then, the prophets prophesied by means of the holy spirit. From then on, give ear and listen to the words of the Sages.

*t. Sotah* 13:2: When the last prophets – i.e. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – died, the holy spirit ceased in Israel. Despite this, they were informed by means of oracles.

*Baba Batra* 12A: Rabbi Abdimi of Haifa said: Since the day when the Temple was destroyed, the prophetic gift was taken away from the prophets and given to the Sages [Rabbis]. – Is a Sage not also a prophet? What Rabbi Abdimi meant to say was this: Although prophecy has been taken from the Prophets, prophecy has not been taken from the Sages. Amemar said: A Sage is even superior to a Prophet, as it says “And a Prophet has the heart of Wisdom.”<sup>27</sup> Who is usually compared with whom? Is not the smaller compared with the greater?

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<sup>26</sup> See n. 3.

<sup>27</sup> See Ps 90:21.

In *4 Ezra*, the general prophetic quality of all biblical texts (plus the seventy non-biblical texts) is secured in another way. But nevertheless, *4 Ezra* also stresses the prophetic quality of the Bible.<sup>28</sup> *4 Ezra* 14:42–47 reads as follows:

They [sc. the five men Ezra assembled] sat forty days; they wrote during the daytime, and ate their bread at night. But as for me, I spoke in the daytime and was not silent at night. So during the forty days, ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying: Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first, and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people.

*4 Ezra* is ascribing prophetic quality to the twenty-four biblical writings (the public ones), as well as to the seventy apocryphal writings (the hidden ones), since their second editions are all of prophetic origin. *4 Ezra* does not bother itself with the prophetic origin of the first editions: It probably presupposes rather than denies their prophetic nature. Yet the theory of *4 Ezra* is focused on authority more so than on interpretation. The inspired quality of the ninety-four writings is important for their authoritative status, not for their hermeneutic handling.

## 5. How the Prophets Became Biblical Authors and How the Biblical Authors Became Prophets

Without the perception of biblical prophecy as relevant for future generations, we would probably have neither the Prophetic books nor any other biblical books. Since these books were understood to pertain to time periods beyond the period of their origins, they were copied and transmitted over centuries and millennia.

This notion made prophets into authors. Furthermore, it led later tradents to write under the authority of great figures from the past and thus also made these authors into prophets. Hence, “Isaiah” is not only the historical prophet from the eighth century BCE, but his persona included later successors to the prophet who participated in writing the book of Isaiah. A prophet who became an author thus ended up involving a variety of writers, but the prophet whose name a book bore nevertheless remained one prophet, at least in the eyes of his tradents. Therefore “Isaiah” wrote the entire book, from chapter 1 to chapter 66, as e.g., Sirach 48:22–25 presupposes:<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See n. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Johannes Marböck, “Jesaja in Sirach 48,15–25: Zum Prophetenverständnis in der späten Weisheit,” in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift: Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz, Thomas Krüger, and Konrad Schmid, BZAW 300 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 305–19; Jean-Louis Ska, “The Praise of the Fathers in Sirach

For Hezekiah did what is pleasing to the Lord, and was steadfast in the ways of David his father, enjoined on him by the prophet Isaiah, a great man trustworthy in his vision. In his days the sun moved back; he prolonged the life of the king.<sup>30</sup> In the power of the spirit he saw the last things, he comforted the mourners of Zion,<sup>31</sup> he revealed the future to the end of time,<sup>32</sup> and hidden things long before they happened.

In historical terms, we can safely assume the prophet Isaiah only wrote some portions of Isa 1–39, but in the perception of his tradents and supplementers, “Isaiah” is responsible for the rest of his book as well. Especially the literary juxtaposition of First and Second Isaiah, i.e. Isaiah 1–39 + 40–66, was of utmost significance for who “Isaiah” became in biblical terms: a prophet who could view the entirety of world history until the creation of a new heaven and a new earth at the end of time.

Once the prophets became authors of writings relevant for and pertaining to future times, this perception affected other portions of biblical literature. The model of literary updating and redactional expansion of existing texts became the gold standard in the transmission of biblical literature. Why? Because faithful transmission in the first millennium BCE entailed not only the transmission of the *letter*, but also of the *spirit* of scripture. And the spirit of scripture could only be safeguarded by continuously (and in some sense prophetically) re-adapting and re-interpreting scripture.<sup>33</sup> Only in this vein did scripture incorporate the necessary theological complexity to be considered authoritative. And this is why not only prophets became biblical authors, but eventually the biblical authors were understood as prophets.

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(Sir 44–50) and the Canon of the Old Testament,” in *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions*, FAT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 184–95.

<sup>30</sup> See Isa 38.

<sup>31</sup> See Isa 51.

<sup>32</sup> See Isa 65–66.

<sup>33</sup> See Hindy Najman, “The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the ‘Canon,’” *JSJ* 43 (2012): 497–518.