Short paper contributed to the OTSEM meeting in Goettingen October 18th- 21st, 2009

Ruth Sauerwein, PhD student, University of Goettingen
(ruth.sauerwein@theologie.uni-goettingen.de)

איש האלהים – Fiction or Function?
A few observations on the title "man of god" in the Elisha cycle

I. Introduction

Elijah and Elisha are included among the pre-classical or non-writing Old Testament prophets (along with others like Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Micaiah, etc.). Unlike the oracular emphasis of the classical or writing prophets in the OT, the records of the non-writing prophets are essentially biographical in nature.

The Elisha cycle appears as a bundle of stories compacted in a block of narrative material (1Kgs 19:19-21, 2Kgs 2:1-8:15 [minus 3:1-3], 9:1-3, 13:20-21]). The stories are woven sometimes more sometimes less firmly into the deuteronomistic notes on the kings Joram (852-841 BCE), Jehu (841-814 BCE), Jehoahaz (814-798 BCE), and Jehoash (798-782 BCE).

The anecdotes about Elisha appear to be loosely strung together. Almost none of the stories follow as a clear consequence of the previous one. Contradictions occur, as might be expected. Therefore, one aim of my dissertation is to reconstruct the growth of the Elisha cycle and to explore how and when the stories of Elisha where bound together with the Elijah stories and at what point in history they have made their way into the Books of Kings.

Generally, the Elisha stories obtain the impression that they are of very high age. This effect derives predominantly from the miracle narrations which report of archaic rites and miraculous techniques performed by Elisha. These phenomena remain without parallels in the Old Testament.[1] The contents of such stories seem to be characteristic for a book of legends, rather than for one of history, miracles being the main preoccupation of the 'prophet'. Therefore, these mira-

[1] These findings caused most researchers to look for the oldest core of the Elisha stories within the miracle narrations. Cf. J. WELLHAUSEN, Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments, Berlin ^{4}1963, 288; M. NOTH, Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament, Darmstadt 1943 (repr. 1963), 83f.; G. FOHRER, Art. Elisa, RGG^3 2 (1958), 429-431, 430.

cle narrations should take a centre stage in this paper. In this respect, the paper aims to examine the question if the title איש האלהים reflects an archaic function (that had probably been held by the historical Elisha) or if the title is completely fictional and was applied to Elisha by a later redaction. With this I'd like to present a general first view of the religion historical approach that will be subject to the second third of my dissertation. Hence, the paper will sum up some first observations on the religion historical parallels from outside the Old Testament and figure out which extra biblical texts might become of interest for my work.

II. Literary growth – an overview

It has been part of the first third of my dissertation to explore and reconstruct the difficult process of literary growth within the Elisha cycle.

The Elisha stories themselves are embedded into the Former Prophets that were subject to many redaction critical analyses during the last decades. According to the redaction historical hypothesis of the so called "Goettingen school" the Elijah- and Elisha-narrations belong to the second (DtrP[rophet]) of three consecutive redactional layers working over the books Josh-2Kgs, the so called Deuteronomistic History (DrtG). Interestingly, right from the beginning there had been doubts whether DtrP can be counted as an independent literary unit because of its extent (compared to DtrH[istorian] and DtrN[omist]) and the debateable uniformity in theological intention. These doubts increased during the last years of research.[2]

Equally relevant for the reconstruction of literary growth is the relation of Elisha- and Elijah-stories that has been debated in several recent studies.[3] The miracles performed by Elisha convey the impression of being duplicates of those which are credited to his master Elijah, with obvious efforts at heightening them, e.g. the stories of the widow's oil, the revival of the child, and the anointing of Hazael and Jehu. It has been pointed out by many scholars so far that the Elisha versions seem to be the original models that became archetype for the Elijah stories.[4]

While reading the Elisha stories in the Books of Kings it is noticeable that there are obviously three different genres of Elisha narrations, which treat a wide range of different topics.

---

[2] Vgl. R. SMEND, Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments, Stuttgart [3]1984, 122.

[3] Cf. B. LEHNHART, Prophet und König im Nordreich Israel, VT.S 96, Leiden 2003; S. OTTO, Jehu, Elia und Elisa. Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen, BWANT 152, Stuttgart 2001, 247-266.

[4] Cf. J. BLENKINSOPP, Geschichte der Prophetie in Israel, Stuttgart [2]1996, 66; H.-J. STIPP, Elischa – Propheten – Gottesmänner, ATSAT 24, St. Ottilien 1987, 453-457; W. THIEL, Jahwe und Prophet in der Elisa-Tradition, in: J. Hausmann et. al. (ed.), Alttestamentlicher Glaube und Biblische Theologie, FS H. D. Preuß, Stuttgart 1992, 93-103, 99.

a) *Elijah-Elisha succession stories*, [5] which picture the transmission of the prophetical office (1Kgs 19:19-21, 2Kgs 2:1-18).
b) *War and court stories*, which report on Elisha's effect on the wars between Israel and Moab/Aram-Damascus and his impact on Israel's court as well as Jehu's putsch (2Kgs 3, 5, 6:8-23, 6:24-7:20, 8:1-15, 9:1-15a, 13:14-19).
c) *Miracles*, that characterize Elisha as talented with magic and mantic skills (2Kgs 2:19-25, 4, 5*, 6:1-7.8-23*, 13:14-19*).[6]

The miracles predominantly form the shape and tone of the Elisha stories. They are usually short (2-8 verses) and function to a large extent as independent literary units without the integration in either the cycle or the Books of Kings. Above all, these Elisha-narrations are embedded in the deuteronomistic frameworks much more loosely than the Elijah-episodes.[7]

The closeness of certain plots within the miracle stories and the obvious changes of place and protagonists make it easy to separate individual episodes, which show differences in content and topic:

a) punishments: 2Kgs 2:23-25, 5:20-27.
b) nature miracles: 2Kgs 2:19-22, 4:1-7, 6:1-7.
c) feeding miracles: 2Kgs 4:38-41, 4:42-44.
d) healing miracles: 2Kgs 5:1-19.
e) resurrections: 2Kgs 4:8-37, 13:20f.

As stated before, this cycle of stories largely seems as a random collection of individual anecdotes which might be the result of a literary growth that went on for quite a while. Hence, there occur various contradictions. Only some examples may be noted here. 2Kgs 5:1 contradicts for instance 2Kgs 6:8 – peace is said to be between Israel and Damascus in the former, war in the latter passage. While 2Kgs 5:27 makes Elisha's servant Gehazi a leper, he nevertheless appears before the king without any further ado in 8:1. The shifting of Elisha's places of residence points in the same direction, and so does the circumstance that Gehazi is now a very important personage (cf. 2Kgs 4:8, 8:1), and now of little consequence (cf. 2Kgs 4:8, 5:1). Again, some of the stories are altogether without historical material, while others, notwithstanding their legendary character, give historical notes of value (cf. 2Kgs 3:1, 6:24, 8:7, 9:1).

Taking these and far more observations into account the Elisha cycle can not be considered as a coherent production of a single author but the result of a complex and extended literary growth.

---

[5] Cf. SCHMITT, Elisa, who names these stories „*Sukzessorgeschichten*", likewise: W. THIEL, Art. Elisa, in: RGG[4] 2 (1999), 1218-1220.
[6] These categories contain grey zones. Especially within the categories b) and c) there will be found overlaps.
[7] Cf. 2Kgs 2:25 and 3:1 as well as 8:15 and 8:16.

At this point of my work I have come to results as follows. The oldest core of the Elisha cycle had been a collection of short miraculous anecdotes about a magically gifted man of god named Elisha who is the leader of a prophetic group that might be located at Gilgal[8] (2Kgs 2:19-25, 4:1-7*, 4:8-37*, 4:38-41, 4:42-44, 5:1-14*, 6:1-7, 13:14-19*). These short miraculous anecdotes consisted of only few verses and functioned as independent literary units that might originate from oral tradition. Each anecdote began with an exposition of the problem and finished with Elisha performing a miracle resolving the original problem.[9] Within these original miracle narrations we find both, the title **איש האלהים** and the Name Elisha. There are no occurrences of the term **נביא**.
This collection of short miracle narrations was inserted into the Books of Kings that in the surrounding chapters mainly consisted of the lists and the so called deuteronomistic notes on the kings of Israel and Judah. Presumably, the same redactor who inserted the Elisha stories also created the set of war and court stories (2Kgs 3*, 5, 6:8-23, 6:24-7:20, 8:1-15, 9:1-15a, 13:14-19*) that brought the miracle worker Elisha in contact with the protagonists of the deuteronomistic framework namely the kings of Israel and their perpetual opponents – the Arameans.
Besides some individual additions and inflictions a second redactor connected the Elisha stories with the Elijah-cycle that meanwhile had made its way into the Books of Kings and created the Elijah-Elisha succession stories (1Kgs 19:19-21*, 2Kgs 2:1-18*).[10]
These three parts (miraculous core, war- and court-stories and succession-narratives) were then tied together and were connected with the Elijah-cycle. This interlocking among each other and with the context of the "deuteronomistic framework" was made by an end-redaction using literary "strings" such as the three-element-order in 1Kgs 19:15-18[11] or the unique appellation of Elisha (**אבי אבי רכב ישׂראל ופרשׁיו**) in 2Kgs 2:12 quoted in 2Kgs 13:14.

III. The title **איש האלהים** *in the Old Testament*

The title **איש האלהים** occurs 76 times in the entire Old Testament; no less than 55 of these occurrences are within the Books of Kings. The title "man of god" is used for:

[8] These annotations do not claim to give any information on the historical value of the stories but remain on the literary level only. Regarding the problem of how and where to localize Gilgal cf. T.R. HOBBS, 2 Kings, WBC 13, Waco 1985, 9; J. GRAY, I&II Kings, OTL 10/11, London [2]1970, 473f.
[9] There are some textual links that connect the original miracle narrations. The invocation of the man of god out of misery happens in 4:1.40, 6:5 each time using the lemma צעק combined with a form of אמר introducing the following speech. There are only five references for this combination in the entire Old Testament. Moreover, the same formula (בני הנביאים ישבים לפניו) is used for the description of the sons of the prophet in 4:38 und 6:1; cf. OTTO, Jehu, 227.
[10] The miracle stories relating to Elijah had already been patterned after and adjusted to the Elisha versions.
[11] The fact that none of these orders is fulfilled by Elisha (himself) indicates that these verses simply serve as twine on the literary base.

- Elisha (29 times: 2Kgs 4:7-13:19) [12]
- Elijah (7 times: 1Kgs 17:18.24, 2Kgs 1:9-13)
- Moses (6 times: Deut 33:1, Josh 14:6, Ps 90:1, Ezra 3:2, 1Chr 23:14, 2Chr 30:16)
- Samuel (4 times: 1Sam 9:6-10)
- David (3 times: Neh 12:24.36, 2Chr 8:14)
- Shemaja (2 times: 1Kgs 12:22, 2Chr 11:2)
- Hanan (1 time: Jer 35:4)
- anonymous men of god (24 times: Jdg 13:6.8, 1Sam 2:27, 1Kgs 13:1-29, 20:28, 2Kgs 23:16-17, 2Chr 25:7.9)

What is interesting about these results is that the title **איש האלהים** is never applied to a classical – a writing prophet, although the term seems to be known in Jeremiah (35:4).

There is no reference for a female equivalent **אשת האלהים** in the entire Old Testament although there is a **אשה נביאה** in Jdg 4:4 and in other cases there occurs a **נביאה** besides an **נביא**.

In most of the references outside the Elisha-/Elijah-cycle (especially for the anonymous men of god) the term **איש האלהים** is used to describe messengers delivering the word of god. Derived from their function the title here is obviously used as a substitute for **מלאך האלהים**.[13] It is up to a further examination whether the title **איש האלהים** was chosen because the term **מלאך האלהים** in these literary contexts had already been occupied by divine beings such as angels. Moreover, there is no **איש יהוה**, although there are many occurrences of both **מלאך יהוה** and **מלאך האלהים**.[14]

In the surrounding semantic field of prophetic texts you can usually find the word transmission formula (*Wort-Ereignisformel,* cf. 1Kgs 12:22, 17:2.8), a messenger's instruction (1Kgs 12:23, 2Kgs 1:3.15) and the messenger formula (1Sam 2:27, 1Kgs 12:24, 13:2, 17:14, 20:28). Interestingly enough, none of these signs of prophetic semantics can be found in the Elisha cycle although he is entitled as **נביא** in seven occasions. Another problem arises concerning Elisha's characteristics. Elisha does not have any features of an Old Testament prophet as we know them. He does neither declare the word of God nor a judgement oracle for Israel nor does he experience a divine vocation. Additionally unlike Elijah, Elisha is not opposing Baal neither does he lead Israel as Moses and Samuel did. He does not call the people to return to YHWH as Elijah did and does

[12] Cf. fn. 21. While the masoretic text of 2Kgs 4-13 uses the title „man of god" 29 times the LXX has only 19 occurrences of ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ, cf. STIPP, Elischa, 46. Stipp concludes that some of the masoretic occurrences are secondary extensions of the Greek text tradition. As a result, one could suggest that the redactional work in the masoretic text wasn't finished yet when the Books of Kings were translated.

[13] Cf. J. KÜHLEWEIN Art. **איש**, THAT 1 (1978), 130-138, 136.

[14] There is very little material from other ancient Semitic languages. Neither the Arabic *du 'ilāhin* (owner of an *'ilāh* = demon) nor the Sumerian LU-DINGIR-RA, Akkadian *amēl ili* (man who is devoted to a god; has a cultic dimension) seem to share the typology. Cf. N.P. BRATSIOTIS, Art. **איש**, ThWAT 1(1973), 238-252, 250f.; L. KÖHLER, Art. **איש**, HAL 1 (1967), 41-43.

not act as conscience to the king of Israel as Nathan did to David. He brings no ethical instructions to either king or people. Instead this particular איש האלהים wanders the countryside performing miracles.[15] Moreover, none of the other prophetic terms such as ראה or חזה or their verbal equivalents is ever used for Elisha.

Resulting from his deeds as they are presented in 1Kgs 2-13 he can only be considered a miracle worker with mantic and magic skills but doesn't have anything in common with the regular image of a prophet as depicted in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

In 1Kgs 13 we can find the antagonism of an איש האלהים and a prophet. In this respect I share Würthwein's opinion that the original story only consisted of the man of god and the king.[16] This primary saga had no connection to the word of god but was a miraculous story of the man of god from Judah in opposition to an (primarily) unnamed king.

We have seen so far that the biblical use of the term איש האלהים implies different meanings. The one involved with Elisha and Elijah is that these men are in a somehow close connection with god that gives them power to perform supernatural deeds.[17]

Besides this, the occurrences of איש האלהים as a title for Moses (in an comparatively late text such as Deut 33:1) and David (in Neh 12:24.36, 2Chr 8:14) imply that the title later on (in late biblical texts) was employed to entitle great men and leading figures in the history of Israel.

The connections with YHWH in the Elisha-cycle are much looser than in the Elijah-cycle which represents a much higher level of theological reflection.[18] Some of these YHWH insertions in Elisha anecdotes, such as the prayer to YHWH before the revival of the child, might have their origin in the Elijah-stories and could (e.g. in 2Kgs 4:33) be a result of a reciprocal redactional adjustment of Elisha- and Elijah-stories.

Within the Elisha narrations in 1Kgs 19 - 2Kgs 13 Elisha's name occurs 50 times.[19] Seven times Elisha is referred to as נביא[20] whereas the title איש האלהים is applied to Elisha 29 times, as shown above.[21] There have been various redaction critical attempts to explain the use and the distribu-

---

[15] Cf. W. J. BERGEN, Elisha and the End of Prophetism, JSOT.S 286, Sheffield 1999, 176.

[16] Cf. E. WÜRTHWEIN, Die Bücher der Könige 1. Könige 1-16, ATD 11,1, Göttingen 1977, 170-172.

[17] This interpretation can also to be applied to Moses.

[18] Cf. e.g. 2Kgs 4:33 (simple redactional addition) and 1Kgs 17:20 (more complex redactional insertion). Another example for a simple redactional insertion of YHWH is חן תשועה ליהוה in 2Kgs 13:17b. Cf. K. OTT, Die prophetischen Analogiehandlungen im Alten Testament, BWANT 185, Stuttgart 2009, 41; E. WÜRTHWEIN, Die Bücher der Könige 1Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25, ATD 11,2, Göttingen 1984, 367. The higher intensity of theological reflection in the Elijah miracles is according to Würthwein (1Kön, 368) the work of the deuteronomistic redaction that converted Elijah's miracles in YHWH's miracles carried out by Elijah.

[19] Cf. 1Kgs 19:16f.19, 2Kgs 2:1ff.9.12.14f.19.22, 3:11.13f, 4:1f.8.17.32.38, 5:8ff.20.25; 6:1.12.17ff.31f., 7:1, 8:1.4f.7.10. 13f., 9:1, 13:14ff.20f.

[20] Cf. 1Kgs 19:16; 2Kgs 5:3.8.13, 6:12; 9:1.4.

[21] Cf. 2Kgs 4:7.9.16.21f.25(2x).27(2x).40.42, 5:8.14f.20, 6:6.9f.15, 7:2.17.18.19, 8:2.4.7f.11, 13:19.

tion of this title so far. To me none of these explanations gave a convincing answer to the diverse statistic and semantic findings.

Beginning with Hans-Christoph Schmitt's study[22] the title איש האלהים used to be considered a marker for a certain redactional layer for more than 35 years. Schmitt regarded this redaction as being responsible for the integration of the Elisha-Cycle into the deuteronomistic history during the first half of the 5th century BCE.[23] According to Schmitt the *DtrGrundschrift* in this passage only consisted of the story of the Jehu putsch. The Elisha stories passed a complicated and long process of growth outside the Old Testament beginning at the end of the 9th century BCE before they were embedded into the Books of Kings by a redactor who used the term "man of god" to adjust the miraculous cycle of stories into the Books of Kings.

Schmitt's interpretation of the title "man of god" was reformulated several times in recent publications.[24] In particular the composition historical study by Hermann-Josef Stipp uses the term "man of god" to distinguish between the different literary layers in a most schematic manner.[25]

Both studies (Stipp's and Schmitt's) are based on a considerable number of redactional changes within the original miracle stories to eliminate the title איש האלהים from them. Unfortunately, these theories lack an explanation why the redactor should have deleted Elisha's name in these verses entirely instead of an appositional addition to the name as we can find it e.g. in 2Kgs 5:8.

From these facts, one may take into further consideration if the concept of a "prophet" represented in the Former Prophets fundamentally differs from the one embodied in the Latter Prophets. The synonymic use of איש האלהים and נביא for certain prophetical figures in the Former Prophets and the complete absence of the title איש האלהים in the Latter Prophets might be another indication for an essential divergence in the understanding of a prophet's function within the two parts of the corpus *nebi'im*. This brings up the question whether there is one so called deuteronomistic concept for prophetism, which according to the theory of the Deuteronomistic History must to a large extent derive from the book of Deuteronomy.

Within Deuteronomy we do have two prominent references concerning prophetism. Deut 13:2-6 condemns (right after the cult-centralisation in Deut 12) the prophets of foreign gods. Interestingly here it seems common that (in this case false) prophets perform miracles. Still, the phrasing

---

[22] Cf. H.C. SCHMITT, Elisa, Gütersloh 1972.

[23] According to SCHMITT, Elisa, 89.101.107 these verses belong to the redaction using the title „man of god": 1Kgs 19:19*, 2Kgs 2:1a.11b.12aαβγ.21*.24*25b, 4:42-44, 5:1aβ.8aα*.11bβ*.14aγ.15a.17*.19a, 6:23b.24aα.25aα, 7:2.16bβ*.17abα, 8:2aβ.4aγ*.11b-13a, 13:14bα*.18-19.

[24] Cf. S. OTTO, Jehu, Elia und Elisa. Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen, BWANT 152, Stuttgart 2001, 247-266 ; B. LEHNART, Prophet und König im Nordreich Israel, VT.S 96, Leiden 2003.

[25] Cf. STIPP, Elischa, 46-47.

of the sentence does not imply that the performance of miracles appoints the prophet a false prophet but the god in whose duty he is acting. Deut 13 became an issue of various debates in recent research. On the one hand scholars such as Eckart Otto see parts of the „*Ur*-Deuteronomy" (the oldest nucleus of the book) within in Deut 13* because of their dependency on ancient near-eastern law codes in form and content, preferably the Neo-Assyrian Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (VTE). On the other hand scholars as for instance Timo Veijola don't see a direct connection of Deut 13 and those ancient near-eastern texts but state a much younger namely postexilic development. [26]

The *locus classicus* for prophetism in Deuteronomy is to be found in Deut 18:9-22 (the so called *Prophetengesetz*). There we find various laws and instructions concerning the foreign people's customs as part of the constitutional outline *(Verfassungsentwurf)* in Deut 16-18. In Deut 16:9-22 fascinatingly we can find the strict prohibition of any kind of magic, sorcery and clairvoyance. Instead this law names three positive criteria that have to be fulfilled by a true prophet. He must have resemblances with Moses, he must be an Israelite and he can not be appointed by humans.

This last criterion and the strict prohibition of magic and mantic practices constitute (at least in the reader's eyes) a severe problem for Elisha and his typology as a prophet with both mantic and magic skills (as well as for other figures from the Former Prophets as for instance Elijah and Saul). In contrast Deut 18 construes another image of a prophet whose ideal prototype is Moses.[27]

The third reference which is crucial for the quest of a prophetic concept in Deuteronomy is Deut 34:10. This verse within the last chapter of Deuteronomy makes Moses the prophet as such and somehow closes the line of prophetical succession: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face." Moreover this verse contradicts the announcement of Deut 18:15.18 which might be an evidence for the literary historical distance between both statements.[28]

The most probable conclusion that we can draw from here is that the three references dealing with prophetism in Deuteronomy are presumably not from a single theological and historical background let alone a single author. Furthermore, it implies that there is no (single) deuteronomic-deuteronomistic concept of a prophet. According to Matthias Köckert Deut 34 represents the youngest, Deut 13 a slightly older and Deut 18 the oldest stratum of a prophetical con-

---

[26] Veijola considers as *terminus post quem* 538 BCE, cf. T. VEIJOLA, Moses Erben. Studien zum Deuteronomismus und zum Schriftgelehrtentum, BWANT 149, Stuttgart 2000, 127. Cf. M. KÖCKERT, Zum literarischen Ort des Prophetengesetzes Dtn 18 zwischen dem Jeremiabuch und Dtn 13, in: R.G. KRATZ et al. (ed.), Liebe und Gebot: Studien zum Deuteronomium, FS L. Perlitt, FRLANT 190, Göttingen 2000, 82.

[27] Cf. Num 11:11f.14-17.24b-30, Deut 18,15.18 and Hos 12,14.

[28] Cf. KÖCKERT, Prophetengesetz, 81f.

cept in Deuteronomy.[29] At first sight this seems a convincing order of progression if one sticks to the view of an increasing deuteronomism that became stricter by the time (and by each layer of the deuteronomistic redaction) and came to its height in Deut 34:10. Still then, it remains the question why a strict deuteronomist would not have worked over a prophetic concept as we can find it in Deut 13. Recent changes in the interpretation of deuteronomism give, as mentioned above, reason to consider if Dtn 13 could be post-deuteronomistic.[30]

Regrettably, we must come to the conclusion that the redaction critical analyses gave no explanation on the actual meaning of the title איש האלהים and the typology that is embodied in Elisha. Moreover, all other references on the Old Testament depict various understandings of the men of god and therefore, can give no homogeneous explanation to the question of typology. Correspondingly, the late biblical references for the title איש האלהים (from Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles) can only be helpful up to a point because they are additionally influenced by the use of the term in the Books of Kings and by the picture of a man of god that is painted by the biblical Elisha.
Since the inner biblical occurrences give no sufficient hints regarding the typology and function of a "man of god" it might be helpful to have a look at parallel texts prior, contemporary and posterior to the Old Testament.

IV. Parallels prior to the Old Testament

An examination of ancient near eastern texts might give hints on the origin of a typology we find in Elisha and which seems to be described by the title איש האלהים. As a first result of my quest some texts could be determined as being helpful in this respect. These are for instance the Babylonian and Assyrian nam.búr.bi-rituals that mainly aim to fight off or relief devastation and misfortune which can be the outcome of a bad omen. Moreover, it is fair to assume that the repulsive rituals *maqlû* and *šurpu* which could heal or prevent diseases and maladies might give an insight into a world close to magic performances. Although the rituals themselves may differ from the miracles worked by Elisha, it has to be pointed out that we also can get some information from the Assyrian and Babylonian texts about the people and the professions who carried out these rituals. Besides other professions such as the divination specialist *bārû,* the medical ex-

[29] Cf. KÖCKERT, Prophetengesetz, 85.94-96.
[30] Since this is not the crucial question of my work I will leave it with this for now. Nevertheless, I would like to take the question of a deuteronomistic concept of prophecy into considerations for the religion historical part of my dissertation. Still the *Prophetengesetz* in Deut 18 supports that the insertion of the Elisha happened on a "post-deuteronomistic" level.

pert *ašû,* there can be found the casual sorcerer *kaššāpu* and his female counterpart *kaššāptu* whose conjurations often have a malicious aim. On the other hand there is the profession of the conjurer *ašipu* whose work was in most cases to remedy both psychic and physical afflictions caused by demonic influence or malicious conjurations. Interestingly, the *ašipu* is reported to have contact with the Neo-Assyrian royal courts just as the Books of Kings account for Elisha.[31] Fascinatingly, we can find a connection of motifs in the concept of an *ašipu* (performing miracles specifically healings and interacting with the royal court) that are characteristic for Elisha as he is pictured within the final shape of the Books of Kings. However, all the information we can get concerning the *ašipu*'s profession and function derives from letters and ritual manuals written by conjurers themselves. Unlike the Elisha stories there are no third person records about the conjurers' deeds and their magical performances. Furthermore, the rituals performed by the *ašipu* seem to have a mainly medical and exorcistic ambition whereas phenomena such as feeding miracles or nature miracles are never reported of.[32] Nevertheless, the texts mentioned above will constitute one part of the religion historical research within my dissertation.

V. Parallels contemporary or posterior to the Old Testament

Another field of study will be the analysis of those texts that show parallels to the Elisha narrations but originate from the period contemporary or posterior to the Old Testament. These texts couldn't possibly provide information on where the typology of the man of god Elisha originated but could help in localizing the sociological milieu and the surroundings where stories of a similar type developed and spread. Above all, this methodological approach will try to take the results of modern redactional criticism at its face value. There has been a noticeable change in theories about the so called "Deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk (DtrG)" as mentioned above. Unlike some years ago more literary critical and redaction historical studies indicate that the formation of a major amount of texts within the so called DtrG, including those that used to be estimated as DtrP-redaction, took place in the post-exilic period. Hence, my methodology likes to take into consideration that those assumptions in dating tend to result in different religion historical frameworks that is to say the Persian and Hellenistic period.

---

[31] Cf. S. MAUL, Die Lösung vom Bann. Überlegungen zu altorientalischen Konzeptionen von Krankheit und Heilkunst, in: M. Stol et al. (ed.), Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine, Leiden 2004, 79-95; S. MAUL, Die Reste einer mittelassyrischen Beschwörerbibliothek aus dem Königspalast zu Assur, in: W. Sallaberger et al. (ed.), Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien, FS C. Wilcke, Wiesbaden 2003, 181-194; T. Abusch et al. (ed.), Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge Bd. 4. Omina, Orakel, Rituale und Beschwörungen, Gütersloh 2007, 111-115.128-186; S. PARPOLA (ed.), Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars, SAA 10, Helsinki 1993; E. REINER, Astral Magic in Babylonia, Philadelphia 1995, 97-116.
[32] Cf. 2Kgs 4:38-41, 4:42-44, 2Kgs 2:19-22, 4:1-7, 6:1-7.

Due to the fact that there is very little material concerning prophetism and magic from the Persian Period no possible 'parallel' to the Elisha-narrations has occurred to me yet. Unlike the Persian Period the Hellenistic Period seems to develop an appreciable number of pious men and miracle workers. Two examples from the Jewish-Hellenistic and the Hellenistic background seem to be of particular interest for the Elisha-typology.

The miracle worker Honi ha-Me'aggel (Honi the Circle-Drawer) lived in the 1st century BCE and is known as a Jewish scholar prior to the age of the Tannaim. During the first century there occurred different religious splinter groups amongst the Jews in Judea and various individuals claimed to be miracle workers similar to Elijah and Elisha.
According to the Talmud (Ta'anit 3:8) Honi ha-Me'aggel was known for his talent to successfully pray for rain.[33] His name was derived from his practice of drawing a circle in the dust around himself, which he refused to leave until his prayer was granted. Once when God had not send rain for months, Honi drew a circle in the sand and stood inside that circle. He told God that he would not leave the circle until God had sent rain. Moreover, when the rain began to fall shortly after his prayer he also defined the intensity and duration of the rain. According to Josephus (Antiquitates 14.2.1 § 22-24) Honi's death is related to the conflict between the Hasmonean brothers Hyrcanos II. and Aristobul II. and the antagonism between Pharisees and Sadducees. He got caught and was stoned to death by the followers of Hyrcanos II. because he refused to pray for the downfall of their opponents.[34] Furthermore, other miraculous figures from the Jewish-Hellenistic background such as Hanina ben Dosa or Eleazar the exorcist (both 1st century BCE) should been taken into account for the question of analogies to Elisha's typology of a miracle worker.

In addition we find certain parallels in typology between the miracle worker Elisha and the Hellenistic type of θεῖος ἀνήρ[35] as he is represented for instance in Apollonius of Tyana, pictured in Philostratus' biography. Apollonius was known for his extra-sensory perceptive skills. Philostratus (Vita Apollonii 8:26-27) reports that Apollonius while being in Ephesos witnessed Domitian's assassination which took place in Rome. Moreover, Apollonius is said to have ended

[33] Cf. 1Kgs 18.
[34] Cf. W.S. GREEN, Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabinic Tradition, ANRW II/19.2 (1979), 618-647; C. A. EVANS, Jesus and his Contemporaries. Comparative Studies, Leiden 1995; G. VELTRI, Magie und Hallakha. Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum, TSAJ 62, Tübingen 1997, 228-230.
[35] Due to the difficulties recent New Testament scholarship has with the determination of this term, it will only be used as a collective term for the overall phenomenon. In this respect I will follow the general terminology and the understanding represented in M. FRENSCHKOWSKI, Offenbarung und Epiphanie 2. Die verborgene Epiphanie in Spätantike und frühem Christentum, WUNT II/80, Tübingen 1997, 187-191.

a pestilence epidemic in Ephesos by letting the city's youth stone a beggar to death by the statue of Herakles. According to Philostratus this beggar was a pestilence-demon.

Contemporary New Testament research agrees that there is no literary dependency between Apollonius and Jesus.[36] In fact both are based on common folk-tales and narrations that might have their earliest examples in Elisha and Elijah and found different continuations on Hellenistic (θεῖος ἀνήρ) and Jewish-Hellenistic (miracle worker such as Honi ha-Me'aggel, etc.) backgrounds whereas the early Christian authors formed a similar but not exact equivalent in the gospels' account of Jesus. The social context of many of these miracle workers corresponds with the social background of the Elisha-cycle namely the rural and poor milieu that is represented in the leading characters such as the widow or the בני־הנביאים. Nevertheless, Elisha casually has contact with the royal court and a connection to the political protagonists which resembles Philostratus' picture of Apollonius of Tyana.

VI. Conclusion

When we summarize the results concerning the title איש האלהים the conclusion can be drawn that the original short anecdotes about Elisha already had that title as well as Elisha's name. There is no evidence that it was brought into the miracle narrations only by a redactor – and therefore is no mere fiction of a latter redactor – but is in my judgement part of the original short stories. Contrariwise, there is no sign at all that the central character of the short miracle stories already was connected with the title נביא. This implies that if anything the term נביא could be understood as marker for redactional activity.

Unfortunately, the analyses of title איש האלהים has not given any information on the religion historical problem of typology. The biblical occurrences don't give a homogenous explanation for what איש האלהים actually means.

Additionally, we have seen that there are no direct literary parallels to Elisha's typology or the title איש האלהים neither prior nor posterior to the Old Testament. Therefore, it is not possible to tell, if איש האלהים represents a historical function that is to say an archaic profession but at least we can state that the author and the reader of the original Elisha stories must have had an idea what was implied with that term. Otherwise the original short stories would presumably have worked with other terms such as חרטם (diviner, magician), כשׁף (sorcerer), etc. in order to make clear what it is all about with Elisha's special talents.

[36] C. H. HOLLADAY, Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology, SBL Dissertation Series 40, Missoula 1977.

Nevertheless the general character of a miracle worker is not unique but occurs several times in folk tales and stories about pious and specially gifted men in history. These stories originate from the Hellenistic period and occur as well in pagan Hellenistic as in Jewish-Hellenistic texts. The connection of magic and mantic skills and temporary contacts with the royal court (which is, as we had seen, in case of Elisha the creation of a latter redactor) appears only in Apollonius but less elaborated than in the Elisha narrations.

A further analysis has to point out whether the original and short miraculous Elisha folk tales can be interpreted as the origin or the prequel of an entire genre that came to its peek during the end of Hellenistic period. The examination of other ritual text corpora from the Ancient Near East and the study of the typologies of the above mentioned magic professions could help either verify or falsify this hypothesis.