

HOPE BEYOND THE PRE-EXILIC PERIOD

The interrelationship of the Creation and Temple/Zion traditions during the monarchical and exilic periods¹

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Abstract

The thesis of this article is that an investigation of the interrelationship of traditions, and the trajectories that this interrelationship followed through various stages of Israelite history, can assist in determining the character of hope during these stages. This article concentrates on the shifts that took place from the united kingdom of David and Solomon, through the era of the divided monarchy, to the exilic period. It focuses on two distinct and prominent theological traditions of these periods, namely the Temple/Zion and Creation traditions.

1. Introduction

It could be said that the period in which the transfer from monarchical Israel to the exilic period took place was without doubt one of the most influential stages in Israelite history. This period not only saw the political downfall of the divided kingdoms, Judah and Israel, but also immense changes in the sociological and ideological landscape. Perhaps of even more significance were the theological developments and shifts that took place during this historical period. The Jewish exiles adapted and re-interpreted their theological traditions to fit their new circumstances. It was a period of theological re-orientation. No wonder that this era was one of the most productive literary periods in the history of the ancient Hebrew people.

This watershed is clearly reflected in the biblical literature. Biblical scholars therefore have the means to trace the theological changes that characterized this period. Admittedly, the Hebrew Bible does not contain all the texts of this tumultuous period. However, one can detect various theological streams or traditions in these texts.

In this article I will focus on two of these theological traditions, namely the Temple/Zion tradition and the Creation tradition. However, these traditions will not be discussed in isolation. Therefore the focus will consequently fall on the socio-political, theological and ideological 'environment' in which they were practised and transmitted². Thereafter the historical trajectory of each of these traditions from the early monarchy to the exile will be traced. The major part of the discussion will, however, be devoted to the interrelationship between these traditions. The thesis is advanced here that an investigation of this interrelationship can assist in determining the character of hope during the historical period under discussion.

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2 Cf. e.g. Brueggemann (1979, 162, 182): '... the literature that stands within the various trajectories is never sociologically disinterested nor singularly concerned with matters theological. Each text and each trajectory reflect important socio-economic and political concerns. ... A history of traditions approach must include a sociological analysis so that we are aware of the social function of each of the traditions, the authority assigned to it, the claims made for it and power and social vision deriving from it.'

2. The socio-political, theological and ideological 'environment' of the traditions

For a better understanding of the Temple/Zion and Creation traditions a short overview of some of the socio-political, theological and ideological issues that shaped the environment in which they flourished, were transmitted and were adapted will be provided. For more thorough discussions of each of these, the extensive and well-known literature³ could be consulted.

2.1 Mosaic/nomadic covenant versus Davidic/royal covenant

Since 1947 various scholars have indicated that two circles of tradition concerning the covenant could be detected in Israel's literature⁴. The one derived from Mosaic and the other from Davidic circles. At first glance it seems that the biblical literature wishes to suggest that these two circles of tradition are continuous. The Davidic tradition seems to be a natural derivation from that of Moses and continues from the older tradition. It also seems that the Davidic circles undoubtedly wanted to propagate this perception. According to Brueggemann (1979, 161), however, 'recent critical scholarship has now made it reasonable to assume that these two articulations of covenant are not only distinct but also came from very different centres of power and very different processes of tradition building. Tension, and in some ways, conflict between the traditions can be sensed even when one is not attempting to be precise about the points of origin or settings for the two circles of tradition.'

After following the trajectories of these different covenant traditions from the Mosaic period to the exilic period, Brueggemann (1979, 180-1801) characterizes them, admittedly within the framework of a specific theory of society, as royal and liberation trajectories. The Mosaic covenant tradition is associated with the liberation trajectory in which the following common elements could be distinguished:

- (i) It prefers to tell concrete stories of liberation.
- (ii) It speaks a language of war and disruption.
- (iii) The preferred mode of perception is that of historical specificity.
- (iv) It appears to be fostered by and valued among peasant 'have nots'.
- (v) It tends to be socially revolutionary with a primary value being transformation.
- (vi) It focuses on justice and the righteousness of God's will.

The royal trajectory, closely associated with the Davidic covenant tradition, shows the following common elements:

- (i) It prefers to speak in myths of unity.
- (ii) It speaks a language of fertility (creation) and continuity (royal institutions).
- (iii) The preferred mode of perception is that of universal comprehensiveness.
- (iv) It appears to be fostered by and valued among urban 'haves'.
- (v) It tends to stress social conservation with a primary value being stability.
- (vi) It focuses on the glory and holiness of God's person and institutions are also geared to that holiness.

Whether Brueggemann's characterization and description of common elements is viable could of course be disputed. However, his investigation is helpful to indicate that the socio-

3 For references cf. in particular Knight (1977), Brueggemann (1979) and Hubbard (1983).

4 Cf. Brueggemann (1979, 161) for references.

political, theological and ideological 'environment' in which the Israelite traditions flourished could be described as an intricate network of power struggles. It cautions us not to oversimplify our description of other traditions, as well as our characterization of hope in these eras. The question 'What gave people hope in a given period?' should not be answered without being more specific about who the people were that one is talking about. One should guard against making general statements about hope in a given period. One should at most speak of the hope of a specific sector within the intricate network of power relations.

What follows is an attempt to highlight some other factors that might have had an influence on this network of power relations.

2.2 The people of the land versus the royal elite

The social history of Israel during the united and divided monarchies is not that easy to determine. However, various scholarly attempts may help us to form a broad picture of the dynamics within the societies of these periods.

It seems that when the Israelite tribes settled in Palestine, they came into contact, among other things, with peoples who already had some sort of political structure. The Canaanites with their city-states were of course an important factor in this regard. This exposure gradually resulted in a significant part of the Israelite population demanding that a king should be chosen. With the appointment of the first king, Saul, but particularly since David became king, a new era emerged in the social history of Israel. It seems that the schism between the royal elite and the people of the land became increasingly significant. Brueggemann (1979, 169) again interprets this social shift within the context of tension between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants: 'This imperial consciousness combines a religion of a static, guaranteed God together with a politics of injustice and social domination, precisely antithetical to the religion of the freedom of God and the politics of justice introduced by Moses and kept alive in the community of pre-monarchical Israel.' Certain organizational and institutional changes during the early monarchy fostered this shift in society: a change

- (i) from traditional to bureaucratic leadership,
- (ii) from tribal ordering to governmental districts,
- (iii) and from 'holy war' ideology to hired mercenaries. These changes resulted in an increasing polarization in society between the elite and the people of the land.

No wonder that the institution of the monarchy also triggered the advent of prophecy. During the monarchical history of Israel various prophets came to the fore. They were particularly critical of the social injustices practised by the royal elite, the complacency of the rich, and the religious malpractices of the influential. The prophet Amos is certainly a good example. It thus seems that the prophetic protest mainly reflected the values of the people of the land, while the official religion and cultic institutions were supported by the royal elite.

2.3 The 'northerners' versus the 'southerners'

Brueggemann (1979, 172) is of the opinion that the division of the united Davidic-Solomonic kingdom in 922 BC should also be understood within the framework of these socio-political tensions. 'The political institutions of the northern and southern kingdoms are likely vehicles for these two traditions of religion and social vision. ... It is important that the split did not happen over a theological dispute, nor was it simply a gradual growing

apart, but it was triggered by a concrete issue of political oppression and social liberation. There is no doubt that the royal consciousness was committed to the maintenance of order at the cost of justice. This is not, of course, to claim that the northern kingdom did not practise similar oppression ... , but the northern kingdom appears to have been peculiarly open to and vulnerable to the transforming impact of the Moses tradition.'

Brueggemann (1979, 174) even is of the opinion that these tensions are reflected in the normative Biblical traditions, the Jahwist and the Elohist. 'There is little doubt that J is an attempt at unitive and comprehensive theologizing, concerned both to secure the place of the Davidic house in normative theology and to make cosmic claims in terms of linking Jerusalem's centrality and creation theology. Conversely, the E tradition, to the extent that it is a distinct and identifiable piece, is a separatist statement concerned for the purity of the community and aware of the threat of syncretism. Thus the old trajectory of marginal people with a primary concern for freedom and established people with a large concern for stability are reflected in the shape of the J and E traditions. The main issue, in terms of community identity (south and north), communal function and office (king and prophet) and tradition (J and E) stayed alive until the loss of Jerusalem.'

2.4 The Levites versus the Zadokites

The tension between the Levite and Zadokite versions of the priestly institution is well described in scholarly literature⁵, and there is thus no need for an elaborate discussion of it here. This tension already started during David's reign when he appointed two priests, Zadok and Abjatar. His aim was to legitimize the royal house theologically within the united kingdom. His choice of priests was significant. Zadok was from the south. He supported the values and theology of the royal elite. Abjatar, on the contrary, was from the north, and he probably supported the values of the old Moses covenantal tradition. With these appointments David tried to create a balance between the two theological and ideological strongholds within his kingdom. Solomon, however, destroyed this balance when he fired Abjatar, and Zadok became the only and official high priest. This was the start of the long battle between the Levites (associated with Abjatar) and the Zadokites. Le Roux (1987, 105) writes: 'Die Sadokiete het oor buitengewone mag beskik en die nasionale teologie van die Suidryk versterk. In die kultus is die Dawidsteologie en die beloftes daaraan verbonde voortdurend beklemtoon ...'

We have now come to the end of the description of the socio-political, theological and ideological 'environment' of the two traditions which I will now discuss. There are certainly numerous other perspectives that could have been emphasized. However, the above description provides sufficient background information for the present discussion. It is not only the description of these tensions, but also an understanding of their interrelationship that is important for the present discussion. Section 5 of this article, in particular, will deal with the interrelationship.

Before one tries to follow the trajectory of a particular Israelite tradition, one should certainly be clear about what is meant by 'trajectory'. In his description of the two covenant traditions in Israel, Brueggemann (1979, 161) follows Robinson and Koester's understanding of what a trajectory is: '... pieces of literature and tradition should not be studied in isolation nor in terms of mechanical dependence and relationship through a literary process, but ... special attention should be paid to the continuities which flow between various pieces of literature. As a result of social value, use and transmission,

5 Cf. e.g. Le Roux (1986, 153ff. and 1987, 104ff.).

continuities both in terms of cultural context and in terms of theological perspective become decisive for interpretation. ... (A)ttention to trajectories is at best imprecise and does not permit a rigid schematization. It does, however, provide a way to see a coherent and persistent *Tendenz* in each stream.'

In my attempt to follow the trajectories of two Israelite traditions I rely on this understanding of the concept.

3. Following the trajectory of the temple/zion tradition

Various publications provide a thorough description of this tradition⁶. I will here only provide a summary of the factors which are of significance for determining the character of the hope that was fostered by this tradition through various stages of its development.

3.1 The united kingdom under David and Solomon

The so-called national theology that originated in this era was founded on three pillars, namely the indestructibility of the Davidic royal line, of the temple, and of the city of Zion-Jerusalem (Le Roux, 1987, 104). Although many people in pre-monarchical Israel were in opposition to the institution of a king, the immense success of the young King David, in particular, made a significant impact on the population. Many people were so impressed by his reign that they even regarded it as an intervention of Jahweh in their political history. The view became increasingly stronger that the covenant Jahweh made with their ancestor, Abraham, has been fulfilled in the reign of this young and charismatic king. A renewal of the patriarchal covenant was thus visualized in their successful king. This is reflected in the announcement of this covenant in 2 Samuel 7:13,15-16:

He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ... But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.⁷

It is clear from this announcement that the building of a temple was a prominent feature of this covenant. According to tradition David planned to build the temple on Mount Zion in his capital, Jerusalem. It was his son, Solomon, however, who initiated and completed the task. Mount Zion in Jerusalem thus became the religious centre of the united kingdom. By bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Zion-Jerusalem, and by placing it in the Holy of Holies of the temple, it was suggested that Jahweh was present there. The presence of the ark in the temple symbolized Jahweh's invisible presence among his people, that the temple was his earthly dwelling, and that it was therefore indestructible. Zimmerli (1984, 76-77) mentions that this view of Jahweh's presence in the temple was not completely new in this era. 'The transfer of the ark to Zion, coupled with the strong belief in Yahweh, the Lord of Israel, and in particular Lord in the wars of Yahweh, led to an especially intensive adoption of Canaanite idioms in Jerusalem, where, reinterpreted, they became the building blocks for the 'Zion tradition'. Above all, these elements helped give a universal dimension to the belief in Yahweh, who dwells on Zion (Isa. 8:18). Now Yahweh is said to have his dwelling place at the source of the rivers that water the world (Ps. 46:5; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12), as the Canaanites had said of El. Zion becomes the world mountain, Zaphon ... in the north, which

6 Cf. e.g. Steck (1977, 198ff.), Brueggemann (1979, 168ff.), Hubbard (1983, 42ff.) and Le Roux (1987, 104ff.).

7 All biblical quotations in this article come from the NIV.

was referred to at Ugarit as the dwelling place of Baal (Ps. 48:3). ... Now Zion becomes the site where Yahweh destroys the weapons of the attacking nations.'

Although one can assume that this view of the temple as Jahweh's seat (with the accompanying national theology) gained popularity among a significant part of the population⁸, it should be pointed out that this view of the temple was particularly nurtured among the royal elite and the politically and religiously influential. However, this national theology provided a basis for hope to the faithful of Israel.

3.2 The divided monarchy

During the initial years of the divided monarchy, and at least in the southern Kingdom of Judah, the national theology (with the temple as one of its symbols) continued to be influential. Even the prophet Isaiah was a supporter of it. His prophecy prior to the Syro-Ephraimitic war reveals that he was of the opinion that the promises of the Davidic covenant were still applicable and that they should be trusted. This is reflected in Isa. 7:3-9:

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, 'Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smouldering stubs of firewood - because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, 'Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.' Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'It will not take place, it will not happen, ... If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.'

In times when the political leaders decided to rebel against Assyria, Isaiah reacted sharply⁹. He urged the king to trust that Jahweh will protect Jerusalem, because Jahweh has founded Zion.

With the deuteronomic reform under King Josiah, however, the national theology came under pressure. Zimmerli (1984, 77) is of the opinion that 'the deuteronomic movement gave a new form to the belief in Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem. ... In this context, belief in the presence of Yahweh among his people undergoes a reinterpretation that makes the theological basis for this belief stand out in bold relief.' With the acceptance of the deuteronomic ideas Josiah returned to some elements of the earlier Mosaic covenantal tradition. '... conditional salvation was an important characteristic of this theology (i.e. the Mosaic tradition - LCJ): a close connection was made between sin and punishment, between human actions and those of Yahweh. If certain conditions were complied with, Yahweh's blessing and salvation would be experienced and vice versa. This naturally served as an important 'corrective' to the existing nationalist theology and the emphasis on unconditional salvation' (Le Roux, 1987, 109). With regard to the temple, the renewed centralization and purification led to a renewed interest in the temple. However, the security and hope that the temple offered now received a provisional character. As long as the king and the people of Israel would do Jahweh's will, he would bless them. The temple, the city and the kingship would remain intact.

The death of King Josiah disillusioned those in Judah who pursued the deuteronomic ideals. They knew that Josiah was obedient to the will of Jahweh. Nevertheless, he did not

8 Cf. e.g. the pilgrimage of the people of the land to the temple to celebrate the great cultic festivals.

9 Cf. Isa. 30:1-5.

survive a battle with the Egyptians. Le Roux (1987, 108) is of the opinion that the death of King Josiah and the following events had the effect that they increasingly focused on the national theology again. The unconditional character of the salvation of Jahweh became prominent again.

During this era various prophets criticized the uncritical and superficial trust in the temple as the symbol of Jahweh's presence. It was not so much the national theology as such that came under criticism, but rather popular interpretations of it. Jeremiah, for example, submitted this popular interpretation to fierce criticism.

Jeremiah 7:3-8

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!' If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

According to these prophets the judgment of Jahweh over Judah and Jerusalem was imminent (cf. e.g. Jer. 21:4-10 and Ezek. 9:5-10).

3.3 The exile

This judgement came in the form of the Babylonian exile. In August 587/6 BC the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. Not only were the city and the palace destroyed, but also the temple. The political and religious elite (mainly the Zadokite priesthood) were deported as exiles to Babylon. The theological disillusionment that was caused by this immense catastrophe is obvious. The ruins of the temple and Jerusalem were the concrete evidence of the collapse of their age-old theology.

There were various reactions to this socio-political and theological catastrophe. Le Roux (1987, 121ff.) divides these reactions into two groups. The first group, *Lamentations* and the Deuteronomistic history, represented a reaction from those who were left behind in Palestine. The second group, Ezekiel, the Priestly writings, and Deutero-Isaiah, represented a reaction from the exiles in Babylon.

The point of view of *Lamentations* is that the national theology failed to be an anchor in the darkest hour of their history. This theology was unable to explain the reasons for the catastrophe of Jerusalem's destruction. Nor could it foster any perspective for the future. 'Here we find very little perspective on the future. Previously they had been able to face the future so easily and feel assured of Yahweh's protection. ... It is true that they focused on Yahweh himself rather than on a theology *about* Yahweh, and yet the element of uncertainty remained. Previously it had been stated: 'There *is* hope for the future'; but now they said: 'There may yet be hope' (Lm 3:29)' (Le Roux, 1987, 128).

The Deuteronomistic perspective was that the injustice of the two kingdoms was the reason for their destruction. The Deuteronomistic history (Joshua to II Kings), which was written in this era of disillusionment, was a remarkable endeavour to explain why they lost the land. The Deuteronomists' theological point of departure was that Jahweh's salvation is conditional. This corresponds with the Deuteronomic view that emerged during Josiah's earlier reforms. This perspective emphasized that the people of Jahweh were so greatly

under the impression of Jahweh's promises and of the indestructibility of the royal house, the temple and Jerusalem that they started neglecting the importance of obedience. Obedience to the law of Jahweh was a prerequisite for salvation.

Ezekiel also played a significant role during this period. The Zadokites in exile reflected on the possibility of the restoration of the people of Israel and of their land. They were, however, confronted with immense problems. One of these Zadokites was a young priest, Ezekiel. His visions of a future would again give them hope. In his visions of the future the temple and the priests played a key role. According to him the restored Israel would centre on the temple, and the priests would fulfil a theocratic function. His visions of the future temple are recorded in Ezekiel 40-48, where he described the sanctuary in detail. As in earlier royal (Davidic) theology, Jahweh would again be seated on his throne in the temple, and would be present among his people. But now his presence would extend from the temple to fill the land. In Ezekiel 47:1-12 this promise is illustrated by means of cosmic imagery. From the threshold of the temple a stream would flow to the lifeless water of the Dead Sea. This stream would then change the waters of the Dead Sea into fresh water in which fish will be abundant. On the banks of this stream fruit trees would blossom and bear fruit. It is clear from this vision that Ezekiel brought hope, not only for the restoration of the physical temple on Zion in Jerusalem, but particularly of the renewed, and even transformative, presence of Jahweh. This presence is described in cosmic terms.

The *Priestly writings* also tried to restore the exiles' hope. These writings advocate more or less the same line of thought as Ezekiel, and can thus also be associated with the Zadokite ideals. The theological point of departure of the priestly writings can be summarized as follows: The new Israel should be a community organized around the temple. The temple will be the source of order and stability - a place where each person and object has its specific position. The priestly writings would serve as warrant that Israel would never go into exile again. It is significant that the priestly writings transpose the exiles to the period in the desert before Israel's conquest of the promised land. The description of the transgressions of Israel in the desert had to remind the exiles of their own sins. On the other hand, by reminding the exiles of the hope that inspired Israel in the desert, the priestly writings indicated that there is also hope of a new future in their exilic situation. Parallels were drawn between the transition period between the desert wanderings and the promised land during the Exodus, and the transition period of the exiles between the exile and the return to and rebuilding of their land. According to priestly views the temple and the cult would form the basis of the envisioned community. The new temple would provide security and protection to the restored community. This view originated from the Priestly notion that there is a close relationship between the cosmos and the sanctuary. Le Roux (1987, 139) explains: 'The world was seen as a flat disc protected by a heavenly dome, which prevented the dangerous waters above the earth from flooding the dry land. In this cosmos everything was well-ordered, aptly regulated, providing protection for the people and a haven safe from all the forces of chaos (Gn 1:1-2:4a). The tabernacle or tent of meeting fulfilled the same function in the desert by providing protection for Israel in the midst of dangerous surroundings. The Priestly Source cherished the same ideal for the communities of the exile and of the post-exilic period.'

In *Deutero-Isaiah* a different theological perception of the temple and the cult is reflected. This unknown prophet prophesied during the final years of the exile. At that time the exiles were already well-settled in Babylon. The majority of them had no hope anymore that they would ever return to Jerusalem. Views such as those of Ezekiel and the Priestly writings initially encouraged them, but in the meantime they experienced so many

disappointments that they gave up the ideal of a great future. In this situation Deutero-Isaiah introduced new hope and a completely different view of the future. The political situation of the time had an immense influence on this prophet's theological line of thought. After Cyrus, the King of the Persians, conquered the mighty Babylon in 539 BC, the exiles speculated anew on the implications of this new political order. Against the background of this new expectation Deutero-Isaiah showed that Jahweh's acts had cosmic implications. Behind the fall of the Babylonian empire, and behind the emergence of Cyrus on the political scene, was Jahweh. Jahweh was in control of the cosmos and would intervene in history to let his people return to their land. There would be a second exodus, along a new route through the desert (Isa. 40:3-5). Along this route that Jahweh would prepare, rivers and fountains would flow to quench their thirst, and shady trees would grow to provide shade to the tired returnees (Isa. 49:8-13). On a mountain near Jerusalem a messenger would announce that Jahweh and his people are on their way (Isa. 40:9-10). In Jerusalem Jahweh would reign over the whole world, and all humanity would share in the salvation of Israel. It is significant that Deutero-Isaiah's vision of the future did not include any references to the restoration of the land, a new temple or a new cult. There are no detailed prescriptions for everyday life. The Davidic king would not play any role, nor would the Zadokite priests gain any control again. His theology for the future took its point of departure in suffering. 'He linked up with the suffering that the exiles had experienced over the years and accorded it special significance. In this way he prevented the exiles from succumbing to their own grief and experiencing it as senseless. Suffering borne in obedience to Yahweh was, to him, the very road to hope and liberation. ... This pathway of suffering was not an unbearable fate, to be at all costs avoided, but a calling that could not be evaded. Israel of the future had to cooperate in the fulfilment of Yahweh's will for this world by following the way of suffering. If Israel - her leaders and her people alike - imitated the example of Deutero-Isaiah in obedience, bearing all suffering without complaint and holding herself in readiness to become a sacrifice in the hand of Yahweh, the promised blessing and prosperity would be achieved' (Le Roux, 1987, 143-144).

4. Following the trajectory of the creation tradition

4.1 The monarchical period (united and divided)

According to Brueggemann, with reference to Bernhard Anderson's *Creation and Chaos*, there is general agreement that the emergence of creation theology in Israel has its setting in Jerusalem and its context in the royal environment (1979, 170). Brueggemann explains this as follows: 'The shift of social vision (at the inception of the monarchy - LCJ) is accompanied with a shifted theological method which embraces more of the imperial myths of the ancient near east and breaks with the scandalous historical particularity of the Moses tradition. The result is a universal and comprehensive worldview which is more inclined toward social stability than toward social transformation and liberation. Thus, creation theology, like every theological effort, is politically interested and serves to legitimate the regime which in turn sponsors and vouches for this theological perspective' (1979, 170-171).

This view is confirmed when one studies the Jahwistic account of creation (Gen. 2:4b-25)¹⁰. This account does not contain any elaborate creation narrative, but is content merely to sketch the beginnings of Jahweh's history in relation to the world and humanity. The

10 No primal history is evident in E.

world is pictured by J as an arid tract of land. A stream of water from the earth waters the arid desert, and makes it possible for Jahweh to plant an exquisite garden. From the moist clay Jahweh forms the first human being, as well as the animals. According to Zimmerli (1984, 33) J's account of creation emphasizes the position of man: 'The goal of creation is the man, to whom Yahweh gives his beautiful garden as a dwelling place, for whom he creates the animals, and finally forms the woman from the skeleton of the man himself, because 'it is not good for man to be alone.' In other words, concern for man's welfare stands at the beginning of Yahweh's activity. ... the whole account of J is dominated by Yahweh's concern for man.' Even the naming of the animals clearly singles out man from the other creatures. According to 2 Kings 23:34 and 24:17, the giving of names is the act of a sovereign. This point, in particular, supports Brueggemann's view that J's account of creation was politically interested and served to legitimate the regime (1979, 171).

It should also be mentioned that, with regard to terminology, J's account does not speak of a 'world' in the sense of a coherent whole brought into being by creation. 'In the entire account, terms from the realms of handicraft and gardening are used just as they are in the realm of human endeavour' (Zimmerli, 1984, 33).

4.2 The exile

The exile brought about significant changes with regard to the creation tradition. Not only does one observe significant terminological differences, but also changes with regard to the functioning of this tradition within the theological thought of Israel. The exilic accounts of creation bear the unmistakable stamp of theological reflection, far surpassing that of the J account (Zimmerli, 1984, 34). Two versions should be described, namely that of the Priestly writings and that of Deutero-Isaiah.

P's account in Genesis 1:1-2:4a is certainly the most elaborate and well-known biblical version of creation. This account exhibits a marked cosmological interest. Its details are well-described in scholarly literature, and I will thus not elaborate on them. However, the following should be emphasized:

- (i) The creation account does not stand in isolation, but is clearly linked with the history of Israel. Zimmerli (1984, 34) is of the opinion that the structure of the P creation account leading up to the day of rest, provides the link between the creation narrative and the cult of Israel. As was indicated above, P's vision of the future emphasized the role of the cult (with the Sabbath and annual festivals) in the new society. By structuring the creation account in such a way that it climaxes with the day of rest, the cultic institutions of the future were legitimized. However, it was not only the cultic vision for the future that was legitimized, but also the history of Israel. As Von Rad (Part I, 1962, 138) puts it: 'In neither of these documents (J and P - LCJ) of course is Jahweh's work in Creation considered for its own sake: instead it is incorporated within a course of history leading to the call of Abraham and ending with Israel's entry into Palestine. ... Presumptuous as it may sound, Creation is part of the aetiology of Israel!'
- (ii) A second remark should be made concerning the role of God in this account. Zimmerli (1984, 34) interprets P's account of God creating by the mere utterance of a word as follows: '... the assignment of all the works of creation to the peremptory word of God, which calls the elements of the world into being without opposition, clearly eliminates the possibility of any secondary power that might be looked for in the structure of the universe alongside the one God of Israel. ... the work of the

earth is subordinated to the clear command of God, who remains fully sovereign, creating through his own command.' This confession about the God of Israel is significant given the circumstances of the exile in which P's account originated. The exiles certainly were aware of the Babylonian creation accounts in which many gods, in fierce battle with one another, played a role in the coming into being of nature and humankind. By presenting the great lights of heaven (the sun, the moon and the stars, which were regarded as gods in the Babylonian pantheon) as creations of the God of Israel, the P creation narrative becomes a polemic against the Babylonian religion. Not their gods, but the God of Israel is the true God. And by presenting God's act of creation as the mere utterance of a word, the P account becomes a polemic against the Babylonian conception of their gods battling with one another. The God of Israel is thus proclaimed as sovereign. These confessions about the God of Israel certainly provided the basis of hope for the future. Although the Babylonian empire destroyed the Israelites' national theology and held them captive, the exiles were thus reassured that their God is sovereign. He would lead them back to their land again.

- (iii) Attention should also be drawn to the significant position of humankind in the P narrative. The creation of man is preceded by an explicit act of deliberation on the part of God, according to which man is to be created 'after the image of God'. This expression has been discussed very thoroughly in scholarly literature. It suffices to indicate here that it '... refers to the special mandate given to humans: they are to take the lower forms of animal life into their service. God puts humanity into a position of partial sovereignty' (Zimmerli, 1984, 37)¹¹. This view certainly encouraged the exiles to view their fate in the light of the universalistic expression that all humankind are partially sovereign. This would open the possibility of hope for the future, because it would help them to realize that their course is not dictated by the Babylonians only.

These views of the Priestly writings are taken up and elaborated on by *Deutero-Isaiah*. 'Deutero-Isaiah furnishes a fertile field for statements about the creator. For this prophet, who lived in the late exilic period and preached imminent deliverance, creation is one of the great evidences of Yahweh, proving the worthlessness of the gods and the true sovereignty of Yahweh for all eyes to see' (Zimmerli, 1984, 37). It is significant that Deutero-Isaiah always places his discussion of creation in a soteriological framework. Von Rad (Part I, 1962, 137) observes: '... even a quick glance at the passages in question shows that the allusions to Jahweh as the creator are far from being the primary subject of Deutero-Isaiah's message. ... obviously it has a subordinate function in the prophet's message and does not anywhere appear independently: it is intended to reinforce confidence in the power of Jahweh and his readiness to help. ... The reason why the allusion to Creation strengthens confidence is that Deutero-Isaiah obviously sees a saving event in the creation itself. ... Here creation and redemption almost coincide, and can almost be looked on as one act of dramatic divine saving action ...' It thus becomes clear that for Deutero-Isaiah 'creation' does not remain just a cosmological term referring to the material world from its beginning, but is intimately associated with Jahweh's intervention in the history of Israel. The description of the 'arm of Jahweh' in Isaiah 51:9-10 serves as example:

¹¹ Cf. also Von Rad (Part I, 1987, 156ff.)

*Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength,
O arm of the LORD;
awake, as in days gone by,
as in generations of old.
Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces,
who pierced that monster through?
Was it not you who dried up the sea,
the waters of the great deep,
who made a road in the depths of the sea
so that the redeemed might cross over?*

Zimmerli (1984, 38) is of the opinion that in this text protological and cosmological elements combine with the soteriological statement of Israel's historical credo. Another point which Zimmerli (1984, 38) emphasizes is that the Deutero-Isaianic account of creation makes clear that the creator-God is not the distant God of a long-past act of deliverance. 'He is present as creator in the present moment of Israel and in the salvation that will come to pass. Not only do we hear ... that Yahweh is the redeemer and creator of Israel; (he) goes on to state that Yahweh will 'create' ($\alpha\rho\beta$ - LCJ)... salvation. Here the category of creation becomes all-encompassing, referring to Yahweh's work at the beginning of the world, at the historical beginning of Israel, and in the present that lies open to the future, to which a message of salvation, bearing eschatological overtones, is addressed.' This is illustrated in Isaiah 45:18-19:

*For this is what the LORD says—
he who created the heavens,
he is God;
he who fashioned and made the earth,
he founded it;
he did not create it to be empty,
but formed it to be inhabited—
he says:
'I am the LORD,
and there is no other.
I have not spoken in secret,
from somewhere in a land of darkness;
I have not said to Jacob's descendants,
'Seek me in vain.'
I, the LORD, speak the truth;
I declare what is right.*

The basis of the hope which Deutero-Isaiah fostered with his prophecy during the final stages of the exile was that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the sovereign creator, and that he will provide salvation to his people by means of a new act of creation.

5. The interrelationship between the two traditions

In an illuminating article Levenson (1984) discusses the relationship between the temple and the world. In the second part of his article (1984, 282-291), in particular, he proposes that there are close links between the ancient Israelite descriptions of creation, and the description and functioning of the temple. Levenson starts his argument by referring to the results of the phenomenological approach of Mircea Eliade in which the Temple Mount is

regarded as central to the cosmos and has a primordial or protological character. According to this view the cosmic mountain is situated at the centre of the world; from it everything else takes its bearings. Levenson also refers to various rabbinical texts in which Mount Zion is presented as the point from which creation proceeded. 'In short, the Temple is a visible, tangible token of the act of creation, the point of origin of the world, the 'focus' of the universe' (Levenson, 1984, 283). According to Levenson, we find the cosmic conception of the Temple in an enhanced statement in Josephus's writings. With him the shrine is not simply the centre, but it is a microcosm. Every one of the objects in the temple was intended to recall and represent the universe. One could summarize Josephus's view of the temple and the world in Levenson's words: '(The temple) is the world *in nuce*, and the world is the Temple *in extenso*' (1984, 285).

The question now arises whether these later views on the relationship between world and temple were an innovation of Hellenistic Judaism, or whether they were a legacy of a more distant antiquity. Levenson is of the opinion that there is enough biblical textual evidence that this idea goes back much earlier. He refers to four previous studies that prove the point¹². W.F. Albright has already argued in the 1950s that a number of aspects of the Temple of Solomon must be understood as cosmic symbols. CL Meyers, in a more recent study in the 1970s, interpreted the tabernacle lampstand (menorah) as a cosmic tree, which was a symbol that contributed to the assurance of divine accessibility, and that participated in the cosmic paradigm. J. Blenkinsopp has argued that the descriptions of the creation of the world (Gen. 1-2) and of the construction of the sanctuary (Exod. 39-40) in the Priestly source are similar, and that at times almost identical language is used in these accounts. Weinfeld established the wider significance of these correspondences. He has argued that they are not the invention of P, but the distillate of a long tradition in the ancient Near East, which relates Temple building and world building. Whereas the creation account ends with the Sabbath, the temple building account ends with a sanctuary in which Jahweh is present. 'The Temple and the world stand in an intimate and intrinsic connection. The two projects cannot ultimately be distinguished or disengaged. Each recounts how God brought about an environment in which he can find rest. ... The two institutions, each a memorial and, more than that, an actualization of the aboriginal creative act, are woven together not in a purposeless, mindless redaction but in a profound and unitive theological statement. Sabbath and sanctuary partake of the same reality; they proceed, *pari passu*, from the same foundational event, to which they testify and even provide access' (Levenson, 1984, 288). Levenson himself also draws attention to two texts, namely 1 Kings 8 and Isaiah 6, to show how they testify to a cosmic awareness and simultaneously act as parallels to the creation accounts.

Levenson's conclusion is significant for the present discussion. 'We have seen that the connection between world building and Temple building sheds an intense light on P, on Ezekiel, and on texts that focus on the Temple explicitly ... It is not my claim that there existed only one theology of the Temple or even that all segments of ancient Israel accepted at any one time the connection argued here. Rather, I maintain that this complex of ideas, although most conscious and unqualified in P, still has deep roots in Israelite culture. This depth of rootage means that even groups who were not privileged within the Temple show influence of the equation of the Temple with the world *sub specie creationis*' (Levenson, 1984, 291).

This interrelationship of ancient Israel's views on the temple and the cosmos was

12 For the references of Albright, Meyers, Blenkinsopp and Weinfeld, cf. Levenson (1984, 285-288).

confirmed in the discussion of the two traditions above. It showed how the building of the temple during the reign of Solomon was influenced by the cosmic imagery which played a significant role in the Canaanite religion. It was pointed out that the Deuteronomistic account of the temple building in 1 Kings 8 shows interesting parallels to the creation account in Gen. 1. It was illustrated how Ezekiel's vision of a new temple was enriched with cosmic imagery. The notion of the Priestly writings that there is a close relation between cosmos and sanctuary was emphasized, and the cosmic implications of Jahweh's saving acts as they are portrayed in Deutero-Isaiah, were discussed. It thus seems that one should not distinguish too rigidly between theological traditions, such as the Temple/Zion tradition and the creation tradition. Scholarly discussion tends to isolate these traditions from their ideological and theological environment. It would, therefore, be an oversimplification to say that the temple/Zion tradition, as part of the national theology of the united and divided monarchies, was not active during the exilic period. Or, that creation theology, which flourished during the exile, was not active in pre-exilic times. One should rather accept that these theological traditions originated and were cultivated in environments where cosmic imagery was abundant in the broader culture. In these same environments, however, the sanctuary's role in the community was always regarded as important, albeit in different forms, during the pre-exilic and exilic periods.

Although I would agree with Levenson (1984, 291) that one should not claim 'that there existed only one theology of the Temple or even that all segments of ancient Israel accepted at any one time the connection' between these traditions, their interrelationship should be emphasized more strongly. This interrelationship of course varied from time to time. During the pre-exilic period the creation tradition played a lesser role in the national theology. Although cosmic imagery was used in J's description of humankind, this description rather served the purpose of enriching the national theology. Within this national theology the temple played the major role.

During the exile, however, the emphasis in the interrelationship between the Zion/Jerusalem and Creation traditions shifted. The Creation tradition now became more prominent as a means of focusing on the envisioned new community, and on the saving acts of Jahweh. This does not mean that temple imagery was no longer utilized. However, this imagery was incorporated within the framework of the exilic theology, which was strongly influenced by the Creation tradition.

An understanding of this varying interrelationship can also assist in determining the character of hope during the history of Israel. In the next section I will show how a 'redefinition' of hope took place during the exile.

6. From pre-exile to exile: redefining hope

In a section entitled 'Hope as a category of ethical reflection' Brueggemann (1992, 50) writes: 'Israel's faith anticipates the decisive resolution of every human disorder so that full, joyous, peaceable human existence will be possible. Israel's anticipation is that chaos will be overcome by creation. Israel's confidence is that barrenness will be overridden by birth. Most characteristically, Israel's conviction is that bondage will be transformed into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Israel's hope is that there will be a decisive and radical reordering of social power and social goods so that all may have enough, none will have too much, and all will live together in harmony.' Of course, this hope took on various disguises in the different periods of Israelite history. I will argue in this section that Israel's hope in the pre-exilic monarchies could be characterized as a longing for security and affirmation. During the exile a redefinition of this hope took place. In this era hope took on

the form of eschatology and expectation. The interrelationship of the Temple/Zion and Creation traditions serves as point of departure for this description.

6.1 Hope as security and affirmation

As was indicated above, the national theology that originated during the reign of King David was built on the assumption that the Davidic kingship, the Temple and Jerusalem were indestructible. The expectations that Israel held of life before God was that the kingdom of Israel (and later Judah) would be stable, that the king would provide sufficient means for the people of the land for a good living, and that they would be a significant force in the international and regional political arena. The theology of this period encouraged these expectations, or hope of Israel. The temple theology emphasized that Jahweh had his earthly seat in the temple on Zion. His presence not only provided them with security (the indestructibility of the temple, the city and the kingship), but also served as affirmation of these expectations.

In this period creation motifs, although of lesser importance, served to strengthen this type of hope. The original command to humankind to rule over God's creation served to legitimize the role of the king and the priests to order and rule over political and cultic life respectively.

Even the cosmic imagery that played a role in the construction and architecture of the temple fostered the idea of security and affirmation. The temple, as symbol of the ordered creation, provided the cultic point of reference for the hope of the Israelite people.

It should be noted that this type of hope did not long for something new in the future. It rather longed for the *continuation of the present into the future*. Because they found security in their present situation, they wanted this security to be affirmed in the future.

6.2 Hope as eschatology and expectation

During the exile, however, the character of Israelite hope was redefined. The disillusionment that the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple and the kingship caused among the exiles crushed their hope as security and affirmation. Hope now took on the form of eschatology¹³ and expectation. The emphasis on creation theology during this era was one of the factors that served to redefine the character of their hope. 'The new creation language reaches the highest ranges of a hyperbolic future - a transformation that outruns the present creation almost as far as the present creation surpassed the chaos of the beginning; the language leans toward the apocalyptic and paves the way for it, in the description of the divine initiative that performs the transformation. The new creation teaches us that, though salvation is historical, it also transcends historical reality and must be seen in a supra-historical light' (Hubbard, 1983, 46). Within this context the temple imagery functioned differently to what was the case before the exile. Prophecies of the restoration of the temple, now described in cosmic terms, served the purpose of creating hope of a new future, and did not merely serve to affirm a present reality.

Hope now takes on the form of eschatology and expectation. They expected something new to happen, something that has not been there before. Their hope was thus no longer focused on a future that would affirm the present reality, but a *future that would surpass*

13 I use this word in the broader sense, more or less similarly to Hubbard (1983, 34 - quoting Davies): 'Eschatology is a 'dimension of belief ... that history moves in a direction, that this direction is set by God, and that God acts within history to insure this direction.' In this perspective, prophetic hope and eschatology mean about the same thing.'

and eradicate the present reality with something better, something new. This expectation did not exclude the symbols of hope of the pre-exilic period (the temple, Jerusalem, the kingship). However, these symbols now function in another framework, namely an eschatological one.

7. Conclusion

This article has shown that it is not an easy task to describe any theological tradition of ancient Israel in isolation. Although I have tried to follow the historical trajectories of the Temple/Zion tradition and the Creation tradition, the emphasis was on their interrelationship. I have concluded that both these traditions played a significant role during the monarchical and exilic periods. However, the specific historical circumstances in each of these periods caused the theological emphasis to shift from emphasis on the temple tradition in the pre-exilic period to the creation tradition in the exilic period. This shift also resulted in a redefinition of the hope that was fostered in each of these periods.

The story of Israel's hope does, of course, not end with the exile. An investigation into the continuation of the story into the post-exilic period is therefore needed to complete the task undertaken in this article.

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