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THE END OF PROPHECY AND THE APPEARANCE OF ANGELS/MESSENGERS IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

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Introduction

In this paper I propose to read the Twelve Minor prophets as a literary whole. Understanding the Twelve in the singular rather than as a collection of distinct entities finds support from both ancient and contemporary readers. Ben Sirach, in his hymn praising the ancestors (Ecclus. 44.1–50.24), speaks of the Twelve Prophets (Ecclus. 44.10) as having a singular message: '...they comforted the people of Jacob/and they delivered them with confident hope'. The Twelve are recognized as one by Ben Sirach; they are not remembered as individuals among the ancestors of Israel. A number of current studies are beginning to read the Twelve as a redactional unity,[1] though most of these analyses are concerned with tracing the development of the Twelve as it emerged as a single entity shaped over a period of time, and therefore having some coherence as a whole.

My reading of the Twelve also has as one of its strategies the treat-

1. The earliest redactional study of the scroll of the Minor Prophets was Rolland Emerson Wolfe, 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve', *ZAW* 53 (1935), pp. 90-129. For more recent studies see Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup, 97; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Richard J. Coggins, 'The Minor Prophets: One Book or Twelve?', in *Crossing the Boundaries* (ed. S.E. Porter *et al.*; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 57-68; Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (The Biblical Seminar, 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 59-87 and James D. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW, 218; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993).

ment of the book as a literary whole. Indeed, I would agree with redaction critics such as Terence Collins that the composition of prophetic books 'had much in common with the modern art form of collage, in which the juxtaposition of varied, even dissimilar items is cultivated as a matter of style'.[2] However, my strategy for interpreting this literary collage differs from redaction criticism, which has focused on the diachronic history of a book like the Twelve as it developed through time.[3] My aim will be to understand the Twelve as it is—not how it came to be—that is, to appreciate it in much the same way that one appreciates a collage as a work of art in its own right apart from tracing its sources or its development.

My strategy for reading the Twelve, then, will be to read from beginning to end so that my aim will be to understand the whole in terms of its parts and the parts in terms of the whole. Where things occur in the text, what comes before and what comes after, will be consequential for what I am reading as a literary collage.

While I am using this reading tactic heuristically, it rests on general observations about Old Testament texts that many scholars have made. (1) Most would agree that prophetic books are made up of bits and pieces of material coming from perhaps different times and places. However, I do not think that we have the necessary data to trace the diachronic development of the book through time as many redaction critics attempt to do.[4] At any rate, there is an alternative to exploring diachronic development; that is, to trace the unfolding of the book in literary rather than historical terms. (2) Increasingly it is being observed that Israelite narratives such as the so-called Deuteronomistic History do not provide data for reconstructing Israelite history but rather create a past.[5] Biblical

2. Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*, p. 29.

3. For example, Collins understands the origin of prophetic books to be a 'three tiered process'. He says, 'The word "redactor" will be used to refer to those who were responsible for the earlier stages of collection and organization in the "pre-book phase"; the term "writers" will refer to those who used this redacted material to compose the prophetical books; the term "editors" will refer to those responsible for the subsequent revisions of those books' (p. 32).

4. I have developed this point in another place. See 'Prophet, Redactor and Audience: Reforming the Notion of Isaiah's Formation', in R.F. Melugin and M.A. Sweeney (eds.), *New Visions of Isaiah* (JSOTSup, 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1996), pp. 306-26.

5. See, for example, Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOTSup, 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

narrative is valued by a growing number of scholars more for its literary quality than as history. Perhaps the largely poetic prophetic books should also be read in this way. When prophets are introduced in these texts, they are always dated in the past. One way to read them, then, is from beginning to end; that is, as constructions of a prophetic past, and not as data for reconstructing the life and times of the prophets (most studies have abandoned this) or the historical development of prophetic books.

An Overview of the Twelve

Different readers of the book of the Twelve will notice different features of the whole just as different viewers will notice different features of a collage. What stands out in one's viewing/reading a collage will be important for how one perceives the whole. In order to understand my present reading of the Twelve, therefore, it is important that I indicate the features that have captured my attention.

I discern the Twelve as divided into two parts: (1) Hosea to Zephaniah and (2) Haggai to Malachi. The juxtaposition of these two parts highlights difference, but it is in this very difference that one can see how the Twelve can be configured as a whole. The differences are: (1) the first part portrays the period of Judean kings from Uzziah to Josiah depicting a period of Assyrian rise and domination as historical background, while the second part portrays a Persian period during the time of Darius when Judah no longer had kings; (2) the first part portrays a period of confusion over the identification of prophets, while the second part clarifies the issue; (3) the first part understands the presence of angels/messengers (מלאכים) to be only a memory from the time of the patriarch Jacob, and this recollection is found only in one place, Hos. 12.5 (Eng. 12.6), while the second part is filled with מלאכים. The juxtaposition of these two parts, however, helps us to see the whole. The Twelve as a collage pictures the rise and fall of a prophetic past and the reinstitution of an angelic/messenger presence. Prophecy in the Twelve is valued as a past institution that is coming to an end.

From Judean to Persian Royalty

As one reads through the Twelve sequentially from Hosea to Zephaniah, explicit references to Judaean kings in what have been called superscriptions place this section of the book in a time period that stretches from

Uzziah to Josiah; that is, a time period that coincides with the rise and fall of Assyria.[6]

Hosea 1.1	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah[7]	
Amos 1.1	Uzziah[8]	
Micah 1.1	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah	
Zeph. 1.1		Josiah[9]

Narrative portrayals of the past in this part of the book (Amos 7.10-17 and Jonah)[10] also provide as background the same historical period for this literary collage. When the reader moves from Zephaniah to Haggai, he or she is catapulted in time over the period of Babylonian rule to the Persian period.[11] In this section of the book only the Persian king Darius is mentioned. As if to bring the reader from a vaguely remembered past into a better-known period of time, the dating becomes both more frequent and more precise. Haggai begins with a very specific temporal setting: 'In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai... '(Hag. 1.1). Subsequent dating in the book of Haggai with equal specificity as to time and with strict attention to linear sequence strengthen the impression on the reader that one is moving into a better-known world (see Hag. 1.14b-15; 2.1, 10, 20). This frequent and precise dating continues in Zechariah (see Zech. 1.1; 1.7; 7.1). Such a precision in dating functions rhetorically to alert the reader that the book has

6. That is, it coincides with other portrayals of Israel's past in the so-called Deuteronomistic and Chronicler's Histories.

7. Hos. 1.1 also mentions Jeroboam, king of Israel.

8. Amos 1.1 also mentions the Israelite king, Jeroboam.

9. Five of the individuals in the book are given no specific dating (Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum and Habakkuk) so that their literary location in time is determined by the explicit references to kings associated with other individuals that surround them in the literary collage.

10. Excluding, of course, the narrative about Hosea's personal history, Hos. 1 and 3.

11. There is a parallel in the sequential unfolding of the book of Isaiah. Superscription (1.1) and narrative (6.1-8, 22, 20 and 36-39) situate the first 39 chapters in a chronological timeline measured by the reigns of the Judaean kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. At ch. 40 the reader is catapulted in time to a period of Babylonian decline when the only king mentioned is the Persian king, Cyrus (44.28 and 45.1). Isaiah is different from the Twelve in that the Judaean kings are sequenced only as far as Hezekiah and the Persian king mentioned is Cyrus, not the later king, Darius.

moved into a better-known period of record and out of a more vaguely remembered past.

Prophets and Angels/Messengers

I now want to explore in more detail the sudden appearance of מלאכים in the Persian section of the Book of the Twelve and the accompanying certainty with which Haggai and Zechariah are identified as prophets. The historical sequence in the Book of the Twelve—from an Assyrian era to a Persian age—is associated with different ways in which the roles of prophets (נביאים) and angels/messengers (מלאכים) are presented. Of the nine individuals mentioned in the Assyrian section of the Book of the Twelve, only Habakkuk is explicitly identified as a prophet, or better 'the prophet' (הנביא, Hab. 1.1; 3.1). For the reader the vocational status of the other individuals mentioned remains somewhat uncertain. However, when the reader reaches the Persian section of the Book, it is made explicit that Haggai and Zechariah are prophets. Haggai is referred to as 'the prophet' (הנביא) five times (1.1, 3, 12; 2.1, 10) and Zechariah twice (Zech. 1.1, 7). Of equal significance is the sudden appearance of angels/messengers (מלאכים) in the Persian section of the Book of the Twelve. Zechariah is portrayed in his visions as surrounded by מלאכים (see Zech. 1.11, 12; 2.3; 3.1, 4, 5, 6). Of special significance is Zechariah's mention of 'the angel/messenger who spoke through me' (המלאך הדבר בי), a phrase that occurs 11 times (Zech. 1.9, 13, 14; 2.2 [Eng. 1.19], 7 [Eng. 2.3]; 4.1, 4, 5; 5.5, 10; 6.4).[12] Not only is Zechariah surrounded by מלאכים in his visions, but also the Zechariah section of the Book of the Twelve is encircled by מלאכים.[13] In the Haggai section of the Book, which precedes Zechariah, Haggai is the first and only named being in the Book of the Twelve to be designated as a מלאך (Hag. 1.13): 'Then Haggai, the מלאך of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message (במלאכות) saying, "I am with you, an utterance of the LORD".' The Zechariah section of the Book is followed by a section identified as 'An oracle, the word of the LORD to Israel by the hand of מלאכי.'[14] There are two other references to מלאכים in the Mal. section of the Book.

12. 'The Satan' who appears in Zech. 3.2 is also apparently a kind of angel.

13. The convention has been, however, to translate these other instances of מלאך into English as 'messenger', not as 'angel'.

14. In English translations, מלאכי is either transliterated as a proper name, 'Malachi', or translated as 'my messenger'.

Mal. 2.7-8 refers to a priest as the מלאך of the LORD who 'caused many to stumble', corrupting 'the covenant with Levi', and Mal. 3.1-2 refers to a מלאך who is coming to prepare the way of the LORD. The only מלאך mentioned in the Assyrian section of the book is the מלאך who, in the past, used to speak to the ancestor Jacob at Bethel (Hos. 12.5 [Eng. 12.4]).

The Portrayal of Prophecy in the Book of the Twelve

To gain some perspective on the connection between the appearance of angels/messengers and an increased certainty about the identification of individuals as prophets in the Persian section of the Book of the Twelve, it is important to understand how prophecy is characterized in the Book as a whole. Confusion about prophecy is an underlying theme in the Assyrian section of the Book. Who is a prophet and who is not? Who is to be heeded, and who is to be ignored? These are questions the Book of the Twelve presents as issues.

On the one hand prophets are singled out for judgment as participants in the official corruption affecting leaders in the community (Hos. 4.4-6; Mic. 3.5-7, 9-11; Zeph. 3.1-4).[15] On the other hand, prophets are sometimes valued positively as carrying out the work of the LORD (see Hos. 6.5; 12.11 [Eng. 12.10]; 12.14 [Eng. 12.13]; Amos 2.11-12; 3.7-8). However one reads these passages, the impression seems to be that of a community's difficulty in distinguishing between prophets who are corrupt, leading the people astray, and others who are filled with the spirit of the LORD. 'Who is acting as a prophet ought to act and who is mad and acting like a fool?'[16] is an unwritten question that pervades the section of the Book of the Twelve from Hosea to Zephaniah.[17]

This bewilderment is probably most clearly conveyed by the narrative about Amos that occurs in the middle of his reception of visions from the

15. Again the book of Isaiah is similar because in its pre-Persian or Assyrian section (Isa. 1–39) the unscrupulous practices of prophets are rebuked (see Isa. 3.2; 9.14 [Eng. 9.15]; 28.7; 29.10).

16. See Mic. 3.8 and Hos. 9.7b.

17. Some scholars have argued that prophets were only secondarily related to the poetry so that what was once intellectual poetry became prophetic words. See, for example, A. Graeme Auld, 'Poetry, Prophecy, Hermeneutic: Recent Studies in Isaiah', *SJT* 33 (1980), pp. 567-81. My own reading is a synchronic one, and I do not attempt to clarify the conflicting and negative views of prophecy in prophetic books by introducing a diachronic analysis.

LORD (Amos 7.10-17)—the well known story about Amos's encounter with Amaziah the priest of Bethel who accused him of conspiring against Jeroboam, the house of Israel. In Amaziah's dialogue with Amos, Amaziah makes it clear that Amos has spoken not the words of the LORD but the words of Amos. He says, 'The land is not able to bear all *his* [Amos's] words' (Amos 7.10b). As if to underscore the point, Amaziah switches the formula, 'Thus says the LORD' (כה אמר יהוה), which Amos had been using throughout (see e.g. Amos 1.3, 6, 9, 13; 2.1, 4, 6; 3.12; 5.4), to 'Thus Amos said' (כה אמר עמוס). Furthermore, when Amaziah does address Amos, he does not call him a prophet (נביא) but a seer (חזה).

> And Amaziah said to Amos, 'O seer (חזה), go flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy (תנבא) there; but never again prophesy (להנבא) at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom' (Amos 7.12-13).

While Amaziah does say that the activity that Amos is engaging in is prophesying, he does not say that Amos is a prophet. As is well known, the Hebrew nominal sentence in Amos's response, 'Not a prophet I, and not a son of a prophet I', adds to the confusion. Should the sentence be translated in English in the present tense indicating that Amos, as Amaziah has suggested, is not a prophet? Or, should it be translated in the past tense—'I was not a prophet, nor was I the son of a prophet'—implying that although Amos had not been a prophet in the past, he is now? I do not think that the ambiguity needs to be cleared up. Indeed, the ambiguity is the point of the passage. In the Assyrian section of the Book of the Twelve, it is not clear who is a prophet and who is not. The Assyrian past in the Book of the Twelve, the time from Hosea to Zephaniah, the period during the reigns of kings from Uzziah to Josiah, is portrayed as one of confusion in the identification of prophets. The prophets through whom the LORD spoke can only be known as prophets in retrospect.[18]

It is from the perspective of this configuration of the Book of the

18. Here again, then, there is a parallel between the book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve. In the Book of the Twelve the 'former prophets' are presented as figures who were not accepted by their own community in their own time, just as Isaiah's vision was rejected in his own time by a community blind and deaf to its meaning. The rejection of the words of the LORD by the prophet's own community is heightened in the Book of the Twelve by the story of Jonah in which the message Jonah proclaimed to a foreign and enemy city, Nineveh, was readily accepted. See Jon. 3.5.

Twelve that one can see how the end of this confusion as well as the end of prophecy is portrayed. It is not until Hab. 1.1, 'the oracle that the prophet (הנביא) saw', that any one of the named individuals is identified explicitly as a prophet. The identification is repeated again in Hab. 3.1. In reading on to Zephaniah, one could initially dismiss as insignificant the identification of Habakkuk as a prophet because Zephaniah, like the previous seven individuals named in the Book, is not identified as a prophet. At the end of Zephaniah, however, not only does one cross a chasm from the time of the Judaean king Josiah (Zeph. 1.1) at the end of Assyrian domination of Judah to the time of the Persian king Darius (Hag. 1.1), one also passes into a time where there can be no doubt that the reader is encountering prophets (see Hag. 1.1, 3, 12; 2.1, 10; Zech. 1.1, 7). It is not until the Zechariah section of the book that it becomes clear that all the former individuals to whom the LORD spoke in the Book of the Twelve are prophets. Zechariah identifies these individuals as former prophets (הנביאים הראשנים, 1.4; cf. 7.7, 12).[19] By the time of Zechariah, the confusion over who is or who is not a prophet is finally settled. The design of the book suggests that it is from the perspective of this later Persian time that these former individuals from an Assyrian past can be understood as prophets.[20]

This configuration of the Book of the Twelve mirrors a criterion suggested elsewhere in the Bible for determining who is a prophet of the LORD and who is not. In Deut. 18.15-22 it is envisaged that on some occasion there may be confusion concerning who is a prophet of the LORD and who is not, and the following basis for making such a determination is given:

> You may say to yourself, 'How will we recognise a word that the LORD has not spoken?' If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it (Deut. 18.21-22).

19. In making this interpretation, I am following a strategy that takes the literary context of the Book of the Twelve as a whole as the basis for understanding the phrase הנביאים הראשנים.

20. Again there is a parallel with the book of Isaiah. The 'former things' in the latter part of Isaiah refer to the vision of Isaiah in the eighth century found earlier in the book (chs. 6–39). See my *Reading Isaiah* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 137-53.

Read from the perspective of this Deuteronomic text, what the LORD spoke to the 'former prophets' (Hosea through Zephaniah), in a past period of Assyrian domination, has proved true at the later time of Persian rule.

> But my words and statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said, 'The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do' (Zech. 1.6).

This relationship with Deuteronomy is an intertextual one: the Book of the Twelve isnot therefore to be understood as a result of Deuteronomistic redaction. Rather the text of the Twelve, like any text, makes its readers aware of other texts not only because it is related to other texts at the time of its origin (its pretext) but also at the time of its reception (the reader's context).[21] Both Deuteronomy and the Twelve share the notion that a prophet is understood to be legitimate if what he says comes true.[22]

Furthermore, in the Book of the Twelve both Haggai and Zechariah

21. For a discussion of intertextuality see John Frow, 'Intertextuality and Ontology', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (ed. M. Worton and J. Still; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 45-55. For a discussion of intertextuality and the biblical text see Robert P. Carroll, 'Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah: Animadversions on Text and Theory', in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. J.C. Exum and D.J.A. Clines; JSOTSup, 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 55-78, esp. 56-61; and G. Savran, 'Beastly Speech: Intertextuality, Balaam's Ass and the Garden of Eden', *JSOT* 64 (1994), pp. 33-55, esp. 36-37.

22. A number of passages suggest this criterion for judging the legitimacy of prophets. In Jeremiah's response to Hananiah who prophesied peace, Jeremiah responds, 'The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of the prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet' (Jer. 28.8-9). In the well-known passage concerning the prophet Micaiah and his encounter with Ahab in 1 Kgs 22, Micaiah said that the king would not succeed at Ramoth-gilead but would die in battle. When Micaiah is imprisoned for his unfavourable prophecy, he offers the following as the test for determining whether the LORD has spoken: 'If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me' (v. 28).

Of course, other passages in the Old Testament prescribe other means for determining who is a true prophet. For example, Jer. 23.18-22 (see also 1 Kgs 22.19-28) understands that it is only the true prophet 'who has stood in the council of the LORD' (vv. 18 and 22). This passage, of course, relates to Zechariah whose visions suggest that he is standing in the council of the LORD.

gain authority as prophets in their own time because they stand in continuity with the former prophets. Indeed, this continuity is made explicit in Zechariah after he has received his visions. First we are told that in the fourth year of Darius 'the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men' to the priests and the prophets to inquire about mourning and practicing abstinence. Zechariah's answer to this question is

> Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: 'Say to all the people of the land and the priests, "When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink only for yourselves?"' (Zech. 7.4-6).

In the continuation of his response to the question put to him by the people of Bethel, Zechariah supports his answer by claiming that his answer is in accord with what 'the former prophets' had proclaimed.

> Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets (הנביאים הראשנים), when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around it, and when the Negeb and Shephelah were inhabited? (Zech. 7.7).

Zechariah is not directly quoting what any of 'the former prophets' said, but he seeks to ground his answer in the words of the prophets from the past to whom the LORD had spoken and whose words were proved true by subsequent events (cf. Zech. 1.6). His answer receives authority from its foundation in and continuity with a prophetic past. The word of the LORD to Zechariah continues with a kind of precis of the past prophetic message to show how Zechariah's answer about the present behaviour of the people fits with what 'the former prophets' said about the past behaviour of the people. In both cases the people are presented as self-centred.

> The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another." But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. Just as, when I [Heb. 'he'] called, they would not hear, so when they called, I would not hear', says the LORD of hosts, 'and I scattered them with a whirlwind

among all the nations they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate' (Zech. 7.8-14).

Although the design of the Book of the Twelve indicates that the former individuals from Hosea through Zephaniah were prophets and that Haggai and Zechariah, as prophets, stand in continuity with that prophetic past, by the end of the Zechariah section of the Book, prophecy itself is seen to have no future. If there was confusion in the past about who was a prophet and who was not, Zechariah's oracle makes it clear that there will be no confusion in the future because prophecy will end. As can be seen in the following quotation from Zechariah, the reported speech of these 'potential prophets' leaves no doubt; they no longer consider themselves to be prophets. Each will speak the first half of Amos's famous, 'Not a prophet I' (Zech. 13.5; cf. Amos 7.14), and the second part of the sentence, 'I am a tiller of the soil' (Zech. 13.5) allows for no ambiguity. Prophecy will come to an end. Zech. 13.1-6 reads,

> 'On that day', says the LORD of hosts, 'I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets (הנביאים) and the unclean spirit. And if the prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, "You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD"; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy (בהנבאו). On that day the prophets shall be ashamed, every one, of their visions when they prophesy; they will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, but each of them will say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession since my youth." And if anyone asks them, "What are these wounds on your chest?", the answer will be, "The wounds I received in the house of my friends."'

By the end of the Book of the Twelve, prophets have dropped from the scene. One encounters only the LORD's messenger, מלאכי, 'my messenger'. The days of the prophets are over; and the only prophets mentioned are those from the past, Moses (Mal. 3.22 [Eng. 4.4]), to whom the LORD gave statues and ordinances at Horeb, and Elijah, who will return 'before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes' (Mal. 3.23 [Eng. 4.5]).

The Appearance of Angels/Messengers

How are we to understand the appearance of מלאכים, which coincides with the disappearance of prophecy, in the Persian section of the Book

of the Twelve? One way of seeking an answer to this question is to look at the other place where a מלאך is mentioned, that is Hos. 12.5 (Eng. 12.4), a passage that occurs in the earlier Assyrian section of the Book. This verse, about a מלאך who used to appear to the ancestor Jacob/Israel, is part of a larger passage (Hos. 12.3-7 [Eng. 12.2-6]), pertaining to an indictment (ריב) the LORD has against Judah.[23]

In the womb he tried to supplant his brother,
and in his manhood he strove[24] with a divine being.[25]
He strove with the angel (מלאך) and prevailed,
he wept and sought his favor;
he used to find us (ימצאנו)[26] at Bethel,
and there he used to speak (ידבר)[27] with us (עמנו).[28]
The LORD the God of hosts,
the LORD (יהוה) is his name (זכרו).
But as for you, return (תשוב) to your God,
hold fast to (שמר) love (חסד) and justice (משפט),
and wait (וקוה) continually for your God.

There are a number of links between this passage about a מלאך and the later Persian section of the Book where Zechariah is surrounded by מלאכים. Perhaps the best way to indicate these connections is to list them. (1) The doxology that concludes the allusion to the time of the patriarch Jacob suggests the name Zechariah (זכריה).

The LORD the God of hosts
the LORD (יהוה) is his name (זכרו).

23. The incidents in these verses recall occurrences in the life of the patriarch similar to the stories about him in Gen. 25–35.

24. The two verbs, עקב ('supplant') and שׂרה ('strive'), are a play on words suggesting the patriarch's two names, יעקב and ישׂראל.

25. I am translating אלהים as 'divine being' rather than 'God' as in NRSV, since the verb שׂרה is used also in the next line with מלאך.

26. I am reading the object suffix here as a first-person plural rather than a third person singular (as does the NRSV) to bring it into agreement with the first-person plural suffix on the preposition associated with the following verb, עמנו.

27. NRSV translates the two imperfects 'he met' and 'he spoke'. Because the context concerns the past, it is appropriate to render the imperfects as iterative imperfects, i.e., to indicate what happened repeatedly in the past.

28. 'Us' reflects the Hebrew of the MT and the footnoted reading in NRSV, which in the main translation follows the Greek and Syriac and translates 'with him'. The need to emend the text to read עמו seems less necessary when the preceding verb with a suffix, ימצאנו is read 'he used to find us'.

The tetragrammaton and the unusual use of זֵכֶר rather than שֵׁם[29] for 'name' pick up the two components in the name Zechariah (זכריה). Zechariah's very name carries the doxology accompanying the remembrance of an angelic past. The MT pointing of the prophet's name זְכַרְיָה 'the LORD has remembered', links the time of an angelic/messenger presence in Zechariah with the way the LORD used to speak by an angel/messenger in the days of the ancestor Jacob. What the LORD has remembered at the time of Zechariah in the Persian section of the Book is presented as something that had come to an end in the Assyrian section of the Book.

(2) These verses in the Hosea section of the Book suggest that prevailing against the LORD is not only an accusation against the ancestor Jacob but also an indictment against the community in this Assyrian section of the Book.[30] The community has lost the angelic/messenger presence of their patriarchal past. 'He (the angel) used to find us (ימצאנו) at Bethel,/and there he used to speak with us (ידבר עמנו).' This community without an angelic/messenger presence is directed to return (תשוב) to their God. The call 'to return' is finally heeded, according to the Book, in the Persian period when Zechariah reiterates the call of the former prophets for the community to return.

> The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "*Return* (שובו) to me", says the LORD of hosts, "and I will *return* (אשוב) to you", says the LORD of hosts. "Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "*Return* (שובו) from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." But they did not hear or heed me', says the LORD. 'Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they *returned*[31] (שובו)

29. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (AB, 24; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 615, comment on this unusual use of זכר: 'The use of *zikrô* rather than the usual *šemô*, as in Exod 15:3, is notable. Hos 12:6 is the only place where *zikrô* substitutes outright for *šemô* in credal hymns of this kind. The words are, however, interchangeable, as comparison with Exod 3:15 shows.'

30. On this point see G.I. Davies (*Hosea* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], p. 272), who summarises the way these verses work in the allegation by suggesting that 'the sins of the present generation [are] already foreshadowed and in some sense fixed by those of the national patriarch'.

31. I have changed the NRSV translation, 'repented', to 'returned' in order to show in English translation the repetition of the root שוב.

> and said, "The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do"' (Zech. 1.2-6).

The summons 'to return' is not heeded until there is again an angelic/messenger presence in the Persian community.

(3) Just as the מלאך used to be present to speak 'with' (עם) the community at a specific place, Bethel, from a remembered patriarchal past mentioned in the Assyrian section of the Book, in the Persian section of the Book, in which the 'LORD has remembered' this patriarchal past, another מלאך, Haggai, is concerned with establishing a place by summoning the people to rebuild the temple. 'With the message of the LORD' (במלאצות יהוה) Haggai also announces the presence of the LORD: 'I am with you (אתכם)' (Hag. 1.13; cf. Hos. 12.5). When one moves from the Assyrian section of the Book, then, one moves from an Assyrian past where there was an absence of angels/messengers to a Persian period where angels/messengers again appear, and the first of these is Haggai. The argument I am making is that in the Book of the Twelve Haggai, as both מלאך and נביא, represents a transition point in the literature between the end of the LORD being with his people by means of his prophets (Hosea through Zephaniah) and a period of time when there will be מלאכים present in the rebuilt temple (Haggai through Malachi), a time when prophecy will come to an end.

Conclusion

In this article I have read the Twelve as a literary collage recognising that it is composite in its construction, and indeed acknowledging my involvement in configuring the text as I perceive it. I understand the Twelve to construct a prophetic past in such a way that prophets can be identified as such only from the perspective of a later period in which what the former prophets said can be seen to have come to pass. The Twelve also envisions the end of prophecy and the restoration of an angel/messenger past.

My reading has been informed in part by other texts (notably the law on prophecy in Deut. 18) or by what some have called intertextuality. The notion of intertextuality has the potential for opening up new readings of prophetic books. For example, my reading of the Twelve has implications for my reading of other prophetic books such as Isaiah. The intertextual relationship between Isaiah and the Twelve needs to be pursued. Both Isaiah and the Twelve are divided between an Assyrian

part (Isa. 1–39 and Hosea to Zephaniah) and a Persian section (Isa. 40–66 and Haggai to Malachi). In both books the former prophetic past in Assyrian times can be seen only from the later Persian period. In both books prophets disappear from the scene and new figures arise: angels/messengers in the Twelve and the Servant in Isaiah. Isaiah and the Twelve as literary collages, when read intertextually, promise new insights into what have always been recognized as composite texts.

ABSTRACT

In this article I offer a reading of the Book of the Twelve as a literary collage. As such the Twelve does not contain data for constructing a prophetic past but is itself a construction of prophecy from Assyrian to Persian times. Recognizing the composite character of the text, my reading acknowledges the role of the reader in configuring it. The individuals from Hosea through Zephaniah can only be recognized as prophets from the later time of Zechariah, depicted in the book as the Persian period. Furthermore, in this configuration prophecy is replaced by the restoration of a messenger/angelic presence as in the days of the ancestor Jacob.