CHAPTER TEN

SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF JOSIAH'S REFORM (IV): THE MAN AND THE MONUMENT

Two issues arising from the preceding analyses of 1 Kings 13 and 2 Kgs. 23:4–20, although beyond the primary concerns of the present work, nonetheless call for comment.

10.A. THE MAN BEHIND THE MAN-OF-GOD

History does know of a Judahite prophet, who disclaimed to be called such, who visited Bethel and there made oracular pronouncement against its sanctuary and priesthood in the reign of a king named "Jeroboam." The similarities between what is known about Amos of Tekoa from the book bearing his name and what is reported about the anonymous Judahite man-of-god in 1 Kings 13 are striking, but the differences (as most commentators are also quick to point out) would seem to preclude more than a tangential relationship between the two figures.1 The analyses presented above have found the most damaging biographical discrepancies—identification of the king as Jeroboam b. Nebat, his direct personal encounter with the man-of-god, the destruction of the altar while the man-of-god is present, the episode with the old prophet from Bethel and its aftermath—to be literary creations with no claim to factuality. The burning of bones rings true (cf. Amos 2:1; 6:10), but many other similarities in content are also fictional—destruction of the altar (cf. 3:14; 9:1a), slaughter of the Bethel priesthood (cf. 7:17; 8:3; 9:1b), the destruction of the bamoth-houses and their altars (cf. 2:8a, 14a; 7:9), a lion as an agent of personal destruction (cf. 3:4, 8, 12; 5:19), theological word-play with the verb ŠWB (cf. 4:6–11).2 But the book of Amos is no

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more a compositional unity than are 1 Kings 13 and 1 Kgs. 23:4–20: it is the product of an analogous creative process whereby material directly attributable to Amos himself was augmented over time by “remembered deeds and sayings of the prophet,” transmitted separately, and by material with no connection to the historical Amos at all.3 The biographical narrative, the only account of Amos’s visit to Bethel (7:10–17),4 is obviously one such augmentation, and it need not stand closer to the historical realities of that visit than 2 Kgs. 23:4–20 in toto does to the historical realities of Josiah’s reform. The historical Amos stands behind the Amos of 7:10–17, and in the same way but at greater distance he probably stands behind the man-of-god of 1 Kgs. 13:1–32 and 2 Kgs. 23:16–18,5 but he is not identical with either.

One example must suffice to illustrate the relationship between Amos and 1 Kgs. 13:1–10. The Amos tradition knows of an earthquake which seriously damaged the Bethel sanctuary. Amos 9:1a, which undoubtedly derives directly from Amos himself, envisions Yahweh “standing upon the altar” directing the “shattering” and “shaking” of structural components of the sanctuary (cf. 7:13b) in what seems certainly to be earthquake imagery.6 It is reasonable to suppose that he also foresaw the altar being damaged in the same fashion; the Amos corpus only records the prediction that “the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground” (3:14b), juxtaposed with the “smiting” of the royal residences (v. 15a; cf. 6:11) as the capitals of the sanctuary are “smitten” in 9:1a. A compiler of the corpus associates Amos’s career with an earthquake in the reigns of Jeroboam II of (North-)Israel and Uzziah of Judah (1:1). That this was an exceptionally destructive earthquake is evident in the

3 See, e.g., Wolff, Joel and Amos, 106–13 (quotation from p. 108).