Reflections on restauration. A study of prophecies in Micah and Isaiah about the restauration of Northern Israel

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III. CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapter, we have presented our interpretation of these prophecies of weal and our reasons for viewing them as originating from the period just after the fall of northern Israel. This concluding chapter will be divided into two sections. In the first section, we will summarize the most important results of our exegesis of each of these texts. Using each summary as a point of departure, we will concentrate on the themes and traditions by which the author conceptualized the restoration of Israel. In the second section, we will search for any similarities which may mark the thought contained in these prophecies as typical of this early period.

1. SUMMARY

Prophets residing in Jerusalem broached the subject of northern Israel's restoration. An account of their activity and thought is contained in the book of Micah, chapters 2-5 of which record two separate controversies which they had with the man from Moresheth. The record of the first controversy is found in Micah 2-3. Two diametrically opposed prophecies initiated a bitter conflict between the prophets as to who could claim the authority of the Spirit. Although we cannot determine precisely the historical background of this argument, we can read between the lines that the Judean leaders were planning some type of military endeavor. Consulting the prophets beforehand, they heard from Micah (Micah 2:1-5), arguing from the principle of lex talionis, that disaster was coming (cf. page 60f.). Their land would be expropriated, because they had done the same to others. However, the Judean leaders heard different words from the Jerusalem prophets, and their view of the prospective campaign's outcome touched upon the fate of northern Israel.

Micah's opponents saw salvation coming to Judah (Micah 2:12-13). First, Yahweh was to rally, gather, and station all of Jacob and the remnant of Israel (cf. page 51-52). The use of the patriarchal name Jacob/Israel, reinforced
by the expression "all of you," reveals that these prophets had neither the southern nor the northern kingdom in mind, but all of Yahweh's people (cf. page 52). Secondly, the prophets characterize Bozrah and the other possible objects of attack as being helpless like sheep and vulnerable like a flock, which are in commotion on account of the men of Israel stationed over against them (cf. page 52-54). Thirdly, they depict the attack. With Yahweh leading the way, the men of Israel break through Bozrah's walls. Victorious, they cross over the gate of the city and go forth to new triumphs with Yahweh, their king, at their head (cf. page 54-55).

Chapter 3 contains the continuation of the controversy about the conflicting prophecies. The two opposing views prompted Micah's question in 3:1: "Is it not in your power to determine the correct decision (Yahweh's)?" Subtly applying the principle of lex talionis, Micah answers his own sarcastic question to the leaders in his next phrase. He says: "You, who hate the good and love the evil!" The words יְּאָה and יֵל in this phrase are used with a double meaning. On the one hand, Micah criticizes the leaders for their hating good deeds and loving evil deeds. On the other hand, Micah refers to the prophecy for good, just forwarded by his opponents, and the prophecy for evil, earlier presented by himself. He brings both meanings together by means of the principle of lex talionis in order to provide an answer to his question. Haters of good and lovers of evil will not receive good decisions from Yahweh, but evil ones (cf. page 61).

Again, Micah records in 3:11 the deliberation of the leaders of Judah: "Is not Yahweh in the midst of us? No evil will come upon us!" The leaders are, in all likelihood, stating their preference for the prophecy found in 2:12-13, in which Yahweh is pictured as being in the midst of the armies of Israel, and their disapproval of Micah's prophecy concerning evil (cf. page 64).

The prophecy in 2:12-13 is imbued with pre-monarchical war traditions. The overall movement of these verses—from rallying to going forth into battle—depicts a military campaign like one from this period (cf. page 56). Again, Yahweh is commander, musters his army, and crosses over before them. Again, Yahweh is יְּאָה, before him and broke c (II Samuel 5:17f.). I prophets have taken th and Judah now extant i emphasize the central

The sheep of Bozrah are the objects of the specific reference for annexed land from Juda aggression which would the prophets. However, programming the The armies of Israel w in Edom and continuing goal had been accompl also present in Amos 9.

In that day I will and I will repair and rebuild it as that they may pos and all nations w It would seem that the the pattern for the co 12-13. This prophecy of the author of Nahta dom, recorded in II Sa tion here about the ro events.

The Jerusalem prop Already before the com may have been applied apparently believed to concept of Yahweh's ki works (Psalms 5:3; 24:6) was closely associated (Isaiah 6:5). Yet lit that this idea played

The use of the ep in 2:12-13 may offer a
Again, Yahweh is νόον, as he was for David, when he went out before him and broke over the Philistines like flooding water (II Samuel 5:17f.). It is quite possible that the Jerusalem prophets have taken the prophecy of the rallying of Israel and Judah now extant in Hosea 2:12, and recasted it in order to emphasize the central role of Yahweh (cf. page 57).

The sheep of Bozrah and the flock in a distant pasture are the objects of this campaign. Why Bozrah? Why is one specific reference followed by a vague one? Indeed, Edom annexed land from Judah during the Syro-Ephraimitic war, an aggression which would have merited an attack in the eyes of the prophets. However, we evidently witness here stock phraseology, programming the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. The armies of Israel were to reclaim the old areas, beginning in Edom and continuing from there to other areas, until their goal had been accomplished (cf. page 56). This programme is also present in Amos 9:11-12:

In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and I will repair its breaches and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all nations who are called by my name.

It would seem that the time of David and his expansion provided the pattern for the coming campaign which is described in 2:12-13. This prophecy could reflect an awareness on the part of the author of Nathan's promise to David's house and kingdom, recorded in II Samuel 7:16. However, we have no indication here about the role Jerusalem will play in the coming events.

The Jerusalem prophets call Yahweh a king in this piece. Already before the coming of a king in Israel, the epithet may have been applied to Yahweh. For example, the ark was apparently believed to be the divine throne. Later, the concept of Yahweh's kingship was frequently found in cultic works (Psalms 5:3; 24:5; 29:10; 48:3; 68:25; 74:12; 84:4) and was closely associated with Isaiah's vision in the temple (Isaiah 6:5). Yet little is actually known about the role that this idea played in Israelite thought and in the cult.

The use of the epithet, king, by the Jerusalem prophets in 2:12-13 may offer at least two insights into the under-
standing of Yahweh's kingship during the last decades of the eighth century. First of all, his kingship is connected with his being a commander who calls the army together and leads them into battle. Secondly, Yahweh's kingship is limited. He is the king/commander over Israel who leads the attack against other peoples.

In the light of the pervasive nostalgic mood of the statement in 2:12-13, the Jerusalem prophets may have been purposely reintroducing an idea of kingship which had been prevalent in the pre-monarchical period, but had received less emphasis since the coming of a king and a standing army, which consisted partly of mercenaries. However, it is also possible that the prophets have employed stock motifs in order to foreshadow the success of a campaign. In that case the original implications of these motifs would have been less important, and 2:12-13 would not necessarily witness to the understanding of Yahweh's kingship in Micah's day.

Sometime after Micah's first controversy with fellow prophets about the probable success of a military venture, the situation in Judah deteriorated. Assyria attacked. While foreign armies were stationed outside the capital's walls, inside them a new controversy arose between Micah and the local prophets about the outcome of the siege (Micah 4:5-3). Before a gathering of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Micah and his opponents debated, following a specific form. Proceeding from a fixed point of departure (4:1-8), they alternately addressed themselves to the themes contained therein, the Jerusalem prophets supporting them (4:9; 4:11-13) and Micah refuting them (4:10; 4:14-5:3). Each new initiative is signaled by the word "and" (cf. page 71).

The point of departure is a liturgical composition. In view of the threat to Jerusalem, Micah's opponents selected elements from cultic liturgies, ordered them in accordance with the movement of an existing liturgy, and composed thereby a liturgy celebrating the exaltation of Zion (cf. page 71f). This composition contains a processional hymn (cf. page 75f), a recommitment ceremony (cf. page 79), and a response of the community (cf. page 81). The local prophets attempted to convince the people of Jerusalem by means of this liturgy that their city would also experience a res

This resurgence Israel. Two pieces of make this clear. In 6.7a, the two designations complementary, categorize as those who could not of words indicates the distinction and inclusiveness of the king to the recommitment ceremony and the recommitment ceremonies in the northern kingdom.

In substantial agreement, whereas he length with the cultic point, we would like to within this composition, the northern kingdom, namely the composition, the northern kingdom, namely:

The structure and composition are complete reversal that. The development is as:

Thus Yahweh will transform a glorious nation. Is the progressive reversal? Where does it originate? The same goal of the reversal is expressed in the book Abraham what he is a and all nations of the This passage is remi
that their city would not only survive the siege, but would also experience a resurgence.

This resurgence included the rehabilitation of northern Israel. Two pieces chosen by the composers of this liturgy make this clear. In Yahweh's statement of commitment, 4:6-7a, the two designations, lame and outcast, must be seen as complementary, categorizing all of Yahweh's afflicted people as those who could not flee and those who could. This choice of words indicates that the bearer of this prophecy avoided a distinction and included both southerners and northerners in the ranks of the lame and outcast. Moreover, in the response to the recommitment ceremony, 4:8, ideas such as "former sovereignty" and the "kingdom that belonged to the daughter of Jerusalem" confirm that the coming resurgence would include the northern kingdom.

In substantiating our hypothesis that 4:1-8 is a liturgical composition, we have, at the same time, dealt at some length with the cultic traditions that it embodies. At this point, we would like to look more closely at the two sections within this composition that refer to the restoration of the northern kingdom, namely 4:6-7a and 4:7b-8, and would like to determine, if possible, what traditions may be reflected in them.

The structure and choice of words in 4:6-7a emphasize the complete reversal that Yahweh is determined to accomplish. The development is as follows:

- gathering/lame
- collecting/outcast
- lame/(healthy) remnant
- outcast/weary/(mighty) populous nation

Thus Yahweh will transform broken Israel into a healthy, populous nation. Is there a specific thought guiding this progressive reversal? Where does this type of conceptualization originate? The same words, יָדָע יִרְבֶּה, found in verse 7a as the goal of the reversal, are also found in Genesis 18:18, a passage in which Yahweh is deliberating whether to hide from Abraham what he is about to do to Sodom "seeing that Abraham shall become a great and populous nation (יָדָע יִרְבֶּה) and all nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him." This passage is reminiscent of the account in Genesis 12:1-3.
in which Yahweh promises to make of Abram a great nation (Gen. 15:13-17). We see no reason to assume that the promise of becoming a populous nation, attested in these two portions of Genesis, is late. Such a promise probably originated in the nomadic period of Israel's existence, even though we encounter its formulation from a later period. This same, fundamental promise has evidently influenced the structure and choice of words in 4:6-7a. During the last decades of the eighth century, when Israel was 'lame' and 'outcast', a prophet announced that Yahweh was determined to transform her and make her a populous nation, as he had promised.

In 4:7b-8 the community responds to the recommitment ceremony by proclaiming that the "former sovereignty" and the "kingdom that belonged to the daughter of Jerusalem" will come again. While not expressed in so many words, this proclamation must refer to the sovereignty and kingdom that existed during the reigns of David and Solomon. The fact that the terminology is less than self-evident indicates that the idea was self-evident to the people at this time. Once again, we can assume that a firm belief in Nathan's promise to David was the driving force behind these words.

In his two remarks during this dispute, Micah presents his interpretation of Jerusalem's crisis. In the process, he subtly reverses major themes to be found in the liturgical point of departure and refutes the position just having been taken by his opponents (cf. page 73). In his second remark, Micah puts the present crisis in a broader perspective and conveys thereby his view of history and his view of the future of both the northern and the southern kingdoms.

Structurally, 4:14-5:3 divides into two sections, 4:14-15:1 and 5:2-3; the second one is introduced by ἄλλος and is an amplification of the first one. Combining these two sections, we can construct Micah's interpretation of the crisis (cf. page 87). Yahweh will abandon Jerusalem (5:2a); her judge will be struck on the cheek, a gesture which implies the fall of the city and the exile of her inhabitants (4:14). Afterwards however, Yahweh will announce to insignificant Bethlehem, Ephrathah in Judah that she is to bring forth a leader for Israel, which, in such close proximity to the word Judah, designates the people of Jerusalem. This moment is patterned after from Jerusalem to Bethel. In theSyro-Ephraimitic context, the implication of the birth of a leader, after all, was that David's birth, was to have extensive and far-reaching consequences in Micah's view an exaltation in the strength and majesty of a dynasty.

Isaiah was one of the prophets who worked on the restoration of the Syro-Ephraimitic context. His thought is preserved in the temple, Isaiah 6:1-8:23...
designates the people of both kingdoms (5:1). This announce-
ment is patterned after 4:8, craftily shifting the emphasis
from Jerusalem to Bethlehem (cf. page 86). This leader will
stand and 'shepherd' in the strength of Yahweh, and he will be
great to the ends of the earth. The remainder of his brothers,
remained here including northerners, will rejoin the people of
Israel, and they all will dwell securely at their leader's
feet (5:2b-3).

The use of the designation judge for Judah's leader, the
announcement of the birth of a new ruler, the emphasis on the
insignificance of his place of origin, and the historical
rhythm of abandoning/saving, all these motifs are familiar
to us from the pre-monarchical period. Although we have at
our disposal an interpretation of this history from a later
hand, the Deuteronomistic historian, Micah evidently held a
similar view of the same period and referred to it in order to
interpret the crisis in Jerusalem.

Micah's interpretation of this crisis is very intriguing.
Such a view of Yahweh's interaction with his people is seem-
ingly opposed to the theology of the Zion tradition and to
the implications of Nathan's promise to David. Yahweh is
free in this type of thought to abandon and to save, neither
fixed to a city nor a line of leadership. Interestingly,
Micah's words do refer to a tradition about David. The new
leader, after all, was to come forth from Bethlehem, the city
of David's birth, was to unite Israel as David had done, and
was to have extensive dominion. However, David seems to be
in Micah's view an example of a charismatic leader who stood
in the strength and majesty of Yahweh, and not the founder
of a dynasty.

Isaiah was one of the men in this period who ruminated
on the restoration of northern Israel, especially during
the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis and the years immediately there-
after. His thought is available to us in his memoir which
was compiled during this crisis and recapitulated the prophet's
activities as an expression of his confidence in their effi-
cacy (cf. page 99f.) Confronted by Yahweh sitting upon a throne
in the temple, Isaiah became certain of Yahweh's presence
with his people on Mount Zion. This certainty became
the lodestar of his preaching during the Syro-Ephraimitic
crisis and the source of his confidence in Judah's vindication,
as is clear from his own summary of the memoir:

And I will wait for Yahweh, who is hiding his face from
the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.
Is it not so that I and the children whom Yahweh has
given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh
of hosts dwelling on Mount Zion (Isaiah 8:17-18).

Isaiah preached (6:9-13) and his children prefigured (Immanuel
7:10-17; Maher-shalal-hash-baz 8:3-4) the downfall of Rezin
and Pekah (cf. page 99). One segment of the Immanuel prophecy
contains Isaiah's view of what was to happen to Israel and
Syria after their having been vanquished. He announced to
Ahaz that he and his father's house would experience days that
had not come since the day Ephraim had departed from Judah
(7:17). We have seen in our exegesis of this verse that these
words refer to Judah's annexation of vanquished Israel and
Syria, i.e., the restoration of the old Davidic kingdom (cf.
page 96f.).

In one of the comments, 8:23b, which Isaiah appended to
his memoir in order to note developments in northern Israel
apropos the prophecies in this work, the prophet returned to
his statement about the fate of Israel, found in the Immanuel
prophecy. Sometime after 732 B.C., Isaiah noted a reversal
of Israel's fortunes. Indeed, a first one (in all likelihood
the first child/sign Maher-shalal-hash-baz) had brought the land
of Zebulun and Naphtali into contempt, but a last one (the
child/sign Immanuel) had made glorious the three Assyrian pro-
vinces in Israel: the way of the sea, the Transjordan, and
Galilee of the nations (cf. pages 106-14). The hymn of thank-
giving, 9:1-6, appended after the note in 8:23b and bringing
the memoir to a close, sheds more light on the circumstances
associated with this reversal (cf. pages 114-18). It indicates
that in the same year, 727 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III, king of
Assyria and scourge of Israel, had died, and Hezekiah, king
of Judah, had ascended the throne. In view of this dramatic
development, the prophet could say:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of darkness

on them the light
You have multiplied you have increased
They rejoice before with the merriment

This hymn evidences that the history of Judah and
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Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria
on them the light has shined.
You have multiplied rejoicing,
you have increased joy.
They rejoice before you
with the merriment of the harvest
as men shout when they divide the spoil (Isaiah 9:1-2)

This hymn evidences that 727 B.C. was seen as a watershed in
the history of Judah and Israel. The peoples of both kingdoms
were looking forward to an age of peace, with Hezekiah sitting
on the throne of David and ruling over David's kingdom (9:6).

The memoir and its appendices contain Isaiah's view of
the rehabilitation of Israel during, and just after, the Syro-
Ephraimitic crisis. His view appears to have grown from the
unique interplay of two traditions and a set of historical
circumstances. Isaiah adhered to the so-called Zion theology.
His conviction that Yahweh was present in the temple (6:2) and
that Yahweh was dwelling on Mount Zion (8:18) is attested in
his memoir. Thus, when Jerusalem was threatened the tenets of
this tradition came into play: Yahweh would defend his moun-
tain abode and repulse any army that should threaten it, the
armies of Israel and Syria included. Under the circumstances,
however, the repulsion of the armies of northern Israel and
Syria, a reflex in the first instance of Isaiah's Zion theol-
ogy, implied something else. The unique combination of the
defeat of Israel and Syria and the defense of Jerusalem was,
at the same time, a dramatic reconfirmation of David and the
promises made to his house and his kingdom (II Samuel 7).
During the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis, the nations threatening
Judah were the very nations once composing the Davidic king-
dom. Isaiah, committed to the tenets of Zion theology and
to Nathan's promise to David, quite naturally began to think
in terms of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom at this
time.

In short, the traditions concerning Zion and Nathan’s
promise to David along with a unique set of circumstances
during the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis functioned as midwives,
and the conviction of the restoration of David's kingdom was
born. When Jerusalem was vindicated and Israel and Syria
vanquished, the conviction grew: when in 727 B.C. Tiglath-
pileser III of Assyria died and Hezekiah of Judah ascended
the throne, the conviction matured into hopes like those contained in 8:23b and in 9:1-6, the hymn of thanksgiving.

At some point later in his life, Isaiah directed his thoughts to the remnant of his people residing throughout the Assyrian empire (Isaiah 11:11, 15-16). Although the imagery in this section is somewhat obscure, Isaiah envisions a supernatural intervention. Yahweh will split up the Nile river, wave his hand over it, and strike it into seven streams. Along these streams he will lead his people homeward, just as he had led them once before from Egypt (cf. 129-37).

In 11:11, 15-16, Isaiah draws upon the tradition of the wandering in the wilderness in order to illuminate the new wandering. Although the act of Yahweh's waving his hand over the river and striking it into seven streams is almost always seen as a parallel to Moses' stretching his hand over the sea and dividing it, this act is a parallel to Moses' striking the rock in the desert. From this rock, according to tradition, streams flowed forth, which became like roads in the wilderness for the wandering Israelites. When verse 15 touches upon the theme of Yahweh's leading and his providing sandals, we can be quite sure that Isaiah was patterning a new wandering on the basis of the original. These verses provide a valuable insight into the state of the wandering tradition in Isaiah's day.

Isaiah's prophecy, articulating a second wandering in the wilderness, was edited at a later date. A list of seven territories was added after the word, Assyria, in order to supply a geographical cadre for the seven streams and to clarify that the Assyrian empire was under consideration, and not only the country (cf. pages 134-36). In counterclockwise order, these seven territories convey approximately the perimeters of the Assyrian empire. Since Egypt and Ethiopia are enclosed, the redaction must have originated sometime after 670 B.C., when Assyria first conquered these countries. Evidently at the same time in which a redactor added this national tabulation, he appended the poem now contained in 11:12-14. His immediate purpose was to make a connection between the seven territories and this poem's initial phrase, לַיְהוֹב מִשְׁכַּנּוֹ, by which he redirected the thrust of the whole poem. Originally, the

148
nations (0'117) were those mentioned in verse 14, as is sug-
gested by the poem's chiastic structure, but now the redactor
has broadened the scope, for the ensign is raised to the na-
tions found in the list. Since the national allusions and the
scope of the military activities within the poem are limited
to Palestine, we are inclined to date it before Assyria made
inroads on this area and to see the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis
as its historical context (cf. page 128).

This poem conceptualizes a restoration of Israel and
Judah in programmatic fashion. Three steps were to bring a
complete reversal in the scattered and fragmented state of the
sister kingdoms: first, Yahweh would raise an ensign and rally
the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah; secondly,
Ephraim and Judah would resolve their differences; and finally,
they would assault together Aram, Moab, Edom, and the Ammonites
(cf. page 127).

Excavating the traditions buried in this poem, we discover
that it envisions a military expedition which is initiated
by Yahweh and carried out by the militia, an expedition complete
from the raising of the ensign to the attack on the kingdoms
surrounding Israel and Judah. Further, Israel and Judah are
equal partners in this endeavor, whose goal is the restoration
of the borders enjoyed during the kingship of David and Solomon.
Isaiah, however, can hardly be the author of this poem. The
reliance upon military strength rather than upon Yahweh alone,
the image of Yahweh as commander of the armies of Israel, and
the concerted action of the two kingdoms with no indication of
the priority of Jerusalem, all point to another source. Track-
ing these traditions to the circle wherein they originally could
have functioned, we would look, first of all, for militarists,
since the poem projects an expedition with Yahweh as commander;
for unionists, since it presents national harmony as the the
key to dominance; for'Davidics', since his victories and his
kingdom are idealized; for 'nostalgics', since everything look-
ed for here had been realized in the past. Were there men,
possibly in centers other than Jerusalem, who longed for an
earlier period when the militia, not professional soldiers,
was rallied by Yahweh for battle and when Israel and Judah
acted jointly? Were there men who idealized David as the
last example of a leader who had realized these dreams and cherished the hope contained in Nathan's promise concerning David's kingdom? Such men would have been receptive to a prophecy such as that found in Isaiah 11:12-14 and would have preserved it.

2. SIMILARITIES

Having presented a summary of our exegetical findings and an analysis of the conceptualization of the northern kingdom's restoration for each section singly, we would like to compare these statements and to search for any similarities, or dissimilarities, which may typify Judah's thinking about Israel's restoration in this period just after her fall.

One possible way to approach these texts would be to note their different authors — in our opinion, Micah, the Jerusalem prophets, Isaiah, and an anonymous prophet — and to see if they differ from one another. However, the material is too meagre and our knowledge of the authors' background, with the possible exception of Isaiah, too limited to make far-reaching statements in this regard. We can assume that all these authors had a definite point of view about the restoration of Israel, but we cannot determine what it was from the few statements at our disposal.

We will approach these prophecies as a whole and note what they perhaps have in common which could mark them as typical of this period of Judah and Israel's history. Examining the texts in this light, we discover two striking similarities.

First of all, these texts, with the exception of Isaiah 11:11, 15-16, refer to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. As is evident from our exegesis and the summary given above, Isaiah (Isaiah 7:17; 8:23b; 9:6), the Jerusalem prophets (Micah 2:12-13; 4:8), and an anonymous author (Isaiah 11:12-14), all expressed this idea. In the case of Micah (Micah 4:14-5:3), a new leader is to come forth from Bethlehem who is to rule over his reunited brothers, and who is to be great to the ends of the earth. While a reference to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom clearly a pattern for us.

How can one explanation among the different prophecies answer to this question? The unique interpretation of Nathan's promise to David. The Ephraimitic war led Israel to believe that the cycle punishment of Israel, and he linked the coming king, as is evident from 9:1-6. This linkage expression of the hope of the restoration of the kingdom's lifetime. The elements of the hope of restoration was expressed in their references to the cycle of punishment, as is evident from Micah 2:12-13, 4:8, 5:3. This linkage expresses the idea that we are able to gather from their sources reveal a man about to expand its borders, and to rule over those in Judah are already established. This leadership have been a seed-bed for the coming king Hezekiah as the new leader.

The fact that the northern kingdom can be explained as an historical character, the period, not of the exile but of David would be typical and post-exilic period, were not complete. The Davidic kingdom at this time, was one of the historical character.