

THE CONTINUITY OF THE REVELATION OF GOD: PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT BY EXAMPLES OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

In this text I would like to attempt a theological-structural comparison of selected topics from the New Testament with theological references from the Old Testament.

1. Toledot as Foundational Signature

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus. In the first sentence of the NT, a reference to the Old Testament is made where Jesus is called the son of Abraham and son of David. Interestingly, the term appears, addressing the divine origin of Jesus, Son of God, only in chapter 4, where Satan refers to Jesus as such. In the book of Genesis three structural forms can be identified which are complementary and mutually inclusive. This is on the one hand the dichotomy of pre-history and patriarchal history, then the Toledot structure and finally the geographical movements as a structural level. We want to concentrate on the Toledot. Matthew provides genealogies or tribal successions with the meaning: „The following has become from the One“. The term refers to the beginning of a family document and is mainly found in Genesis and Joshua, books that focus heavily on beginnings. *Eläh toledot* - these are the descendants of ... also forms a turning point and heading for the next section, for example Ruth 4:18: „Now these are the descendants of Perez ...

Birth, birthing (*yalad*) is *leitmotif* in Genesis: fertility as God's blessing. Correspondingly, also the revelation of God in the NT, which begins with a lineage, can be regarded as fertility. The Messiah Jesus is the ultimate fruit brought by God into the world. The development of man and his continuing work, „what happened to him“, is documented in the Toledot and then described in its consequences. This is also the work of the essential human being, Jesus Christ, and „what happened to him,“ in the NT. It is remarkable to note the use of a Toledot in the transition of the two parts of the creation account in Genesis 2:4 „Eläh toledot of the origin of heaven and earth.“

After the actual process of creation in Genesis 1 the origin of the world in this context is represented similar to the birth of a family. Thus, the Toledot serves not as an introduction of family documents, rather the overall creation contains the characteristics of forms of family life, of related, internally structured, structurally manageable and diachronically presentable units. With the concept of the family as the basic signature of creation, the geographical, social and political as well as especially the temporal space of the story is joined together in a certain order. Also the NT fits into this temporal structure, when it says, „But when the time had come, God sent his Son“ (Gal. 4:4). The name following a Toledot does not always pro-

vide the main content of the recorded narrative; rather the text is concerned with what has become of the topic and emerged from it. Thus, in the Toledot of Terah the story of Abraham is predominantly treated, in the Toledot of Isaac it is Jacob's story, and in the Toledot of Jacob it is the story of Joseph. The Toledot of Jesus Christ in Matthew is the beginning of a story whose implications are open to the future. It continues in the Acts of the Apostles and missions history, where the churches are integrated, so to speak, into the Toledot of Jesus. Faith in Christ equals "to be born into" his genealogy. Thus, the first sentences of the NT already introduce a future lineage and not only form a backward view of the human ancestry of the Messiah.

Toledot theologically: „The following has become from the one“ indicates a theological link between Trinity and creation. The Trinity as divine „family“ expands in the creation, becomes fertile. From the „One“, God the Father, the divine - and from the one with whom the Toledot begin, the respective human family emanates (e.g. Gen 5:1: „This is the genealogy of the descendants of Adam“). The creation of man as an extension of the „divine family“ remains in the „family tradition“ in active „relationships of relatives“. For this purpose God creates man explicitly in his own image, as the text emphasizes by repetition, „and in the image of God he created him.“ The image of God in man - particularly including the ability to communicate with God and with creation - forms the relationship of relatives, the close relationship bridge between God and man, as well as between God and the entire world. If the NT places a Toledot, namely the Toledot of a „representative“ of the Trinity at the beginning, the „divine family“ opens itself to the world as already with the creation. But this happens still

significantly more extensively when the Son of God becomes man, as shown in the following chapters of Matthew. The promise of God is crucial for the Toledot and thus the progress of salvation history. The individual Toledot show a concentration on the chosen seed and contain the theme of blessing and curse, critical for the entire Torah. From a biblical-theological perspective, the genealogy in Matthew 1 is the direct continuation of the Old Testament. The Messiah is the 12th Toledot and concludes the sequence. For this reason the Gospel of Matthew most likely has been put in first position.

2. The Birth of the Messiah

„And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. But this is done, that it would be fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet who is speaking (Isaiah 7:14): „Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel“ which is translated, God with us.“ (Matthew 1:21-23).

Parallel to the mystery of the work that God is doing through the male figure of the suffering Servant, Isaiah mentions the feminine figure of Zion, which is adorned with a transcendence and holiness, which announce the gift of salvation destined for Israel.

In the New Testament, all these promises come true. On the one hand, Mary, the chosen daughter of Zion, as a woman comprises and transforms Israel's being the Bride, waiting for the day of her salvation. On the other hand it can be seen in the masculinity of the Son, how Jesus in his person takes up all that the Old Testament symbolism had applied to the love of God to his

people, which is described as the love of a bridegroom to his bride. ... In the last hour of the present history appear in the Book of Revelation „a new heaven“ and „a new earth“ (Rev 21:1), and in a vision appears the female figure of the city of Jerusalem, „prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband“ (Rev 21:2). Revelation concludes with the word of the Spirit and the Bride, who pray for the coming of the Bridegroom: „Come, Lord Jesus!“ (Revelation 22:20).“¹

3. Jesus and the Temple

With the „presentation“ of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple, Church tradition celebrated at the same time the first visit of Jesus Christ in the Holy City. In antiquity, the residents of a city made preparations for the first visit of the ruler by coming to meet him in order to return with him into the city. When the liturgical feast emerged in the 4th century, accompanying Christmas, there was a monastery on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, founded by a woman named Hikelia. „Hikelia is said to have equipped their monks with candles for this path towards Christ - and then with him into the holy city The Eastern Church calls the feast Hypapante (encounter) and emphasizes the aspect of the encounter of the Redeemer with the pious ones of his people, that await him.

Jesus' Presentation in the Temple is not only in compliance with a prescribed Jewish Ritual, rather it includes an event from the infancy narratives as a kind of salvation-historical compendium. „Jesus and Jerusalem,“ focuses specifically on „Jesus and the Temple“. The prophet Malachi speaks in the last chapter of the Old Testament about the fact that the Lord will come to His temple (Mal 3:1), which also implies that the Temple belongs to him. In remembrance

of the Passover night the firstborn son was considered the property of God (Ex 13,2.15: „Consecrate me all the firstborn“) and handed over to him in the Temple ceremony, „presented“, and then needed to be redeemed through a sacrifice (Num 18:16), to be bought back, so to speak. At the same time (Lev 12:1-8) the impurity of the mother after birth, in case of a boy 40 days, ended with a sacrifice of purification.

(1) Relatively extensively the evangelist Luke (2:22-32) describes the Old Testament regulations and therefore integrates the life of Jesus entirely into the tradition of Israel and its Mosaic Torah.

(2) The character of Simeon embodies a type of Old Testament piety which listens first to the biblical texts of the law and the prophets, not to the Jewish-rabbinic exegetical tradition, filtered by Hellenism. In this the Old Testament is present.

(3) Although he did not know Jesus yet, therefore he also did not believe in him, the Holy Spirit was upon him. For him, so to speak, Pentecost is „anticipated“, he had received the Spirit of truth from God, „whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees nor recognizes him“ (John 14:17). The context shows that the relationship between repentance and bestowal of the Spirit can be reversed by a man who pays respect to the Bible and is attentive to the realization of its statements, and even before getting to know Jesus, receives the Holy Spirit. This could also be formulated as follows: there was both before and after the ministry of Jesus an outpouring of the Spirit.

(4) The gift of the Spirit of God was located in the Temple, the central place of the divine presence among the people of Israel. The existence and work of Christ

should likewise focus on the temple, because here and in no other place for the first time the messianity and salvific function of Jesus was testified to.

(5) Three times in verses 25 - 27, the Holy Spirit is referred to as an active and decisive actor. First, the Spirit is upon him (cf. Gen 1:2), and then the Spirit speaks (Mark 13:11: „For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit“), and finally, he is the leader who guides Simeon into the temple (cf. Jn 16:13).

(6) The tabernacle and the temple derived from it are places of contemplation. God makes himself known, not in a magically miraculous way, but to guide his people on a specific way. „And the LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud and the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance of the tent“ (Deut 31:15). The Israelites had the goal in mind to see God, as Paul predicted that he will see God „face to face“ and also „completely know him, as I was also completely known“ (1 Cor 13:12).

(7) Simeon not only beholds, he takes Jesus in his arms, becoming the „Christ bearer“. Like Zacchaeus later who saw Jesus not only from a sycamore tree, but invited him into his house (Luke 19:1-10). Salvation has come upon him (Soteria), and Simeon proclaimed that he had seen the Savior (Soter).

(8) Also, the missiological aspect, as it unfolds especially in the book of Acts, leading to the worldwide church of Jesus Christ, Simeon already mentions. Twice he leads the nations of the world: one is the salvation before the eyes and prepared for the nations, secondly, Jesus is „a light to enlighten the Gentiles“ (Lk 2:32).

(9) „And for the glory of your people Israel“ - His own people receives Doxa

through him: fame, glory, greatness, power, honor, and above all the revealed presence of God. The insignia of the Temple are fully represented in Jesus.

(10) Simeon initiated his praise- and death-song, - more cannot be achieved in life: „Nunc dimittis ...“ („Now, Lord, you let your servant, as you said, depart in peace ...“)²

(11) That Jesus also has a judicial mission is expressed in verse 34. He is savior and judge at the same time: he will raise up and bring the downfall. In addition to „The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost“ (Lk 19:10) the other side applies as well: „Do not think I came to bring peace on the earth. I have not come to bring peace but the sword.“ (Mt 10:34; cf. Heb 4:12). That the judgment begins in the house of God, is shown in the later so-called cleansing of the Temple in which Jesus claims in an impressive way the original purpose of the Temple as a house of prayer, a place of encounter with God, and at the same time demonstrates a foreshadowing of the future judgment.

(12) Then appears the prophetess Hannah. „What kind of a multifaceted city of Jerusalem! Where Jews lived from all countries, having moved home into the Zion of the ancestors (Acts 2:9). Here there were representatives of all Jewish groups and parties. Here “there were“ even people like Simeon and Hannah. Who was this „Hannah“? Her name is genuinely Hebrew (actually „Channa“), which means in English „grace“ and reminds us of the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1-2). Since Luke calls Hannah a descendant of the tribe of Asher, she must be seen as a remnant of the ten tribes destroyed and scattered at the Assyrian conquest of 722 BC. She represents the northern kingdom of Israel, and thus completes the people of God of the Old

Covenant. „In her person, also these tribes worship the newborn Messiah.“

Thus Jesus meets in the temple an Israel represented in its entirety, faithful to the Torah, devoted to God and obedient in faith. They were also those who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem, Jews living in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Possibly these Messiah-oriented Jews formed a subset at the Temple with its own meetings and premises, as Hannah „never left the temple, because she served God night and day with fasting and prayer“ (Lk 2:37). She also recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah, therefore she was guided by the Holy Spirit like Simeon. Hence the Biblical truth criterion was met, which says that „with the testimony of two or three witnesses shall every matter stand or fall“ (2 Cor 13:1). Like the shepherds in the field Hannah felt obliged to speak again and again about Jesus and to proclaim the Christ. At the same time, she refers by her origin to the task of the Messiah, to also gather again the „lost tribes“, which she represents, and to unite them again in the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 13:16; 19:9, Acts 26:7). And in fact, among the redeemed of Israel mentioned in Rev 7:6 also the “tribe of Asher” is mentioned.

And now another surprise: Luke calls Hannah a prophetess. Apparently the temple tradition of unbound, „charismatic“ prophethood was preserved in relative freedom, what reminds us of prophetesses like Miriam (Ex 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4) and Huldah (2 Ki 22:14). Hannah thus embodies besides Simeon also the line of women of the Old Testament that were important for the existence of Israel, and the progress of the history of salvation. What wonderful role models and female figures of faith are shown to us by the Gospel of Luke in Elizabeth, Mary and Hannah!

During the first visit to Jerusalem - and that as a baby of a few weeks - already a comprehensive *biblical* and comprehensive *historical* range unfolds regarding the Messiahship of Jesus in Old Testament prophetic continuity, his priestly and royal authority, his work of salvation and judgment, his embodiment of Torah and Temple and thus foreshadows as a preface his entire work in a concentrated and confessional manner.

The eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus began to proclaim his message of salvation among the Jews. Many were persuaded by their preaching and devoted their lives to the rule of God. Thus begins the story of the community of Jesus Christ, the time of the church. Most Jews, however, do not accept Jesus as Savior, because they expected that the promised Messiah would free them from Roman rule. Instead, they took the liberation into their own hands - with disastrous consequences!

The preliminary „last visit“ of Jesus in Jerusalem closes the loop for the first time. Critical issues such as Jesus' messiahship, his reference to the temple, his kingship emerge once again, however, in a tapered shape.

The dramatic events happen in the context of the Passover. This most important Jewish festival recalls the ending of the slavery of Israel, the sparing of the people from the criminal court by the blood of a year-old flawless young animal from sheep or goat, which had been applied on the doorposts of the houses, the Exodus from Egypt, the gift of the Mosaic Torah. Thus, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was placed in the context of the Old Testament tradition of this festival. „Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world“ (Jn 1:29) says John the Baptist at the first sight of Jesus, and in the

Book of Revelation „the Lamb“ is used 16 times as a synonym for Jesus Christ.

That the King of Israel would enter the city on a donkey, had already been predicted by the prophet Zechariah: „Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, your King comes unto thee, just and victorious is he, humble and riding a donkey, on a colt, a donkey foal.“ (Zechariah 9:9). That Jesus as the one in whom all the fullness of the Deity dwells, comes from the East, is reminiscent of the temple vision of Ezekiel: „And the glory of the LORD came into the house on their way through the gate, which lay to the east. The house was filled with the glory of the LORD“ (Ezekiel 43,4.5). The monarchy concerned the rule over all the people that God had given Jesus and which still belongs to him.

The temple Jesus had often seen - as a child at the festival visits with his parents. In a discussion on the Shabbat commandments Jesus said, „The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath“ (Matthew 12:8), and „I tell you that: Something greater than the temple is here.“ (Mt 12:6). Jesus speaks of a temple-operation, they saw the central institution of the people no more as a gift from God, rather it was led by the responsible priests in autocracy, and therefore in the service of increasing the temple gold.

In the immediate vicinity of the temple at the time of the Passover the cleaning baths, the Mikveot, were in high demand in preparation for temple offerings. The centers of such baths were in the north of the pool of Bethesda, at the same time a kind of „hospital“, in the south was the Pool of Siloam. In both places Jesus stayed during the festive season and healed the sick. The combination of cleaning and healing points to an eschatological process in which a river

will be flowing out of the temple (Ezekiel 47:5), which is lined with many trees, „and where the river comes, there will be life“ (Ezekiel 47:9).

This statement of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel is confirmed by the Book of Revelation in the New Testament: „And he showed me the river of the water of life, which is as clear as crystal, and he springs from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle between the road and the river, on both sides, are trees of life“ (Rev 22:1,2). - Maybe this perception can be complemented with a spatial movement: from the repentance- and cleaning baptism of John the Baptist, about 30 km east of Jerusalem (400 meters below sea level) to the ritual baths accompanied by individual healings outside the Temple (800 meters above sea level) up to healings that have happened in the temple area itself by Jesus: „... and to him came the blind and the lame in the temple, and he healed them“ (Mt 21:14).

In the first signs the temple is led by Jesus to its proper destination, the healing touch of man by God. And yet at the same time the divine authority of Jesus is linked to the temple, when he acts in an authority which the priests do not have, immediately bringing salvation and healing to the people. In him God has come to his temple, and the temple has come to his God. However, this involves the criticism of all alienations, with the consequence that the rulers foreign to the temple make him more violently to become their own - and adore themselves, their „I“.

„I“ means in Greek, „instead of the gods“, in Hebrew, it is still „in the face of God“. The temple saw this face for the first time immediately in Jesus. „The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven“ (Psalm 11:4) - „The LORD is

in his holy temple. May the whole world be quiet before him“ (Hab 2:20).

„But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children shouting in the temple, Hosanna to the Son of David!, they were indignant and said to him: Do you hear what these say? Jesus answered them: Yes! Have you never read (Psalm 8:3): „From the mouth of babes and sucklings you have prepared praise?“ (Mt 21:15,16). Whereas the royal authority was already awarded to the small baby Jesus on his first visit to Jerusalem, now resounds the Davidic confession from the lips of children! Often children have a very self-evident idea of spiritual interdependences, even if they were not yet taught about these.

So these children bring the healings of Jesus in the temple into direct relation to the davidic royalty and proclaim quite openly Jesus as the one who through his actions, seen by the chief priests and the scribes themselves, proved to be king. At the same time the old desire of Israel to „see the true God in Zion“ (Ps 84:8b), had been fulfilled in front of everyone’s eyes. How amazing: the highest Jewish authorities and scholars ignore Jesus, the children recognize and acknowledge him as the King of Israel - and „go from one strength to another“ (Ps. 84:8a). Jesus begins his praise of God in Mt 11:25,26 with the words: „I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and disclosed it to infants. Yes, Father, for this is your good pleasure“.

The temple becomes a place of teaching: „I have sat daily in the temple and taught“ (Mt 26:55). To suggest, as became evident with the messiah-oriented Jews, and later in the regular temple visits of the apostles, various

Jewish groups could meet and gather in the vast temple area with its extensive porches, especially in the royal hall as a communication center, without being subjected to observance or even to censorship. Even the so-called cleansing of the Temple of Jesus did not call the temple guard into action and was a rather limited, predominantly symbolic act. - With the teaching of Jesus at the same time the new Torah is entering the temple. „Hear, all ye people! Take heed, land and everything that is in it! For the LORD God has to speak to you, yes, the Lord from his holy temple.“ (Mi 1:2)

The Holy of Holies, inter alia the location of the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments, was empty at the time of Jesus, after Nebuchadnezzar in 587/586 BC possibly had plundered and destroyed the Ark. Jesus takes up the topic once again: after the Torah in his time was moved from the temple to the synagogue, he establishes the connection once again. „Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets: I have not come to dissolve, but to fulfill.“ (Mt 5:17) As fulfilling the Torah he enters the temple and as a teacher embodies the perfectly valid Torah. As such, his place would be even in the most holy place; since he is the only one who has fully complied with the Old Testament law, he may enter without atonement ritual. And indeed, at the crucifixion, the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies rips in two from top to bottom, the access is open, anyone can go through, Jesus has opened the door to the most holy God: „I am the door, if anyone enters by me he will be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture“ (John 10:9).

„And Jesus went out from the temple, and his disciples came to him and showed him the buildings of the

temple. He said to them. Do you see all this? Verily I say unto you: Not one stone will remain upon another that shall not be broken.“ (Mt 24:1,2). „Verily I say unto you: All this will come upon this generation.“ (Mt 23:36). Jesus himself is the true temple authorized by God, therefore the impressive complex of Herod degenerates to a deceptive facade, lacking the supporting structure, the decisive content. Such a temple has no support and no future. Passing aside from Jesus - is to be left to decline, although its appearance can be maintained for a while. To deny this consequence would be an equally façade-like concealment of inescapable relationships.

What the crowd shouted in Jerusalem, „His blood be on us and on our children“ still lingers: definitely get away with Jesus, how bad the consequences for us may be, we are ready to bear them. But the sentence was fulfilled in a twofold manner: as the saving blood that carries the world’s sins, including the sin of all the people and their children which called for the death of Jesus; then the judging blood, which less than 30 years later fell as a horrible disaster on Jerusalem. And this came through the Romans, who had previously become the fulfilling servants of Jesus’ death. Thus Rome became twice the “tool of death”.

Pontius Pilate, the governor under Herod Antipas, condemned Jesus to death, at the urging of the excited people and had him crucified as a rebel against the rule of Rome. But nothing could stop the spread of the faith in the Messiah Jesus. From Jerusalem, the Gospel was carried to the whole world. Less than 20 years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the major cities of the Mediterranean there were Christians and first Christian communities.

4. The »comprehensive« Priest-King

In the New Testament Jesus, just like King David, is compared to Melchizedek, the priest king, in whom we encountered the city of Jerusalem as “Salem“ for the first time. The Book of Hebrews refers to this comparison, in Chapter 7 we read: “Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek forever.” The priest-king Melchizedek is seen as a reflection of the high priest Jesus Christ, having preceded his incarnation. What, however, is regarded of Melchizedek as the image of the heavenly King, applies even more to the archetype Jesus Christ himself: He who according to his human origin does not belong to the priestly tribe of Levi (7:13f), is Priest “because of the power of an indestructible life“ (7:16) and therefore incomparably superior to the priests, “according to the order of Aaron“ (7:11). This means: While the Levitical priests could not provide final forgiveness through the prescribed rites in the law (7:11, 18f; 9:6ff; 10:1ff), the eternal priest “after the order of Melchizedek“ has, by his one and one for always valid sacrifice, provided the sanctifying restitution, liberating from sin (7:24ff; 9:11ff; 10:10ff).

5. Local Tradition und Local Future

The Bible identifies not only the messianic functions, it also names the place on which all of this is concentrated, Jerusalem. In all of its contradictions and its oppressive burden Jerusalem has a great future. It will be the capital of a kingdom which will cover the whole earth. Blood guilt is on the city, but after that Isaiah announces, “they will call you: city of righteousness, the faithful city“ (Isaiah 1:26). Then “out from Zion will go counsel and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem“ (Is 2:3). The Holy One of Israel is there to take his dwelling and

clothe her with his glory. All restitution attempts to restore city and Temple with Torah piety, ritual purity and Jewish nationalism, yes, political “fearlessness of death”, have ended in a terrible drama. Only the Messiah as a king, priest and prophet owns the right and the authority for this. Therefore God has sent His Son Jesus Messiah, as the builder of Israel and Lord and Saviour of the world: “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).

ENDNOTES

¹ Cf. John Paul II., in: <http://f3.webmart.de/f.cfm?id=906296&r=threadview&t=3885365&pg=4>

² Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace. Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum, quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum, lumen ad revelationem gentium et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

- Νῦν ἀπολύεις τὸν δοῦλόν σου, δέσποτα, κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου ἐν εἰρήνῃ: ὅτι εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τὸ σωτήριόν σου ὃ ἠτοίμασας κατὰ πρόσωπον πάντων τῶν λαῶν, φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν καὶ δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ.

- Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

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FOR
OUT
OF ZION
SHALL
GO
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AND
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OF
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FROM
JERUSALEM.
ISA 2:3