

JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP

Essays on the
Book of Isaiah

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

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The Formation of the Hebrew Bible Canon: Isaiah as a Test Case

Four Moments in the Pre-Canonical Process

I propose to take as my point of departure a brief consideration of four “moments” in the pre-canonical process: Josephus, ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), Chronicles, and Deuteronomy with associated writings.

Josephus, C. Ap. 1:38–42

It therefore naturally or rather necessarily follows – seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written, seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred – it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books conflicting with each other. Our books – those justly accredited – are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history down to the death of the lawgiver ... From the death of Moses to Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own time in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

Josephus testifies to the existence of a *closed* collection, one which he disingenuously contrasts with Greek writings produced without quality control, a collection which covers the period from the time of Moses to Artaxerxes I (465–425 BC).¹ The thirteen books covering the history after the death of the lawgiver must have included the four known much later as the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges with Ruth, Samuel, Kings) and the four prophetic compilations (Isaiah,

¹ Josephus identifies the Ahasuerus of Esther 1:1 and *passim* with Artaxerxes rather than Xerxes, and in his view the book of Esther stands at the end of the biblical period. The prophetic *diadoche*, therefore, is limited to the biblical period.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve). The total number was filled out by Job, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Josephus is not the most disinterested and objective witness in matters of religion, and we may be sure that, in spite of relegating prophecy to a circumscribed era in the past, he wrote in awareness of his own profession as historian and his own claims to prophetic inspiration, opportunely discovered or activated as he faced the prospect of an unpleasant death while hiding from the Roman soldiers in the cave at Jotapata (B. J. 3:351–354).² Nevertheless, his description of prophecy and the prophetic role, while incomplete, is not entirely inconsistent with rabbinic dicta, especially those which speculate on the subject of the end of prophecy (*sôph hannëvû 'âh*).³

Jesus ben Sira

Josephus wrote his treatise *Against Apion* in the last decade of his life, towards the end of the first century AD, and Jesus ben Sira wrote his early in the second century BC. He treats of biblical prophets in an encomium of national heroes – rulers, warriors, counsellors, sages, prophets, poets and plutocrats (Sir 44–50). Since the survey is chronological, beginning with Enoch and ending with his contemporary, the high priest Simon son of Onias, prophets are named in the order in which they were presumed to have lived rather than in their “canonical” sequence. The list begins with Moses followed by Joshua who succeeded Moses in the prophetic office (Sir 46:1) and ends with the Twelve (49:10). It soon becomes apparent that the emphasis is on biography rather than the prophetic message of social regeneration, which has featured so prominently in the modern period. Beginning with Moses, these prophets are *'anšê ma'âšîm*, “men of deeds”, chiefly miracle workers, the miracles designed to recall the people to repentance.

This proved easy to demonstrate with Elijah and Elisha (Sir 48:1–14), less so with Joshua near the beginning (46:1–6) and Isaiah near the end (48:23), in spite of the fact that both worked a sun miracle. Samuel, too, produced a meteorological miracle with the preternatural thunderclap which discomfited the Philistines at Mizpah (46:16–17; see 1 Sam 7:9–11).

For Jesus ben Sira, therefore, the prophet is no longer assigned a destabilizing role in society as, in the language of Max Weber, a demagogue and pamphleteer. The concept of prophecy has been generalized and diluted to the point where the author can characterize his own sometimes pedestrian teaching as a form of prophecy. Above all, the prophet is an object of biographical interest, a “man of

² On Josephus’ understanding of prophecy see my “Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus”, *JJS* 101 (1974), 245–255.

³ The Holy Spirit, meaning “the spirit of prophecy” departed from Israel either after the destruction of Solomon’s temple (b. Bat. 12a; b. Yoma 21b, b. Sotah 48a) or after the death of the last biblical prophet (b. Yoma 9b, b. Sanh. 11a).

God” who stands apart by virtue of his thaumaturgic and therapeutic powers and the gift of intercessory prayer.⁴

The Books of Chronicles

Somewhat similar views can be detected in the historical work written rather less than two centuries earlier than ben Sira known simply as Chronicles (*dibrê hayyāmîm*). The author lists prophets and seers so often among his sources as to leave little doubt that he takes the writing of history as essentially a prophetic activity. These prophetic authors are figures well known from biblical sources, including Isaiah (2 Chr 26:22; 32:32), and others less well known: Samuel (1 Chr 29:29), Nathan (1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29), Gad (1 Chr 29:29), Ahijah of Shiloh (2 Chr 9:29), Shemaiah (2 Chr 12:15), Iddo (2 Chr 12:15; 13:22), and Jehu ben Hanani (2 Chr 20:34).

The progressive institutionalization and scribalization of prophecy is apparent at several points throughout the work of the Chronicler. Even preaching comes to be associated with the prophet rather than the priest.⁵ After the rebuilding of Solomon’s temple in the Persian period the role of preacher devolved on Levites, and in Chronicles it is represented as carried out under divine (i. e. prophetic) inspiration. Hence we hear of the Spirit of God coming on the Levites Azariah and Jahazael (2 Chr 15:1–7; 20:14–17). Preaching is therefore also a form of prophecy (*nēbû ā*, 2 Chr 15:8).

Another activity defined as prophetic in Chronicles is the composition and rendition of liturgical music. Prophecy and poetry had always been closely associated in antiquity, and the use of music and percussion to induce states of transformed consciousness is well attested in Israel as elsewhere (e. g. 1 Sam 10:5–6, 9–13; 2 Kgs 3:15–16). Typically, however, in Chronicles this activity is routinized and we hear no more of ecstatic states. The professional activities of the guilds of liturgical musicians are, however, now redescribed as prophecy (1 Chr 25:1–8) and their members as seers (1 Chr 25:5; 2 Chr 29:30; 35:15). These “prophetic” liturgists perform under the charter laid down for them by David, the poet and prophet *par excellence*. This tradition will lead to Psalms being attributed to David. According to the Psalms scroll from the eleventh Qumran cave (11QPs^a), David composed 4,050 hymns “through the prophetic gift given to him by the Most High”, – no mean achievement.

⁴ “Man of God” advisably, since ben Sira lists none of the female prophets in Israel, seven according to a rabbinic count (b. Meg. 14a), not even Huldah during the reign of Josiah (49:1–3). This is hardly surprising given this author’s extremely jaundiced views on women.

⁵ The closest term in biblical Hebrew for preaching would be *hētîp*, literally, “to drip”, which apparently did not carry the unfortunate associations then as it does now in the vernacular (Amos 7:16; Mic 2:6, 11; Ezek 21:2, 7). “Preacher” is therefore *matṭîp* (Mic 2:11).

In summary of what has been said so far: According to the tradition typified by these mainstream authors, prophecy is no longer a presence that makes claims of a preemptory nature in the religious sphere. It is essentially a past phenomenon, the essential pastness of which is enshrined in *written* texts. The prophet has also become the object of biographical interest. Corresponding to these transformations, the language of prophecy has undergone a considerable semantic expansion to include such activities as preaching, liturgical psalmody and the recording of the nation's past. By the time of Chronicles, practically any significant figure in the tradition, for example Abraham and Moses, could be called a prophet (*nābi*).

Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History

It now remains to demonstrate that these transformations on the way to canonical status can be traced back one stage further to Deuteronomy and associated writings. Mindful of recent admonitions about inflated usage and the dangers of pan-Deuteronomism,⁶ it will be helpful to clarify the terms as used here. The concern is neither with the origins of Deuteronomism nor with the authorship of the book of Deuteronomy nor with its formation. I have no problem with the use of the term "Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic school" in the sense of a plurality of learned savants who share the same ideology and who are active over several generations. This having been said, it will be convenient to take off from a remark by Richard Coggins on this subject, about "ideological pressures at work to impose a particular view of Israel's past, of its relation with its God, of the meaning of the events which had befallen it, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of its leading citizens."⁷ One effect of these pressures is that in the History the primary role of the prophet is to admonish rulers and the people in general to observe the laws, with political disaster being the outcome of non-observance. This can be seen in the paradigm case of Samuel in relation to Saul (1 Sam 7:3–4; 8:8; 12:10, 14–15, etc.), a pattern replicated, with variations, in the later History. It is also apparent where the Historian refers to prophets as "his (Yahweh's) servants the prophets."⁸ Reflecting on the fall of the kingdom of Samaria, the author states that the role of prophets and seers is to warn and admonish people to "turn", that is, repent, and observe the commandments and statutes communicated through Yahweh's servants the prophets beginning with Moses the protoprophet (2 Kgs 17:13; 18:12). The concern is to

⁶ See articles by Richard Coggins, Norbert Lohfink and Robert Wilson in Linda S. Schearing/Steven L. McKenzie (eds.), *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 22–82.

⁷ Coggins, *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 34 n. 8.

⁸ 2 Kgs 17:13, 23; 21:10–15; 24:2–4.

associate prophecy formally with the law and with Moses the lawgiver as a way of explaining why disasters take place and to prescribe a remedy for the future.

A notable feature of the History is that there is practically no overlap between prophets named by the historian and the canonical fifteen. The exception is Isaiah, but this is because at a certain point in the formation of the book of Isaiah episodes from the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah were incorporated with modifications into it, an issue to which we will return.⁹

In summary, the transformations in the understanding of prophecy we noted in Chronicles, ben Sira and Josephus can be traced back to Deuteronomy and related writings. Deuteronomy itself has several marks of a canonical work. It contains the standard prohibition against adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it (Deut 4:2; 12:32); in other words, it is a closed book. It is also an official document that must be deposited in the temple archives and read in public at stated intervals (17:18–20). It defines a normative epoch in the past coterminous with the life of Moses, thus providing a standard for all future institutions and conduct, including prophecy (34:10–12).¹⁰ It is, we may say, the first attempt to impose an orthodoxy and orthopraxy in matters civic and religious. These claims would make it imperative for their authors to counter prophetic claims to new revelations and the often destabilizing influence of institutionally unattached prophets. The idea was that once a written law is available, sporadic prophetic revelations were both unnecessary and undesirable. And it goes without saying that the prerogative of issuing binding interpretations of the laws translated into a great deal of political power, the power of coercion. We note some of the ways in which the Deuteronomists went about offsetting prophetic influence: by redefinition and redescription, as in Deuteronomy 18:15–22; by simple omission, as we have seen to be the case with the History; by concentrating on prophetic biography rather than the prophetic message, with the implication that prophecy is essentially a past phenomenon and, finally, by neutralizing by addition.¹¹ Of this last we will find an example in the book of Isaiah, but first some preliminary remarks on Isaiah as a canonical book are in order.

⁹ See on the *Prophetenschweigen* issue Klaus Koch, “Das Prophetenschweigen des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks”, in Jörg Jeremias/Lothar Peritt (eds.), *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walther Wolff* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 115–28; Christopher Begg, “The Non-Mention of Amos, Hosea and Micah in the Deuteronomistic History”, *BN* 32 (1986), 41–53; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Why Does the Deuteronomistic History Make no Mention of the Prophets to Whom Books are Attributed?”, in James K. Aitken et al. (eds.), *On Stone and Scroll. Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 343–356.

¹⁰ Compare the Babylonian idea that all revealed knowledge has been handed down once and for all to the antediluvian ancestors, a dogma incorporated in the *Babyloniaca* of Berosus. On the latter, see Wilfred G. Lambert, “Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity”, *JCS* 11 (1957), 1–14; Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Canonicity in Cuneiform Texts”, *JCS* 36 (1984), 127–44.

¹¹ I take this expression from Samuel Sandmel, “The Haggada within Scripture”, *JBL* 80 (1961), 105–22.

Isaiah as a Canonical Book

The first stage in the interpretation of any biblical book has to be recovered from indications in the book itself. The capacity to generate commentary is one sign of canonical status, but unfortunately we have no sure means of determining the time when addenda of different kinds could no longer be incorporated in the text but had to take the form of commentary on the text. The earliest extant commentaries on Isaiah are the Qumran *pěšārîm* reconstructed from several fragments (4QpIsa^{a-e} and 3QpIsa = 4Q161-65 and 3Q4), but the complete Isaiah scroll from Qumran cave 1 (1QIsa^a) indicates that the text was more or less fixed no later than the mid- second century bc. The paraphrastic Greek version (the Septuagint) is usually assigned the same date, though this is only an educated guess. In the early years of the same century Jesus ben Sira was familiar with material from both major sections of the book (1-39, 40-66), since he tells us that the same Isaiah who worked the miracle of the sun and healed Hezekiah comforted the mourners in Zion and revealed hidden things about the end time (Sir 48:22-25). He therefore implicitly acknowledges that there was only one book of Isaiah, but it does not necessarily follow that the book had by that time reached the point of canonical closure.

More important in that respect is Jesus ben Sira's naming in sequence Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve (Sir 48:23-25; 49:6-10). This suggests that the literary construct we call Latter Prophets was in existence in some form by the time he was writing. If we accept that structure is an important vector of meaning, especially in ancient texts, we will give due importance to the efforts that clearly had to be made in order to come up with twelve prophetic authors in the *dodekapropheton*, no doubt symbolic of twelve-tribal Israel. It would then be a short step to concluding that the 3 + 12 structure of Latter Prophets stands for the three great ancestors and the twelve tribes. It was, therefore, symbolic for the ingathered Israel of the end time to which the prophetic books in their finished form beckon. If this is so, the end time perspective is encoded in the structure of the prophetic collection itself, and therefore in the biblical canon.¹²

Isaiah generally occupies first place in Latter Prophets, but the rabbinic text b.Bat 14b-15a places Isaiah after Jeremiah and Ezekiel immediately before the Twelve. Isaiah also adjoins the Twelve in the Septuagint. The critical study of Isaiah in the modern period lends some plausibility to this arrangement. As a compilation of diverse pronouncements with numerous addenda Isaiah resembles the Twelve more closely than it does either Jeremiah or Ezekiel. Then there

¹² I argued this several years ago in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 120-23, and found confirmation in the finale of the collection, namely Malachi 3:23-24, which speaks of unification effected in the second coming of Eijah as prelude to the final judgment. The passage seems to be understood in this sense in Sir 48:10.

is the question of authorship. There is reason to suspect a degree of fluidity and artificiality in assigning attributions to the prophets in the *dodekapropheton*.

Two anonymous sections – Zechariah 9–11 and 12–14 – had to be assigned to Zechariah in order to maintain the important duodecimal structure, and Malachi may not be the only fictitiously named prophet to whom material of unknown origin was assigned. While there is no reason to doubt that a prophet or man of God named Isaiah was known to have existed, and in fact did exist, and while prophetic books are notoriously non-self-referential, attribution to Isaiah must be considered rather weak. All three titles in which his name appears (1:1; 2:1; 12:1) are acknowledged to be late, and one of them, 13:1 introducing an oracle against the Neo-Babylonian empire, cannot be by the same prophet who spoke or wrote under the Neo-Assyrian empire.

Chronicles refers to the book of Isaiah as a vision (*hāzôn*, 2 Chr 32:32) and its author as an historian (2 Chr 26:22; 32:32). Six other Isaiahs are named in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles and two in inscriptions. Three of those named in the biblical sources are Levites and one a Levitical temple musician who “prophesied” since temple music was considered a branch of prophecy.¹³ A late date for the assignment of the name is also suggested by the designation “Judah and Jerusalem” used in the titles at Isaiah 1:1 and 2:1, in the order usually found in late texts and the reverse of the order in passages taken to be early (Isa 3:1–8; 5:3; 22:21). Isaiah is essentially a compilation like Psalms, and it is beginning to look as if Isaiah is taken to be its author in much the same way that David is taken to be the author of Psalms.

As the record of different voices enunciating different and sometimes conflicting points of view, the book of Isaiah reproduces on a smaller scale important features of the biblical canon as a whole. One of these, sometimes overlooked, is that a canon represents the resolution of ideological conflict either by imposition of a dominant ideology or orthodoxy by *force majeure* or in the form of a compromise between different ideologies. Canon also represents closure, in the sense of excluding further authoritative revelations. It goes without saying, however, that these impositions are not always successful, for the texts are still there to be interpreted afresh after the authoritative and definitive interpretation has been issued. A study of the ideological lines of force embedded or encoded in the final canonical form of Isaiah would call for a major scholarly enterprise. All that can be done here is to outline two examples of what would be involved in this task.

¹³ Ezra 8:7, 19; Neh 11:7; 1 Chr 3:21; 25:3, 15; 26:25. The name also occurs in the Elephantine papyri (AP 5:16; 8:33; 9:21) and on a seal. On the Elephantine papyri, see Arthur E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B. C.* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967 [1923]), 11, 23, 26. On the seal, see Nahman Avigad, “The Seal of Yesha’yahu,” *IEJ* 13 (1963), 324.

Isaiah and Deuteronomism

Our first example takes us back to our discussion of the Deuteronomistic (henceforth D) understanding of the prophetic role and the relation between the D oeuvre and the prophetic books. Opinions have been expressed for and against D influence on pronouncements in all sections of the book of Isaiah.¹⁴ We shall confine ourselves to the narrative passages in Isaiah beginning with chapters 1–39. The first of these narrates the meeting between king Ahaz and the prophet (7:1–17). The introduction “In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah” is adopted from 2 Kgs 16:5, but it adds the names of his predecessors to provide the appropriate historical context. It also omits mention of a siege of Jerusalem by Pekah of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus in the same verse since this would presumably have ruled out a meeting between Ahaz and Isaiah at a strategic point in the city (Isa 7:3). It is tempting to conclude that Isaiah 7:1–17 originated as one of several prophetic *legenda* in the History. The meeting between Isaiah and Ahaz takes place at the spot where the Assyrian commander called for the surrender of the city in a narrative originally part of the History (Isa 36:2; 2 Kgs 18:17), and the parallel passage in the History breaks off suddenly and switches to Edom, suggesting that something has been omitted (2 Kgs 6:5).

By far the longest narrative insertion into the book of Isaiah is the section consisting in chapters 36–39 corresponding to 2 Kings 18:13–20:19, with the addition of a psalm attributed to Hezekiah (Isa 38:9–20). It contains four incidents featuring the prophet – he is actually identified as a *nābīʾ* (prophet) only in this section (37:2, 38:1, 39:3). (1) An intervention by Isaiah in the crisis of Jerusalem under siege in 701 BC solicited by Hezekiah (36:21–37:7); (2) an unsolicited intervention in the same crisis, probably a variant of (1); (3) the healing of the king and the sun miracle (38:1–8, 21–22); (4) visit of a Babylonian delegation to Hezekiah, Isaiah’s reaction, and prediction of exile in Babylon (39:1–8). That these incidents have been adopted from the History with certain modifications rather than the reverse, as is the case with the last chapter of Jeremiah (Jer 52; 2 Kgs 24:18–25:30), is tolerably certain. The granting of fifteen additional years of life for Hezekiah is calculated on the basis of annalistic data in the History where we learn that Hezekiah reigned for twenty-nine years (2 Kgs 18:2), and the crisis took place in the fourteenth year of the reign (2 Kgs 18:13). The manner in which the ruler consults a prophet who announces good news for the short term and bad news further into the future (Isa 39:5–8) also follows the pattern in the History, the clearest example being the delegation sent to the prophetess Huldah during Josiah’s reign and her response (2 Kgs 22:11–20).

¹⁴ No attempt will be made to document these discussions. Robert A. Kugler, “The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets”, in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 134–35, has some brief and mostly negative remarks on the views of Otto Kaiser and Jacques Vermeylen on Deuteronomism influence on Isaiah chapter 1 but nothing on Isaiah 40–66.

As a footnote to these remarks on the D ideology at work in the book of Isaiah, a reading of the incident of Merodach-Baladan's delegation to the Judean court during Hezekiah's convalescence (2 Kgs 20:12–19; Isa 39:1–8) may afford a glimpse into the ideology at work in the book. As critical readers, we would have to note that, according to the historically reliable version A (2 Kgs 18:14–16), Hezekiah had just handed over all his gold and silver to the Assyrians, even stripping the gold from the doors of the temple in order to meet the conqueror's demands. This leaves us wondering what he would have had left to display before the Babylonian envoys (39:2–4). We also know that the revolt of Merodach-Baladan II (Marduk-apla-iddina) had been crushed by the Assyrians two years before the punitive campaign against Jerusalem, hence such a visit after that date is historically implausible. If, therefore, the visit actually took place, it would have been in connection with overtures for another anti-Assyrian alliance, and Hezekiah's "show and tell" would have had the purpose of proving that he was a credible ally. This is not even hinted at in this brief account since it would have left him open to the accusation of making an alliance with the detested Babylonians. Even worse, it would have tended to make him, rather than Manasseh, his son and successor, responsible for bringing on the disasters to be inflicted on king and country a few years later (cf. 2 Kgs 21:10–15, 23:26–27, 24:3–4).

Eschatology and Canon Formation

One of the most striking features shared by Isaiah and several of the books of the Twelve is that they conclude by presenting a scenario of the end time for Israel and the world in general. The scenario sometimes stays more or less within the bounds of historical plausibility, including return from the diaspora and a mission to foreign peoples. More often, however, it describes a "singularity" involving a total meteorological disaster, warfare on a cosmic scale, new heaven and new earth, a final judgement by fire, and associated motifs.¹⁵ This literary phenomenon occurring at the conclusion of so many prophetic books suggests a fixation on the apocalyptic world view among those involved in the final stages of the composition and final redaction of these books and perhaps also, as hinted earlier, of the 3 + 12 unit as a whole. We therefore arrive by a somewhat different route at the same point as Otto Plöger. Plöger's examination of key prophetic passages (Joel 3, Zech 12–14, Isa 24–27) led him to conclude that the prophetic books were edited in the later Second Temple period by anonymous groups, the precursors of the Hasidim of 1 Maccabees 2:42 and 7:13 and the author(s) of the book of Daniel, in the direction of an apocalyptic and sectarian world

¹⁵ Isaiah 66 and *passim*; Joel 3:1–4:3; 4:9–21; Amos 9:11–15; Obad 15–21; Mic 7:8–20; Zeph 3:8–20; Zech 14:1–21; Mal 3:19–24.

view.¹⁶ Some aspects of Plöger's thesis are debatable, not least the contrast between theocracy and eschatology, and his choice of texts imposes limitations. Yet the argument seems to be basically sound, and invites corroboration by taking a different route through the texts.

Recent commentary on Isaiah has noted linguistic and thematic parallels between the last section of the book and the first chapter; for example, the condemnation of those who rebel against Yahweh (66:24 cf. 1:2, 28), festivals of new moon and sabbath (66:23 cf. 1:13), transgressive cults carried out in gardens (66:17, cf. 1:29), and the final judgement on reprobates with the imagery of inextinguishable fire (66:24, cf. 1:31).¹⁷ This *inclusio* is telling us that Isaiah is one book, and that all the parts of this book converge in one way or another on the final event of judgement and salvation.

The last chapter of the book ends with three oracular pronouncements which speak of the ingathering in Jerusalem at the end time, a mission to the Gentiles preceding the final theophany, and the creation of new heaven and new earth (Isa 66:17, 18–21, 22–23). These are rounded off with a final verse so dark and menacing – the bodies of those who had rebelled against God, inextinguishable fire, the worm that does not die – that in the reading of the haftara in the synagogue liturgy the previous verse was read after 66:24. The final chapters of the books also provide evidence of intense internecine conflict provoked by these apocalyptic beliefs. Thus, the Servants of the Lord will be the ones who will eat, drink, rejoice, and sing for joy in the end days, while their enemies *within the community* will go hungry and thirsty and will suffer shame and anguish (65:13–14). This typically sectarian theme of eschatological reversal also comes to expression in the address of a seer to those who tremble at the word of God, who are hated and rejected, and who have been excommunicated by their brethren on account of their eschatological beliefs or on account of their exclusive claim to salvation when the great day dawns (66:5).¹⁸ For the understanding of canonicity, it is of crucial importance that the protests of the socially and religiously dispossessed, nourished as they were on the interpretation of older prophecy, were not expunged from the record.

¹⁶ Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond: John Knox, 1968).

¹⁷ Other parallels have been noted by Leon J. Liebreich, "The Compilation of the Book of Isaiah", *JQR* n. s. 46 (1955/1956), 276–277; Rémi Lack, *La Symbolique du Livre d'Isaïe* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1973), 139–41; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaiah Tradition* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 21–24.

¹⁸ I take a closer look at this section of the book in Joseph Blenkinsopp, "A Jewish Sect of the Persian Period", *CBQ* 52 (1990), 5–20 and id., "The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book", in Craig C. Broyles/Craig A. Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies in an Interpretive Tradition, Volume 1* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 155–75.

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