**University of Siegen, June 6-9, 2018**

**International Hans Jonas Conference**

The Idea of Scattering and Re-Collection in the Prophets /

Die Idee der Zerstreuung und Wiedereinsammlung bei den Propheten

Lecture by Petr Frantik

**Abstract**

Hans Jonas published this work in 1922, at a time when the state of Israel did not exist. However, discussions about returning to the Holy Land were widespread among people of the Jewish faith. Against this background, Jonas examines some writings of ancient prophets that predicted both the scattering and the re-collection of the Jewish people from their territory. Hereby, Jonas briefly pictures the historical situation and the religious motives behind this prophecies (1). He then describes their effect on Jewish thought in the Diaspora and outlines different interpretations of the connection between punishment and salvation (2).

(1) In order to strengthen people's belief and obedience in God, it was the aspiration of the prophets to find the most terrible punitive scenario for a god-denying people, and that was to become an uprooted and disunited people. There were two reasons why this threat was taken very seriously by the people of that time. First, it was common for the Assyrians, who invaded many territories at that time, to break the resistance of conquered peoples through deportation. Secondly, it was still in the collective memory that the Israelites, after years of exile, only recently returned to their country. The possession of the Holy Land was not a matter of course, but a gift of God that could be taken away again. To prevent this, it was essential to observe the religious laws. Nevertheless, the idea of returning to the homeland was always part of the prophecies. A permanent separation from the Holy Land was extremely difficult to bear because a religious practice without a unified community on its own territory was hardly conceivable for the people of that time.

(2) The writings of the ancient prophets enjoyed great authority, especially among the people of the Diaspora, for after all, the first part of their prophecy came true. The question of a purpose of the diaspora and a possible return to the homeland was of fundamental importance. Jonas recognizes three different interpretations in respect to the connection of punishment and salvation. Firstly: The diaspora as a just punishment of God, which at the same time is a proof of the power of God and a memorial to other peoples among whom the Israelis now live. Salvation could occur through an act of God's mercy or in another version through atonement of guilt. Secondly: The Diaspora as a test for God's beloved people to educate and purify them. A return is possible when this process is completed. Thirdly: The idea of selection. Only those will return to the land, who can proof herself or himself worthy.

**Discussion**

With regard to the development of the philosopher Hans Jonas, the following questions seem interesting to me, which I would like to discuss with you:

1. What does the text tell us about Jonas´s (early) philosophical thinking?
2. What does the text tell us about Jonas´s relationship to Judaism?
3. What does the text tell us about Jonas´s attitude to Zionist movements?
4. What does the text tell us about Jonas´s concept of culture?