

HEADINGS IN THE BOOKS OF THE EIGHTH-CENTURY PROPHETS

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The present essay is part of a larger contemplated study of the headings or opening lines of several biblical books, and what they can tell us about the purpose and process of scriptural redaction and publication. The project at hand involves an examination of the headings of the four books of the eighth-century prophets, listed in the order in which we find them in the Hebrew Bible: Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah.¹

With slight but significant variations, the headings are formulaic in character, follow the same pattern, and contain the same or corresponding items of information. If we set the introductory lines side by side or organize them in tabular form, as we do on pp. 10-11, we can recognize at a glance both the formulary and the divergences in detail.

1. *Structure of the Headings*

The headings consist basically of two parts, each of which may have a varying number of subdivisions or extensions. Thus, the heading proper consists of a phrase in the form of a construct chain containing two words, the first defining the experience of the prophet

¹Most of the headings (or titles) of the prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible, while sharing similar elements, show remarkable diversity. The headings of the eighth-century prophets compared with the other prophetic headings show sufficient similarity to suggest that they were shaped by a common editorial tradition. For a general discussion of the content and structure of the headings of the eighth-century prophets as they compare with the headings of the later prophets, see F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea*, AB 24 (Garden City, NY, 1980), pp. 143-149.

or the core of divine revelation, while the second, the absolute, identifies either the prophet himself, or the source of revelation, Yahweh. The opening phrase is then followed by one or two relative clauses, introduced by the relative particle, ^ʔ*ašer*. The clausal verbs are *hāyâ* and *hāzâ*, with either one or both used to qualify the initial phrase.

The second major component consists of the chronological indicator, which in this period is linked with the reigning kings of Judah and Israel. The opening word in every case is *bîmê* (“in the days of. . .”; i.e., “during the reign of. . .”), followed by the names of the kings during whose reigns the prophet was active. Unlike the headings of later prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the specific years are not mentioned. In every case, the appropriate kings of Judah are mentioned or listed, and in two cases the contemporary king of Israel is also given. In one case, an additional chronological datum is offered (Amos 1:1). We may set out the headings according to the following plan:

PART I: HEADING PROPER

A. Isaiah

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>ḥ^azôn y^eša^c yāhū</i>
<i>ben-^ʔāmôš</i> | The vision of Isaiah
ben Amoz, |
| 2. ----- | ----- |
| 3. ^ʔ <i>ašer hāzâ al-y^ehūdā</i>
<i>wîrûšālāyim</i> | which he saw concerning
Judah and Jerusalem. |

B. Hosea

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>d^ebar yhw^h</i> | The word of Yahweh, |
| 2. ^ʔ <i>ašer hāyâ el-hôšea^c</i>
<i>ben-b^eeri</i> | which came to Hosea
ben-Beri. |
| 3. ----- | ----- |

C. Amos

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>dibrê amôs</i> | The story of Amos |
| 2. ^ʔ <i>ašer hāyâ hannōq^e dîm</i>
<i>mitt^eqôa^c</i> | who was among the cattlemen
from Tekoa, |
| 3. ^ʔ <i>ašer hāzâ</i>
<i>al-yiśrā^ʔel</i> | who had visions
concerning Israel. |

D. Micah

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>d^ebar yhw^h</i> | The word of Yahweh, |
| 2. <i>ʔašer hāyā ʔel-miḵā
hammōraštī</i>
.... | which came to Micah the
Morashtite,
.... |
| 3. <i>ʔašer hāzā ʕal-
šomʕrōn wirūšālāyim</i> | who had visions concerning
Samaria and Jerusalem. |

PART II: CHRONOLOGICAL INDICATOR

A. Isaiah

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>bīmé ʕuzziyyāhū yōṭām
ʔāhāz y^eḥizqiyyāhū
malḵē y^ehūdā</i> | In the days of Uzziah, Jotham,
Ahaz, Hezekiah,
the kings of Judah |
| 2. ----- | ----- |

B. Hosea

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>bīmé ʕuzziyyā
yōṭām ʔāhāz y^eḥizqiyyā
malḵē y^ehūdā</i> | In the days of Uzziah,
Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah,
the kings of Judah; |
| 2. <i>ūḥīmé
yāroḥ ʕām ben-yōʔāš
melek yišrāʔel</i> | and in the days of
Jeroboam ben-Joash,
the king of Israel |

C. Amos

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>bīmé ʕuzziyyā
melek-y^ehūdā</i> | In the days of Uzziah
the king of Judah; |
| 2. <i>ūḥīmé
yāroḥ ʕām ben-yōʔāš
melek yišrāʔel</i> | and in the days of
Jeroboam ben-Joash,
the king of Israel, |
| 3. <i>š^enāṭayim liḥnē hārā ʕāš</i> | two years before the earthquake. |

D. Micah

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>bīmé yōṭām ʔāhāz
y^eḥizqiyyā malḵē y^ehūdā</i> | In the days of Jotham, Ahaz,
Hezekiah, the kings of Judah |
| 2. ----- | ----- |

Notes to Part I

1. With regard to the opening phrase, Hosea and Micah have the traditional *d^ebar yhw^h*, while Isaiah and Amos specify the name of the prophet after the initial word *ḥzwn* or *dbry*.

2. With regard to the $\text{ʔ}^a\text{ʕer}$ clauses, Amos and Micah have both $\text{ʔ}^a\text{ʕr hyh}$ and $\text{ʔ}^a\text{ʕr hzh}$, although in Micah the second subordinate clause comes at the end of the unit after the chronological indicator rather than before. Isaiah has only the $\text{ʔ}^a\text{ʕr hzh}$ clause (like Amos and Micah), while Hosea has only the $\text{ʔ}^a\text{ʕr hyh}$ clause, corresponding to Micah in this respect. It may be noted that while Amos has the same basic pattern as the others, the details vary more widely from the others, and the verb *hyh* requires a different rendering.

Notes to Part II

1. All four prophets are dated according to the sequence of Judahite kings. In the cases of Hosea and Amos we also have synchronisms with a king of Israel. In the case of Amos, a third datum is offered, the only specification of years by number, i.e., “two years before the earthquake.”

2. A curious feature of the king lists is the omission of the conjunction (“and”) between the names of the kings of Judah, as though they were copied directly from an official list or docket. The fact that this feature is common to all of the headings, along with the repetition of formulas and the general patterns, suggests that the headings in their present form are the work of a single editor or compiler.²

3. We may note further that there is a divergence in the spelling of two of the names in the list of the kings of Judah: Uzziah and Hezekiah. In both cases the Book of Isaiah preserves the long form of the names, while in the three minor prophets the names are consistently shortened:

ISAIAH	MINOR PROPHETS
ʕuzziyyāhū	ʕuzziyyā
$\text{y}^e\text{hizqiyyāhū}$	$\text{y}^e\text{hizqiyyā}$

This divergence does not reflect a difference in authorship or editing, but rather the separate development in the spelling of words in these books.

²The lists of the kings of Judah in the headings of the eighth-century prophets appear with the conjunction omitted between each king (with the exception of Amos, which mentions only one Judahite king) and are preceded by the noun $\text{y}^e\text{mē}$ in the construct. Compare this with a similar list in the heading of the book of Jeremiah, where the construct $\text{y}^e\text{mē}$ is repeated before each king. The use of one construct noun coordinated with a series of kings, along with the designation of the group as a whole as “kings of Judah,” gives the impression that the editor considered the successive reigns as one era. It is noteworthy that the kings of Judah serve as the primary chronological reference point both for the northern prophets (Amos and Hosea) and for the Judahite prophets (Isaiah and Micah). For further discussion of the evidence for common editorship, see Andersen and Freedman, pp. 146-147.

As can now be confirmed from inscriptional evidence, the longer spelling reflects the older original form of these names correctly preserved in the Book of Isaiah. The shorter spelling reflects post-exilic developments, as represented by similar names in seals and other inscribed materials. The preserved orthography is consistent with what we know of the books (= scrolls) in question.³

2. Orthographical Considerations

The scroll of the Minor Prophets exhibits a consistent pattern of very late orthography, including numerous examples of the latest developments in the Bible. Its transmission history is quite different from that of the Book of Isaiah, the first edition of which can be associated with the prophet of that name and may have been produced as early as the end of the eighth century or shortly thereafter. In this compilation we find as we expect the name of the prophet and the names of the kings spelled out in full in accordance with pre-exilic practice. That spelling has been preserved in the MT of Isaiah.⁴

A further, similar example of early and late spelling can be cited as well: The name of King David is spelled with three letters (*dwd*) in the Book of Isaiah, while the predominant spelling in the Minor

³For a historical discussion of the long (*-yhw*) and the short (*-yh*) spellings of the divine element in personal names, see D. N. Freedman and M. O'Connor, "YHWH," in *TDOT* 5:501, 506-508. The most recent and exhaustive study of biblical spelling can be found in F. I. Andersen and A. D. Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible*, Dahood Memorial Lecture (Rome, 1986), pp. 315-316. They conclude that the spelling in the Latter Prophets is less conservative than in the Primary History but more conservative than in the Writings. While there is variation between the individual books of the Major Prophets (and in the case of Isaiah, between chaps. 1-39 and 40-66), the orthography of the Major Prophets is more conservative than that of the Minor Prophets, which is characterized by spellings consistent with the Second-Temple period and which show a "remarkable homogeneity in their spelling" (*ibid.*, p. 315).

⁴The consistency of the spelling in the Minor Prophets, although individually coming from quite different time periods, strongly suggests that the spelling throughout reflects the date of publication (Second-Temple period) of the composite work—which cannot antedate the latest individual book. The more conservative spellings of Isaiah argue for an earlier publication date, preserving the spellings of the time which would have been maintained through the centuries and preserved in the MT. See D. N. Freedman, "The Spelling of the Name 'David' in the Hebrew Bible," *Hebrew Annual Review* 7 (1983): 99-100; and Andersen and Forbes, pp. 315-316.

Prophets (including some of the eighth-century prophets) is with four letters (*dwyd*). Just so, the evidence from other books of the Bible is that the three-letter spelling is archaic and pre-exilic, while the four-letter spelling was introduced in post-exilic times.⁵

We draw the following conclusions from the textual and orthographic evidence for the headings of these four books:

1. The headings belong to the same genre, use the same formulas, and reflect a common authorship, or were written under the same direction. There is every reason to believe that the headings were composed in connection with the initial publication of the books and that in their original form they belong to the pre-exilic period, perhaps as early as the end of the eighth century or more likely the first decade of the seventh century.

2. In the transmission of the text, there is an important orthographic divergence between the heading of the Book of Isaiah and those of the three Minor Prophets. The former retains the authentic pre-exilic spelling of two of the royal names (*ʿuzziyyāhû* and *y^hizqiyyāhû*), while the latter exhibit the shorter post-exilic spelling of the same names (*ʿuzziyyâ* and *y^hizqiyyâ*). Generally, the scroll of the Minor Prophets in the MT reflects a very late orthographic style, while Masoretic Isaiah is both more moderate and earlier.⁶

3. *Chronological Considerations*

Our next concern is with the chronological information in the four headings. The only significant differences are with the number and distribution of the royal names, and to a consideration of these we will now turn. For the sake of convenience we will set the data in

⁵E.g., all 572 occurrences of the name "David" in the books of Samuel are defective (three-letter spelling), while the 271 occurrences in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles are *plene* (four-letter spelling). See n. 3, above. For a detailed statistical discussion, see Freedman, pp. 89-104, and Andersen and Forbes, pp. 4-6.

⁶Freedman, pp. 99-100, and Andersen and Forbes, pp. 315-316.

tabular form so that the congruences and divergences will be immediately apparent:

ISAIAH	HOSEA	AMOS	MICAH
<i>bîmê</i>	<i>bîmê</i>	<i>bîmê</i>	<i>bîmê</i>
ʿuzziyyāhû	ʿuzziyyā	ʿuzziyyā	-----
<i>yôṭām</i>	<i>yôṭām</i>	-----	<i>yôṭām</i>
ʾāhāz	ʾāhāz	-----	ʾāhāz
<i>yʿhizqiyyāhû</i>	<i>yʿhizqiyyā</i>	-----	<i>yʿhizqiyyā</i>
<i>malḵê</i>	<i>malḵê</i>	<i>melek</i>	<i>malḵê</i>
<i>yʿhûḏā</i>	<i>yʿhûḏā</i>	<i>yʿhûḏā</i>	<i>yʿhûḏā</i>
	<i>ûḥîmê</i>	<i>ûḥîmê</i>	
	<i>yāroḥ ʿām</i>	<i>yāroḥ ʿām</i>	
	<i>ben-yô ʾāš</i>	<i>ben-yô ʾāš</i>	
	<i>melek</i>	<i>melek</i>	
	<i>yîsrā ʾēl</i>	<i>yîsrā ʾēl</i>	
		(<i>šenāṭayim</i>	
		<i>lipnê</i>	
		<i>hārā ʿaš</i>)	

Two impressions arise immediately from consideration of this table or chart: (1) The first is how very much alike the headings are and how extensively they overlap. Except for the unique reference to the earthquake as a chronological marker in Amos, all of the other data are duplicated at least once. Thus, the names of the four Judahite kings occur three times each, and two of the four lists of these kings are the same (Isaiah and Hosea). The single Israelite king is mentioned twice (in Hosea and Amos). (2) The second impression is that in spite of the formulaic similarities and the repetition of common elements, no two texts are exactly the same. Each text is different from every other.

The first of the foregoing factors was to be expected in view of the overlapping contents of the books of these prophets and the apparent effort on the part of compilers and editors to organize the

information into some unified structure or pattern. The latter feature, however, shows that the headings were tailored or shaped for the individual prophets to reflect both the time and circumstances of their ministries and careers. By comparing the texts carefully we can infer and deduce a variety of propositions concerning this group of prophets. In other words, we are encouraged and obliged to take seriously and in detail both what is included and what has been excluded in connection with each prophetic heading.⁷

We will make some general observations first, to be followed by more detailed proposals:

1. While the lists of Judahite kings dominate the headings in terms both of quantity and priority (i.e., they always come first), the presence of an Israelite king in two of the lists provides a partial synchronism (there is an overlap between Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah, but it is universally agreed among scholars that the latter outlived the former), thus helping to define the period of the prophets' work. Also, it gives information about the place in which the prophet carried out his commission from Yahweh. Thus, we interpret the reference to Jeroboam of Israel in Hosea and Amos to mean that both prophets uttered oracles and performed their prophetic task in the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam, and by inference not after his reign. Had they continued in the northern realm after Jeroboam's death, then reference would have been made to successor kings of the latter, e.g., Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, etc. Such inferences are generally confirmed by the contents of the books mentioned, and no one has ever seriously doubted that Amos and Hosea conducted prophetic missions in the north, i.e., carried out their prophetic activity in the kingdom of Israel. If, however, we take the headings at face value, then we must also affirm that overlapping with such activities and/or subsequent to their work in the north, they carried out their prophetic mission in the southern kingdom as well—Amos during the reign of Uzziah, while Hosea, along with the remaining prophets in our lists, continued

⁷Andersen and Freedman, p. 144, provide a list of eight distinct features that may be included in the prophetic headings of all of the Hebrew prophets: "1) A name for the work; 2) The prophet's name; 3) The prophet's patronymic; 4) His hometown; 5) A reference to his call, however vague; 6) A time of his activity; 7) A precise date (of his call or first oracle); 8) The subject matter of his prophecy." Although the headings of the four eighth-century prophets demonstrate enough similarities—in view of the variety made possible by these eight elements—to conclude a common editorial tradition, the variations (both additions and deletions) are also quite apparent and should be carefully analyzed.

into the reign of Hezekiah. What this information indicates is that the books of these prophets were developed and processed in the southern kingdom and reached their published form under Judahite and possible royal sponsorship.

2. The lists not only define the broad limits of this period of prophetic activity, but they also provide clues to the specific scope of the individual prophets within the larger range. Thus, the entire period extends from the overlapping reigns of Jeroboam in the north and Uzziah in the south into the reign of Hezekiah, a time span of perhaps 100 years, from ca. 790 to ca. 690.⁸

If we look at the king lists in the headings, the principal difference is in the number of kings mentioned. They range from two (Amos) to five (Hosea), with no two headings exactly the same: e.g., Micah has three and Isaiah has four. If we arrange the kings in tabular form we can recognize immediately the correspondences and the divergences. We follow the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible:

	ISAIAH	HOSEA	AMOS	MICAH
<i>Judah:</i>	Uzziah	Uzziah	Uzziah	-----
	Jotham	Jotham	-----	Jotham
	Ahaz	Ahaz	-----	Ahaz
	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	-----	Hezekiah
<i>Israel:</i>		Jeroboam II	Jeroboam II	

It will be noted at once that Hosea's list is the only complete one, and that it encompasses all the others. That fact may explain why Hosea is placed first among the Minor Prophets.

While the order of the books is broadly chronological in the sense that the earlier books are toward the front and the later books are toward the back (e.g., the three eighth-century prophets are among the first six, or in the front half [Hosea is no. 1; Amos, no. 3;

⁸There are substantial differences in the dates assigned by various scholars to these kings, and it cannot be said that a consensus has been reached: e.g., Albright's dates would be from 786 (Jeroboam II) to 687 (death of Hezekiah), while Thiele's would be from 793/2 to 687/6, and Tadmor's from 790(?) to 696(?). These differences do not seriously affect the calculations in this essay, so I have adopted a compromise position as indicated. Within those broad limits we can place the four prophets in chronological order, assigning them positions in relation to each other and also against the actual dates deducible for the reigns specified.

and Micah, no. 6], and the three sixth/fifth-century prophets are at the end of the group: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi [nos. 10-12]), it has generally been agreed that Amos is earlier than Hosea, and that such a conclusion is readily deducible from the contents of the two books and comparison with information provided elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Kings). Furthermore, our examination of the headings conforms to the order: Amos preceding Hosea, rather than the other way around. So why are they reversed in the traditional arrangement in the scroll of the Minor Prophets? The answer would seem to be that the order is not precisely chronological and another concern or interest has supervened in the order of the books.

What the heading suggests or implies is that Hosea is the key figure in the group and that his ministry overlapped with all of the others, and that he may at some time or other have had contact with them. We may even speculate that he had an important part in the compilation and assembly of the materials that went into the four books. In passing, we may add that the evidence of the heading suggests that Hosea departed from Israel during the reign of Jeroboam and was domiciled in the south during the reigns of the four successive Davidides in our list. Clearly there are parts of the book that reflect circumstances and events in the north and probably the south that post-date the era of Jeroboam (e.g., the revolving-door series of kings following the death of Jeroboam), and it is widely agreed that Hosea's ministry extended down to the times of crisis in Israel. His location and his relation to the southern kingdom remain obscure, however; but in my opinion, some connection on his part with the south is unavoidable.

If we then compare the list in the heading of Hosea with those for Amos and Micah, we note that the lists in Amos and Micah together form a list exactly equivalent to that of Hosea. Amos has Uzziah and Jeroboam, the first and last in Hosea's list, while Micah contains the three intervening kings: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Thus, for the three minor prophets we have two complete lists, one in Hosea and the other distributed between the other two prophets. It is clear that Amos and Micah were active in different periods and did not overlap; on a professional basis, at least, there was no contact between them. After Hosea, the order in the group is chronological: Amos preceded Micah.

Isaiah spans a period very much like that of Micah, the only difference being that presumably Isaiah's ministry began while

Uzziah was still alive, even if barely so, whereas Micah's ministry began after Uzziah's death, when Jotham was sole king. Isaiah could also have been a prime mover in organizing the collection and publication of the literature under consideration.

On the basis of the information provided, we can put the prophets in the following order: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah. Amos and Hosea were both active during the reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah, so they belong in the earlier part of the period under consideration. Isaiah's ministry apparently began at, or toward the end of, the reign of Uzziah.

If we take Isa 6 to be Isaiah's inaugural vision (still the prevailing opinion among scholars), then Isaiah's formal career as a prophet began in the year of Uzziah's death. That Micah belongs at the end of the list is clear from the fact that the first king in his list is Jotham, the successor of Uzziah. It is true that Jotham ruled as co-regent while his father Uzziah was still alive, but during that period Uzziah continued to be recognized as reigning, even if not ruling; therefore, Uzziah would have been mentioned in Micah's heading if in fact Micah had been active while Uzziah was still alive.

When it comes to terminal dates, we note that for three of the prophets (Isaiah, Hosea, Micah) the lists end with Hezekiah, while for the remaining one (Amos) the limits are more circumscribed, with only Uzziah and Jeroboam being mentioned. Clearly Amos' career was considerably shorter than that of the others, a conclusion consistent with the biographical and other information in the book itself.

The relative periods of prophetic activity of the four prophets can now be set forth in the following way:

	Jeroboam Uzziah	Jotham	Ahaz	Hezekiah
Amos	-----			
Hosea	-----	-----	-----	-----
Isaiah		-----	-----	-----
Micah		-----	-----	-----

Two points become apparent upon inspection of this diagram:

1. The terminal date for prophetic activity for three of these books is in the reign of Hezekiah. That fact is not only important in its own right, but

may offer helpful clues in resolving the question of the occasion and reason for the compilation of the collection of the eighth-century prophets.

2. The case of the heading of the Book of Amos is exceptional, limiting his ministry to the overlapping reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. The terminal date for Amos' prophetic activity and the completion of his book (or the production of a version of the book bearing his name) must lie in the reign of Uzziah, much earlier than the presumed date for the other three books. This unusual aspect of the Book of Amos must be associated with the unique added item about the earthquake, which provides another clue to the date of the book. The earthquake in question—obviously a major one with significant impact on at least one population center—occurred during the reign of Uzziah, as we know from the reference to it in the Book of Zechariah (14:5), and it serves as a fulcrum or pivot for the Book of Amos.

The implication of the statements in Amos 1:1 is that the book of Amos (= *diḅrê ʿāmôš*) was published after the earthquake occurred, but that it contained only oracles and other materials uttered or compiled up to two years before that event. It may be suspected that the dramatic confrontation between priest and prophet at the Temple in Bethel took place on the earlier occasion, and that the earthquake occurred two years later. During that period, the oracles or stories were assembled, with whatever materials may have been added, and the collection as a whole was then published shortly afterwards. Thus, it was the earthquake that provided the occasion for the publication and vindication of the oracles and predictions of the prophet.

It is in the fifth vision (Amos 9:1-5, esp. vs. 1) that we find the forecast of the coming seismic tremor which validated Amos as an authentic prophet and verified a particular vision and prophetic utterance. The Book of Amos therefore was the first of this group (or in fact, of the whole collection of prophetic works) to be issued in written form—precisely because of the unusual circumstances surrounding the visions and the sudden confirmation of the prophetic prediction by a violent manifestation of nature.

4. *The Process of Compilation and Publication*

We can then consider the process of compilation and publication of the other three prophetic works in the light of the proposed account of the production of the Book of Amos. According to our analysis of the three other headings, the prophets completed their active careers during the reign of Hezekiah; or, put another way, there is no evidence of prophetic activity on their part during the reign of Hezekiah's son and successor Manasseh. While it is perfectly possible that one or more of these prophets lived or lingered on into the next reign, as seems to be the case with Isaiah (if we can credit the legends recorded or reflected in intertestamental works such as

The Lives of the Prophets; or a suggested NT reference in Heb 11:37, where mention of prophets or martyrs being sawn asunder is interpreted as an allusion to the martyrdom of Isaiah at the hands of Manasseh), that in itself would not be in conflict with the view taken here.

If we have interpreted correctly the implication of the headings of these prophetic works, then we must consider both the reasons and occasions for the termination of the prophetic activity at that time, and also both the reason and occasion for the compilation of a collection of such prophetic materials.

I believe the answer is to be found in one of the books in question, in particular in the stories that round out First Isaiah, the collection of oracles and stories that make up the bulk of chaps. 1-39 of that book. I would exclude from the collection only chaps. 34-35 as belonging to Second (or Third) Isaiah, and argue that First Isaiah was a literary product of the First-Temple period or more particularly the Exile, a work close in character and time of publication to the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but especially Jeremiah, which also concludes with a chapter drawn from, or parallel to, the account in 2 Kings. While there are notable expansions and other differences separating Isa 36-39 from the corresponding section of 2 Kings (18:13-20:19), the connections or correlations are so close, not only in content, but also verbally that a common undertaking in compilation and publication must be acknowledged.

In this account of the reign of Hezekiah, the central and decisive event is the invasion of the land by Sennacherib and the resultant siege of the capital city, Jerusalem. Without examining either the problems of the narrative or exploring the numerous details, we can say that the high and culminating point is the miraculous deliverance of the city, an outcome in which the prophet, Isaiah, is credited with a major role. In response to the king's prayer in behalf of the nation and the city, Isaiah brings the assurance of Yahweh that the invasion will fail, the siege will be lifted, and the city and the king will be spared (Isa 37 = 2 Kgs 18). Shortly thereafter the prophecy became fact, although the details are confusing and the biblical accounts do not present a consistent picture. With the help of the detailed Assyrian records of the same event, the following seem to be the central and verifiable facts in the case:

Sennacherib and his armies responded to Hezekiah's rebellion by overrunning the land and investing the city of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, and in spite of accepted and standard Assyrian procedure in

such cases, the Assyrian army did not capture the city of Jerusalem, and the rebellious king Hezekiah was not deposed nor was his dynasty terminated. Instead, Hezekiah paid a huge indemnity, thus acknowledging his status and role as vassal of the Assyrian king.

While the outcome does not qualify as a victory for Judah or as a rout of the king of Assyria, the deliverance of the city and the royal house was certainly worth a prayer of thanksgiving and the recognition that the nation had been spared by a compassionate deity. This was the view of the incident a century later when Jeremiah reported on it (Jer 26:18-19). The main point was that because Hezekiah and the people had repented in all earnestness, Yahweh also repented of the evil he intended against them and reversed his decision, and so the city and kingdom were spared. In the passage in Jeremiah, the ominous prediction by Micah about the fate of Jerusalem was quoted as a conditional threat, providing reason or occasion for the subsequent repentance on the part of king and people, which in turn induced divine repentance and the deliverance of the city. We can understand, therefore, why the prophecies of Micah would be brought into the collection of prophetic works in which this central or decisive event was presented.

It is my suggestion that the collection of the books of the four prophets was assembled during the reign of Hezekiah, to celebrate and interpret the extraordinary sequence of events associated with the Assyrian invasion of Judah and investment of Jerusalem, along with the departure of the Assyrian army and the deliverance of the city. While giving due attention to the roles of the two local prophets and their oracular utterances, the compiler(s) also recognized that the sparing of Jerusalem in 701 was only the final act, the climactic note at the end of a long and theologically significant series of events. During this period the parallels and contrasts between the two capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, were in constant view and under continued discussion and debate.

In all four of the prophetic books here under consideration, these two cities, representing their respective nations, were under severe scrutiny. In general, they were attacked as centers of sin and placed under the same divine judgment. It is a typical feature of eighth-century prophecy (followed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel) to compare the capital cities of Israel and Judah with the cities of the plain (Amos and Isaiah refer to Sodom and Gomorrah; Hosea

mentions Admah and Zeboiim) and to threaten both of them with the same fate.

In the end, however, it was Samaria that fell to the Assyrians, while Jerusalem was spared. In order to focus attention on the latter event and to explain this extraordinary outcome, it was necessary and important to emphasize the full presentation of the prophets that included both kingdoms and both capital cities. The story began with the oracles of Amos and Hosea, and was continued in those of Isaiah and Micah.

Put together, the major lesson and moral could be drawn: Yahweh is the devoted Lord of his people in both kingdoms. Both are under heavy judgment for deliberate defiance of the deity and persistent violation of the central demands and commands of the Covenant. The only possibility of escape from violent final punishment is genuine repentance on the part of all, king and nobles, priests and prophets, and the people as a whole. If they repent, Yahweh may also repent and spare them. The experience of the capital cities proved the truth of that doctrine. Samaria—its kings and priests and people—did not repent, and the city was captured and the kingdom brought to an end. Jerusalem, to the contrary, was spared because its leaders, including the king, and its people repented.

Thus, the collection of prophecies was made after the miraculous deliverance of the city of Jerusalem, as a thank-offering to Yahweh, a *te Deum* addressed to the God who had himself repented in response to the repentance of the king and people of Judah. This mutual or reciprocal repentance on the part of people and God was in marked contrast with the resistant behavior of the leaders and people of the north. It may be noted that the theme of the God “who repents over the evil” (*niḥām ʿal-hārāʿā*) is also prominent in other books that are about or from the same period, or that are bound in with the eighth-century prophets in the scroll of the Minor Prophets (cf., e.g., Jonah 4:2 and Joel 2:13 [Heb.]). We may say, therefore, that it is this aspect of the Godhead, this thread in the historical theology of the Bible, that runs through the corpus of eighth-century prophets. We may add that the compilation was originally intended as a dramatic and informed interpretation of the traumatic and critical history or sequence of events through which the two Yahwistic kingdoms had passed in the course of the eighth century,

concluding with the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem and at least temporary reprieve of the kingdom of Judah at the end of that century.

I would further propose that the composite work combining the books of the four prophets was carried out under the sponsorship and with the approval and support of King Hezekiah himself, who seems to have been not only a major religious reformer (as documented in 2 Kings and much more extensively in 2 Chronicles) and military and diplomatic mastermind (like his great-grandfather Uzziah, not to mention David, the founder of the dynasty, and David's immediate successor Solomon), but also a city planner and builder on a large scale (as we find from the Siloam Water Tunnel and from archaeological excavations in the Western Extension). In addition, he was a patron of the principal art in Judah: literature (cf. the curious but important reference in Prov 25:1). Only a king of such stature and ethical sensitivity, as Hezekiah is described to be, could and would have encouraged such a work. Others, too numerous to mention, would have tolerated neither the words nor the prophets responsible for them; e.g., we hear of neither prophets nor their works nor anything like them in the otherwise long and peaceful reign of Manasseh, the bitterly condemned son and successor of Hezekiah. While this idea must remain speculative, it is hard to imagine such a work being put together at any other time or without the consent and support of the reigning monarch.

The work exhibits, of course, the rather unusual combination of serious—even severe—criticism of the monarch, along with continuing support of him and his dynasty. It recognizes that the House of David remained the best hope for continuity, stability, and the fulfillment of the ultimate dreams of people and prophets alike. Of all the kings mentioned in our headings, only Hezekiah qualifies as sympathetic with the goals and standards of the prophets and sensitive to basic theological and ethical issues. The prophets would find in him a ready listener and one willing to translate into practice their harsh and difficult prescriptions. In return, he would see in them authentic channels to and from the divine presence—men firmly dedicated to the ultimate well-being of the nation, its king and people—however hard and uncompromising their words of condemnation and reprobation might be. There would be a community of interest, and they could make common cause in this account of the crises which came in flood-tide in the course of the century, overwhelming the northern kingdom and so swamping the south as to leave behind a barely surviving kingdom as a remnant.

An authentic analysis of that experience was needed to serve as a valid interpretation of what the nation had been through, and as an informed set of guidelines and exhortations for the future. Small wonder that the amalgamated experience of the eighth century was incorporated into the whole prophetic collection when it was assembled in the sixth century or later. The great lessons of the earlier time were still to be learned and absorbed, but they would be available from that time onward for every succeeding generation.

5. *Conclusions*

We may summarize the results of this cursory investigation as follows:

1. It is my belief that the headings of the four eighth-century prophetic works were devised in accordance with a standard form and formula, but that these were modified to accommodate the differences in time and place of the individual prophets. Therefore, I maintain that the books of these prophets belong to a common collection and that at the same time they exhibit divergences which are important in placing the prophets chronologically, geographically, and in relation to one another. Thus, we can arrange the four prophets in the following historical order: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah.

2. From the headings we can also identify and isolate features and factors in the prophets' careers and oracles. It is clear, for instance, that Amos and Hosea were active in the north, while Isaiah and Micah were active in the south. Unexpectedly, however, we find evidence pointing to activity in the south on the part of Amos and Hosea as well, which may have echoes and reflections in disputed passages in these prophets.

3. I believe that the books of the eighth-century prophets were compiled and combined in a two-stage process: (1) The first of these involved the publication of the Book of Amos as a result of a remarkable occurrence. After a major earthquake in the days of Uzziah, it was believed by a group of disciples (and perhaps Uzziah himself) that Amos had been vindicated as an authentic prophet of Yahweh and that his prediction of an imminent earthquake had been confirmed by that event. (2) Later, during the reign of Hezekiah, and after an equally or even more remarkable event, the books of the three other prophets were collected and published along with the Book of Amos (perhaps with a modicum of updating), to celebrate

the miraculous rescue of Jerusalem from the besieging army of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king.

4. The principal purposes and objectives of this work, in my view, were to establish an authoritative theological-historical interpretation of the events that had transpired during the last three-quarters of the eighth century—from the time that Jeroboam II embarked upon his masterful and major campaign to recover the territories across the Jordan that had belonged or been subject to Israel in times past, until the armies of Sennacherib withdrew from Jerusalem and left the southern capital badly shaken but intact and at peace, at the end of the century.

5. The lessons to be inculcated and learned were the following: (1) That both kingdoms were under divine judgment for serious and deliberate violations of the Covenant commands and that Yahweh would use foreign powers, especially the Assyrians, to punish his rebellious, apostate, and idolatrous people, both north and south. (2) That the only recourse remaining and available to the people, including their leaders, was whole-hearted repentance, regret for sins past and present, and new resolution to remake their lives. General repentance would in turn beget divine repentance, that is, a profound change of heart and mind on the part of God. (3) That the results for Samaria and Jerusalem brought out the truth of these assertions: Samaria persisted in rebellion and was destroyed, Jerusalem repented and was spared.

6. I believe that the books or scrolls of the prophets were produced and published to celebrate the survival of Jerusalem, to explain the historical experience of the eighth century, to warn present and future generations about the available options, and to renew both threats and promises for the time at hand and for the time to come.

7. I believe that the publishing project was carried out by the surviving prophets and their followers shortly after the deliverance of Jerusalem, and that the enterprise had both the approval and the support of the king, who himself had been delivered along with the city, and who remained on his throne and was able to pass it on to his descendants. Hezekiah had much for which to be thankful and, much about which to be worried. It was important to offer thanks, and also to leave a record and a warning for posterity.