ISAIAH

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Isaiah

The Prophet and his Book

Ulrich F. Berges

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Preface

'If you want to grasp the prophet, you cannot bypass the book!'

This is the motto of the most recent research into the prophets and their books and it also indicates for the reader the direction taken in this volume, which originally appeared in the German language series 'Biblical Figures' ('*Biblische Gestalten*'). This does not mean that the books of the Old Testament are the products of individual authors. Rather, they should be compared to the great medieval cathedrals that were continuously expanded over hundreds of years by the best architects of the time. Just as it is possible to detect the work of the individual stonemasons and their guilds upon some of the stones, so have the literary architects of the prophetic writings left their marks in many places. Stone for stone, word for word, over a period of centuries—this is the manner in which the word of God in human words echoes throughout these literary masterpieces, impacting anew each generation of readers, including those of our own day and age.

Isaiah and his book both stand for the immeasurable greatness, the purifying holiness, and the power of the Lord of Hosts that is able to overcome all that is high and lofty in the whirlpool of world history. Yhwh's earthly residence is in Zion, his royal city is Jerusalem; that is the place where those who trust in him will find eternal security. Its gates are wide open for all those individuals from Israel and the nations who seek justice and mercy and who live accordingly. Whoever works through this book—whether by reading it or listening to it—will become a witness to a prophetic vision in which past, present, and future are fused together as if melted under the rays of a magnifying glass.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Dr Rüdiger Lux, the co-editor of the German series, for his patience and encouragement. My team at the University of Bonn provided me with the best support in the final phase of this project. I would therefore like to thank Johannes Bremer, Christiane Schneider, Bernd Obermayer and Sarah Rudolph for their perseverance and precision. I am also very grateful to Ms Friederike Kaltofen from the department of my colleague Professor Lux in Leipzig for helpfully finding images in a printable format for this volume.

The students in Nijmegen (1998–2005), Münster (2005–2009), and Bonn (since 2009) have either had to endure or continue to endure me with my enthusiasm for Isaiah. As an expression of gratitude and as a salutation it is to them that I dedicate 'my Isaiah'.

Ulrich F. Berges
Bonn, Easter 2010

On Easter Sunday I received the news of the sudden death of my friend and teacher Erich Zenger. Isaiah and the Psalms will always remain joined together!

Chapter A

Historical Background and Literary Development

1. *Isaiah and His Circle of Disciples in the Assyrian Period*

Whoever wishes to discover the prophet Isaiah must first and foremost turn to the book that bears his name. There can be no viable theory of the 8th century BCE prophet of Jerusalem which does not take into account this literary testimony to him, about him, and by him. The name Isaiah (*yᵉšaʿyāhû*) means 'Yhwh saves' (*yšʿ*) and as such functions as a programmatic summary of the content of the literature that is united under this name. This content is concerned with no less than the God of Israel's will and power to save, both of which persist through the highs and lows of the history of his people, from the time the Assyrian threat (8th–7th centuries), through the period of the Babylonian captivity (587–539), and culminating in return and restoration under Persian sovereignty (539–333). No other prophetic book in the Old/First Testament contains such a developed theology of history, one which envisions the people of God in the midst of the nations, interpreted in the light of their special origin and calling.

In light of this, it is understandable that the superscription to the book (Isa. 1.1) presents Isaiah as neither a writing prophet nor as a prophetic writer, but rather as the man who saw (*ḥzh*) the vision (*ḥᵃzôn*) of Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah (773–734?), Jotham (756–742?), Ahaz (742–728) and Hezekiah (728–700), the kings of Judah.[1] The prophet was not an author in the modern sense of the word, for the concept of individual authorship was unknown to ancient Near Eastern, and thus also biblical, literature. Rather than being the products of the literary genius of individual authors, these writings are the verbal expressions of living traditions, passed on and developed by knowledgeable tradents utilizing the medium of text.[2]

The effect of the superscription in Isa. 1.1 is not to turn Isaiah into the author of the book that bears his name, it is to establish him as the authority behind it. Everything that can be found in the following 66 chapters has

1. Chronology according to Veenhof, *Geschichte*, p. 315.
2. Cf. especially van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*.

been connected to this man of God from the Jerusalem of the late 8th century and as such participates in his undisputed prophetic authority. Isaiah is also not the figure who guides the reader through the book; he is only one figure among many that appear in its pages. These other figures, however, have remained anonymous, hiding themselves behind the figure of Isaiah. As such, he is the implied author who guides his readers through the historical vision that has now become a book (cf. Isaiah 7). These scribes have ascribed their work to the famous Jerusalem prophet, for they know that despite all discontinuities and new beginnings they are related to his body of thought.

The book received the superscription 'Vision of Isaiah' at the end of an almost 450 year long process of literary growth. There are two indications that the superscription was added in time of Chronicles, i.e. in the mid or late Persian period (5th–4th centuries). First of all, longer version of Hezekiah's name—*yᵉḥizqîāhû* instead of *ḥizqîāhû*—can only be found the books of Chronicles (e.g. 1 Chron. 4.41; 2 Chron. 28.12, 27; the two exceptions are 2 Kgs 20.10 and Jer. 15.4). Secondly, the sequence 'Judah and Jerusalem' contradicts the Isaianic custom of putting Jerusalem before Judah (cf. Isa. 3.1, 8; 5.3; 22.21). In short, at the end of a productive phase the entire scroll was conferred with this title in order to relate it to a common denominator.[3]

But who was this Isaiah ben Amoz? What was the historical and political context in which he did his work? What were his religious and theological commitments? It is only possible to understand this prophet, his message, and his work in the context of the political situation of the second half of the 8th century BCE. Of decisive significance in this connection is Tiglath-pileser III's (ruled 745–727) assumption of power in Assyria. Whereas 100 years beforehand the mini-states of Syria-Palestine had been able to resist Shalmaneser III's attempts to expand his empire westwards at the battle of Qarqar at the Orontes (853 BCE) (Ahab, the king of Israel, and Ben-Hadad II, the king of Damascus, played an important role here), they were powerless in the face of Tiglath-pileser III. If these states formed anti-Assyrian alliances, they risked losing their independence and even destruction. As long as Urartu (the name is probably derived from Mount Ararat), situated to the north of Assyria, was a regional force to be reckoned with, Assyrian power was limited. The situation changed, however, with the ascendency of Tiglath-pileser III in the

3. In addition to the prophet, the OT knows of seven other individuals with the name 'Isaiah'. The evidence is all post-exilic (1 Chron. 3.21; Ezra 8.7; Neh. 11.7): Those with the background of a temple singer in Ezra 8.19; 1 Chron. 25.3, 15; a Levitical temple singer in 1 Chron. 26.25. In terms of epigraphy, the name 'Isaiah' is often found on private seals dating from the 8th to the 7th century BCE, cf. Renz; Röllig, *Epigraphik* II/2, pp. 260ff.

second half of the 8th century. It has been estimated that after roughly forty military operations under his leadership the number of deportees from the besieged nations rose to more than half a million.[4] The Assyrian superpower no longer subjugated these nations simply by imposing oaths of loyalty, it also broke all possible and actual resistance by means of displacement and resettlement. Israel's Northern Kingdom fell in 722 BCE to such punitive measures and disappeared forever from the stage of world history.

It was in the context of this Assyrian dominance that Isaiah appeared in Jerusalem as a prophet. Yet it must not be forgotten that Israel was not the only nation that knew of such politically active men of God, a similar phenomenon can be found among the surrounding nations.[5] For example, Zakkur of Hamath and Lu'ash, a city at the headwaters of the Orontes, describes how he successfully resisted being forced to join an anti-Assyrian coalition under the leadership of Ben-Hadad III and 16 other kings. Men of God had assured him of the support of Be'elshemayn, the 'Lord of Heaven', a promise that Zakkur recorded in an inscription dating around 785 BCE: 'Be'elshemayn turned to me through seers and fortune tellers. And Be'elshemayn said to me, "Do not fear, for I have made you king and will stand by you; I will liberate you from all the kings who are besieging you"'.[6] One cannot overlook the fact, however, that Zakkur also turned directly to the Assyrian king Adadnirari III (810–783) for assistance. This certainly weakened Damascus, but it also resulted in the king of Hamath and Lu'ash's even greater dependence on Assyria. This extra-biblical incident exemplifies the extremely precarious situation of the Syrian-Palestinian mini-states, including the Northern Kingdom of Israel with its capital Samaria, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as the city of its king and temple.

The crisis-ridden nature of the situation in which Isaiah operated can also be seen in the particular contexts in which his name appears in the book of Isaiah. Apart from in those places where he is identified as a visionary (1.1; 2.1; see also 13.1: a vision concerning Babylon), his name is always mentioned in connection with significant foreign political conflicts: in his meeting with Ahaz (Isa. 7.3) during the Syrian-Ephraimite war (734–732), in relation to his symbolic activity (Isa. 20.2-3) at the time of the Philistine revolt (713–711), and during the attack of the Judean capital by Sennacherib, with its consequences for Hezekiah (701–700) (Isa. 37.2, 5-6, 21; 38.1, 4, 21; 39.3, 5, 8; cf. the parallels in 2 Kings 18–20).

In light of this, the span of Isaiah's activity can be divided into four periods: (1) the early period, from about 740 BCE; (2) the period during of the

4. Veenhof, *Geschichte*, p. 251.
5. Cf. de Jong, *Isaiah*.
6. *TUAT I*, p. 637 (translated by W. Delsman).

Syrian-Ephraimite war; (3) the period before and after the Philistine revolts, and (4) the period during of threat posed by Sennacherib. These historical moments in the life of the prophet are spread throughout chaps 1–39 (Isa. 7, 20, 36–39) in such a manner that they function as a framework that encompasses the large mass of the remaining oracles of the book. These biographical narratives constitute the backbone of the basic structure of chaps 1–39.

1.1. *Isaiah's Activity in the Early Phase of his Proclamation*

The book of Isaiah does not say very much about the person and personality of Isaiah himself, though a few pieces of information can be garnered. In the superscription we are told that his father was called 'Amoz' (not to be confused with the prophet 'Amos'). According to Rabbinic interpretation, the name of the father of a prophet is only preserved by the tradition if he himself was a prophet (Babylonian Talmud Megillah 15a; *Leviticus Rabba* 6.6). This indicates a certain familial continuity. Furthermore, the tradition considers 'Amoz' to be a brother of king Amaziah (796–781), the father of Uzziah. This would mean that Isaiah is the nephew of the king of Judah whose death occurred in the year that he received his prophetic commission (bMeg 10b). Isaiah's proximity to the royal house is supported by the fact that he had immediate access to the king, to the court (7.3ff.), and to the innermost parts of the temple (6.1ff.) (in the pre-exilic period the temple was under the authority of the king).

If it is the case that Isaiah's vision of God's glory along with his purification and commissioning took place in the year of Uzziah's death, then we may roughly date the event to the year 734 BCE, despite uncertainty regarding the various chronologies. As far as exegesis is concerned, this event is not only a historical datum, it also represents a structurally significant element in the framework of the book. In contrast to the accounts found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the commissioning of Isaiah is not placed at the beginning of the book but after the first five opening chapters. In the first five chapters, the prophet had presented his listeners with a stark choice between 'judgement or salvation'. The effect of placing his commission to harden hearts in 6.9ff. is that the recipients of his message cannot be considered to be innocent or unprepared.

The literary positioning of the call narrative in Isaiah 6 and the historical dating of the event to the year of Uzziah's death clearly indicate that there must have been an earlier phase to Isaiah's prophetic activity. This may be set in the period c. 740 to 734 BCE. The following texts provide us with a glimpse into the early years: Isa. 1.2-3, 10-26; 2.6-22; 3.1-9; 3.12–4.1; 5.1-7, 8-24. Right from the beginning, the future of Jerusalem as the political and religious centre of Judah lay close to Isaiah's heart. He saw this future to be deeply threatened by the presence of social and cultic abuses. With a sharp tongue he denounced the communal leaders as 'rulers of Sodom' and

the populace as 'people of Gomorrah' (1.10). A number of rabbinic interpreters took the tone and the content of these statements to be an indication of the hard and unpleasant nature of the prophet (*Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* 14.4). In the early years Isaiah seems to have concerned himself primarily with issues of domestic policy. Here he considered salvation to be a genuine possibility, but only on condition of a genuine transformation in behaviour. 'If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword' (1.19-20). A one-sided interpretation that portrays Isaiah as a prophet or either judgement or salvation only does not do justice to the complexity of his personality and his mission. By placing a condition on the offer of salvation, Isaiah is not making a diplomatic manoeuvre. Rather, he is taking seriously the social responsibility that is a corollary of Yhwh's relation to his people. God will grant a salvific future only on the condition that the city becomes a city of 'righteousness and faithfulness'. No cultic activity can dispense with the need to practice social solidarity (1.10-18). For the prophet Isaiah, himself of noble lineage, every form of pride is an offence to be vigorously opposed. 'Indeed, a day of Yhwh Sebaoth will come upon everything that is proud and lofty, upon everything that is lifted up—it will be humiliated!' (2.12). This theme runs through chaps 1–39 like a read thread. It is one of the foundation pillars of his proclamation as well as its further literary development by later tradents (*Fortschreibung*).[7] Although Isaiah does not refrain from harshly criticizing the Jerusalem upper-class (see also Isa. 10.1-4; 28.7-22; 29.9-16; 30.8-17), he remains safe from reprisals by those who would maintain the status quo. This seems to be due to his familial connections with the Jerusalem aristocracy.

It did not take long for Isaiah to become convinced that judgement would be inevitable. In a performance that reminds one of a piece of street-theatre, he sings of Yhwh's deep disappointment with the results of the loving care he has bestowed upon his vineyard (5.1-7). Even if certain details, such as the conclusion in v. 7, were added at a relatively late date, there is no reason not to ascribe the poem as such to the historical prophet.

1.2. *Isaiah's Activity During the Syrian–Ephraimite War*

The second phase of Isaiah's activity is marked by the events of the so-called Syrian–Ephraimite war. Isaiah 6.1 dates Isaiah's vision in the temple to the year of the death of King Uzziah. Since this dating represents a second chronological notice following the superscription in Isa. 1.1, we have here a clear structural marker. Historically, the reference to Uzziah's death allows us to date this event to roughly the year 734 BCE. Besides Manasseh's

7. Cf. Isa. 2.12-17; 3.16-24; 5.15; 9.8; 10.12, 33; 13.11, 19; 14.11, 13; 16.6; 23.9; 25.11; 28.1, 3; 37.23.

55 year reign (697–642), Uzziah's rule (773–734?) was the second longest of all the kings of Judah and Israel. Due to a skin disease Uzziah was unable to rule for the last 20 years of his incumbency, so that first his son Jotham and then his grandson Ahaz took over the regency. According to the edifying narrative in 2 Chronicles 26, Uzziah was afflicted with the skin disease while standing at the altar of incense as a punishment from God for attempting to appropriate to himself the priestly right of offering incense (v. 19). It is possible that the act of purification carried out by the seraph who touched Isaiah's lips with a glowing coal taken from the altar (of incense) (Isa. 6.6-7) may have been intended as a counter-image to the defilement of the king. The Targum saw the connection and so supplemented Isa. 6.1 as follows: 'In the year that King Uzziah was afflicted with leprosy'.[8]

Recent research has increasingly cast doubt upon the historicity of the diplomatic and military crisis of the years 734–732 BCE. This does not detract, however, from that fact that the tradents of the Isaianic tradition assigned their master a special role in this period. The biblical version of history portrays Rezin, the King of Aram (i.e. Damascus) and Pekah, the king of Israel (i.e. the Northern Kingdom) as marching against Jerusalem.

> They besieged Ahaz, but could not conquer him… Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, 'I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me'. Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria listened to him; the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir; then he killed Rezin (2 Kgs 16.5-9; cf. 2 Chron. 28.16-21).

It is possible that in reality there had only been a failed attack upon Judah by Aram in which Samaria played no role. If this is the case, the crisis for the Southern Kingdom and Jerusalem under Ahaz would have been less serious. The Assyriologist W. Mayer comes to the following conclusion:

> Tiglath-pileser's actions did not require Ahaz of Judah's request for help against Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus. As such, the 'Syrian–Ephraimite War' that can be found in 2 Kgs 16.5-9 probably belongs to the realm of later legend. There is some justification in assuming that his contemporaries would also have realized that after North Syria, Media and Urartu, Damascus was the next opponent. Despite the ancient animosity that existed between Judah, Israel, and Damascus, it is unlikely that they would have started a suicidal war in a political context in which the arrival of Assyria was expected to be immanent.[9]

8. See Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, pp. 167-68.
9. Mayer, *Politik*, p. 308.

The multiple historicizing verses that can be found in the so-called *Denkschrift* ('memoir') or *Immanuelschrift* ('Immanuel document') of Isa. 6.1–8.18 (7.4b, 5b, 8b, 17b; 8.6b, 7b), along with its explicit chronological contextualization and the general retrospective tone indicate that this literary composition received its current form at a date somewhat later than the original events. Even at an earlier stage in the compositional history of these three chapters, it was understood to constitute a special unity. This can be seen by the threefold framework that structures it, namely the use of 'woe oracles' (5.8-24; 10.1-4), the two 'poems of the outstretched hand of God' (5.25-29; 9.7-20) and the motif of 'threatening darkness' (5.30; 8.22). The most likely date of origin is either during the long reign of Manasseh (697–642) or the decades under Josiah (639–609). There are two indications that the reign of Manasseh is the more likely date for the composition of Isaiah 6–8. First of all, the Assyrian threat is still present as a live reality, both within the composition itself as well as within the frame. Second, signs of the beginning of the end of Assyria only began to appear after the loss of Egypt (from 656), the almost forty year fratricidal war between Assurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin (652–648), and the subsequent Arab wars.[10] These considerations comport well with H. Spieckermann's assessment of the Judean kings during the time of Sargon:

> Who knows whether Manasseh, the alleged Isaiah murderer, attempted in his own way to understand and take to heart Isaiah's call to 'be still' (Isa. 7.4; 30.15), a call that Manasseh's grandfather Ahaz ignored and that Hezekiah—well censored by the Deuteronomist—violated! The lack of prophetic voices during the reign of Manasseh does not have to be an indication of his murderous intentions but simply a sign that the stability that he achieved through his (foreign) policies gave no cause for prophetic critique.[11]

Have other indications of the prophet's life and social status been preserved, despite the historical distance? This may well be the case, for when Isaiah sought out two witnesses (Isa. 8.2) to whom he could reveal the symbolic name of his son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Speedy-booty-hasty-prey), he chose Uriah, the high priest whom Ahaz had commanded to re-erect alters in the Assyrian style (2 Kgs 16.10-18), and Zechariah, Ahaz's father-in-law (2 Kgs 18.2; 2 Chron. 29.1). In other words, Isaiah chose for his witnesses two important representatives of public life. The association of Isaiah's broader familial context with the institution of prophecy is indicated by the fact that the women with whom he fathered his second son is called 'the prophetess' (*hannᵉbîʾâ*) (Isa. 8.3). Within the Old Testament it is unusual though not unheard of for women to take on the role of prophetess (Exod. 15.20; Judg. 4.4; 2 Kgs 22.14; Neh. 6.14). One may assume,

10. Cf. Mayer, *Politik*, pp. 398-412.
11. Spieckermann, *Juda*, p. 376.

then, that Isaiah's wife was also active as a prophetess. This leads to an institutional contrast between King Ahaz and his young wife as parents of a future child bearing a name symbolizing salvation, 'Immanuel' (7.14), and the prophet Isaiah and his wife as parents of a son with a name symbolizing destruction, 'Speedy-booty-hasty-prey' (Isa. 8.3). The parallel expressions 'before the child knows' in Isa. 7.16 and 8.4 confirm the intentional juxtaposition of not only the children but also the parents. It cannot be denied that a dynastic move is being made here: Just as Immanuel is destined to take over the throne, so are Isaiah's children to take up the prophetic office (cf. Isa. 8.16-18).

1.3. *Isaiah's Activity Before and During the Philistine Revolt*

Isaiah's symbolic action during the Ashdod led revolt of the Philistine cities (713–711 BCE) (Isa. 20.1-6) demonstrates the degree to which he understood the political nature of his prophetic mission. These were the three years in which Isaiah, the well-known prophet of noble lineage, walked around naked and barefoot, i.e. like a prisoner of war. He did this as a sign and a portent (*'ôṯ ûmôpēṯ*) against Israel's supposed partners, Egypt and Cush (Isa. 20.3). We find the same expression in the plural in Isa. 8.18: By means of his children Isaiah is the one who provocatively gives expression to the will of God in times of crisis. The reports about Isaiah's public activity, which begin in the year of Uzziah's death (c. 734) and are particularly interested in his activity under Ahaz, continue into the period of Ahaz's successor, Hezekiah. The mention of Ahaz's death in Isa. 14.28 marks the transition to the reign of Hezekiah, the last of the four kings mentioned in the superscription (728–700). If it is the case that Ahaz did not die in 716/715, as older research has supposed, but rather in 728/727, as more recent research claims, then the notification in Isa. 14.29 fits well with the warning to the Philistines to which it is attached. Here we are told that they should not rejoice over the broken rod, for from the snake will come forth an adder, as if from a root. This metaphor is an allusion to the death of Tiglath-pileser III, who also died in 727 and whose successor was Shalmaneser V (727–722). Accordingly, Isaiah was fearful that the death of Tiglath-pileser III would lead to revolts in the Syrian provinces which could also catch on in Judah. In this context, the prophet stresses that Shalmaneser V should not be underestimated (he later turned out to be right). The oracle concerning Damascus and Ephraim in Isa. 17.1-3 alludes to the same event. Here, Isaiah warns both states that the death of Tiglath-pileser III will not save them from final destruction.

The downfall of the political entities Damascus and Samaria led to the next political crisis: the Philistine revolts (713–711 BCE). The three year period in which the prophet went about naked (Isaiah 20) served as a warning against making a pact with Egypt and Cush against Assyria.

Once again, this assessment turned out to be correct, for after having fled to Egypt, the ruler of Ashdod was delivered over to Assyria by the Ethiopian king Shabako (712–698). On the military level, it did not take long for Sargon II (722–705) to swiftly and confidently re-establish the *pax assyrica*. Isaiah's message and symbolic deeds cannot have been clearer: Faith that is placed in Egypt and Cush instead of Yhwh will end in a fiasco—just as Ashdod's faith had ended in catastrophe.

A final piece of 'biographical' evidence for this period can be found in Isaiah 22. In this chapter, Isaiah criticizes the current rejoicing of the population of Jerusalem. It seems most likely that this refers to the end of the revolt of Ashdod in 711 BCE. King Hezekiah had managed to save both himself and Jerusalem by distancing himself from his neighbours in the nick of time. Although it is unlikely that Isaiah will have had the authority to personally intervene in Hezekiah's politics, the oracle concerning Shebna in Isa. 22.15-18 nevertheless makes good sense within the context of the averted catastrophe. Shebna had to cede his position as second-in-command to a certain Eliakim, although as secretary he remained the third most important person. He retained this office during Sennacherib's siege in the year 701 (Isa. 36.3, 22; 37.2). Isaiah prophesied that Shebna would not be buried in his magnificent grave but would be cast like a ball of yarn into the open country (Isa. 22.17-18). The fact that this oracle was not fulfilled speaks for its authenticity. As elsewhere so here, Isaiah advocates a policy of quietism, of not forming pacts against Assyria, a stance which he interprets theologically as an act of trust in Yhwh.

1.4. *Isaiah's Activity During the Siege of Sennacherib*

The various snippets of information about Isaiah's public activity culminate in the report of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE. Sargon II had died during his campaign against Tabal in 705 as the result of a surprise attack by what may have been Caucasian rulers (his corpse could not even be retrieved). This led his successor Sennacherib (705–681) to inquire of his gods about the nature of the sin which had condemned Sargon II to such a dishonourable death.[12] As was often the case, news of the death of the Assyrian ruler triggered a wave of uprisings by the subjugated nations. In the West these were associated with pro-Egyptian sympathies and Judah too, under the rule of Hezekiah, was gripped by the movement. Yet, just as the rebels who had arisen in the wake of Tiglath-pileser's death in 727 BCE had underestimated the stubborn power of the new Assyrian king, so too did these new rebels underestimate the determination of Sennacherib. The first of the rebels to taste his iron fist was the Babylonian Marduk-apla-iddina (Merodach-Baladan), who had managed to acquire

12. Veenhof, *Geschichte*, pp. 258-59; cf. Isa. 14.4ff.

sovereignty over Babylon for nine months with the help of Elam in 703 BCE. This date is especially significant, for 2 Kgs 20.12-19, with its parallel in Isaiah 39, reports a Babylonian envoy sent by Merodach-Baladan to Jerusalem. If it is historically true that Hezekiah showed the envoys from Babel his riches and his weapons of war, he did not do this out of irresponsibility or ignorance, but in the proud knowledge that he was a worthy partner in the war against Assyria. Hezekiah's politics of religious propaganda in the former Northern Kingdom (2 Chron. 30.1-12), his cultic reform in Judah (2 Kgs 18.4), his attempts at expansion as far as the Philistine coast (2 Kgs 18.8), his strategic preparation of the defensive walls and the water supply via the Siloam tunnel (2 Chron. 32.2-8), and his military-diplomatic relationship with Egypt all pursued one single goal: resistance to and, where possible, removal of the Assyrian yoke. Historically speaking, however, the Babylonian envoy cannot have taken place after the lifting of the siege of 701 BCE but rather—if at all—a few years beforehand, possibly during the Philistine revolts (713–711). Be that as it may, Sennacherib's rapid intervention against Merodach-Baladan in south Babylon in 703 BCE and his second campaign one year later in the eastern mountain regions should have made clear to Hezekiah how dangerous a rebellion against the Assyrian could be. It is possible to see who had joined Hezekiah and who had resisted being ensnared in an alliance against Assyria by looking at the consequences of Sennacherib's third campaign. Padi of Ekron was released from forced custody in Jerusalem, while Ashdod (who, a few years previously, had been on the side of the rebels) and Gaza profited at the expense of rebellious Judah from their faithfulness to Sennacherib.

The biblical tradition of the interruption of Sennacherib's campaign by the military advance of the Ethiopian Tirhakah (Isa. 37.9; 2 Kgs 19.9) is a mixture of historical fact, half-truth and half-falsehood. What is true is that there was a battle at Elteke between Assyrian forces and the auxiliary contingent from Egypt. What is not true, however, is the designation of Tirhakah as king, for in 701 BCE it was his brother Shebitku (Shabataka) who bore the title. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that Tirhakah, who would have been roughly 20 years old at the time, took part in the battle with the Assyrians. After the Battle of Elteke, Sennacherib pitched camp in Lachish and laid siege to this important city on the way to Jerusalem. The situation in Judah had deteriorated so significantly that, according to Assyrian annals, 46 cities in Judah were conquered, 205,105 prisoners were deported, and Hezekiah was confined like a bird in a cage. The rebels had no other option but to submit to the Assyrian king and pay tribute amounting to 810 kg of gold and 8,100 kg of silver. The fact that Sennacherib neither shot an arrow into the city nor erected a rampart against it is interpreted *post factum* by the authors of 2 Kgs 19.32 (par. Isa. 37.33) as a sign of divine protection in a time of great peril. The fact that Sennacherib

continued to be very active after 701 BCE and had not lost anything in military power relegates the report of the death of 185,000 Assyrians before the gates of Jerusalem through Yhwh's angel to the realm of legend (2 Kgs 19.35-37; Isa. 37.36-38; 2 Chron. 32.21-22). Flavius Josephus's report of a region in North West Jerusalem known as the 'Military Camp of the Assyrians', the same place where Titus set up camp in 70 CE, cannot be deduced as evidence for the historicity of a mass Assyrian death at the same spot. It simply indicates the durability and popularity of this biblical fiction (cf. 1 Macc. 7.41; 2 Macc. 8.19; 15.22; Sir. 48.21).

Sennacherib's departure from Jerusalem leaves us with an open historical question, for his treatment of the rebellious Hezekiah was unusually mild. Why were the king, the royal family, and the pro-Egyptian advisors not deported to Assyria, as had happened to Sidqa of Ashkelon? Why did Sennacherib not execute the rebels as a deterrent to others, as he had done to those in Ekron who had delivered King Padi, Sennacherib's faithful vassal, to king Hezekiah? Why did Sennacherib not transform Judah and Jerusalem into an Assyrian province, being content instead to make him a vassal and impose tribute (albeit with the forced annexation of the western regions to Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. This reduced Hezekiah to total dependence on Jerusalem and the unproductive mountainous regions)? For a start, Judah and Jerusalem were so economically impoverished by the tribute payment that plundering the city militarily was pointless. Secondly, the forced handover of territory to those neighbours who did not rebel effectively excluded the possibility of a renewed revolt on the part of Hezekiah. Third, Sennacherib may have known that it would not have been easy to replace Hezekiah with a non-Davidic successor, especially as it was not in the interests of Assyria to weaken it southwest border with its arch-rival, Egypt. Furthermore, the Assyrians would have known about the Isaiah led anti-Egyptian faction within Jerusalem that would more than ever advocate political quietude. The fact that enemy powers were well informed about internal political conflicts in Jerusalem can be seen in the case of Jeremiah, who was treated well by the Babylonians after the capture of Jerusalem because of the content of his message during the siege (Jer. 40.1-6). In any case, Sennacherib's calculations concerning Hezekiah proved to be correct, for after the military and economic defeat of 701 Hezekiah remained quiet for the remainder of his years.

His son and successor Manasseh (697–642) learnt from the mistakes of Hezekiah and followed an extremely pro-Assyrian course. This led the Deuteronomists (2 Kgs 21.1-18) to conclude that he was one of the worst kings of Judah, if not the worst Davidic king of all. The bright light that falls upon Hezekiah throws a dark shadow over Manasseh. According to later legend, Manasseh is even credited with murdering the prophet!

The fact that Sennacherib did not remove Hezekiah from power, despite his rebellion, and that Jerusalem did not fall in 701, served as the basis for

a broad theological development. In the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition Hezekiah's enormous payment of tribute is simply ignored while his piety is emphasized. The biblical writers would have loved to have had Sennacherib die along with the other Assyrians, for he had dared attack Jerusalem and the temple, the earthly dwelling of the heavenly king of the world. They did not, however, have the liberty to rewrite history on such a drastic scale. They had to be content with having him murdered by his son within his own temple—directly after his heinous attack on Jerusalem. It is in fact true that Sennacherib was murdered by his sons, but this took place in 681 BCE and not 701. The catalyst was probably his decision to favour Esarhaddon (681–669) as his successor, leading the slighted prince Arda-Mulissi (Adrammelech) to seek revenge. The identity of Sharezer, the second murderer (2 Kgs 19.37), remains unexplained. The temple of Nisroch is a misreading of Nimrud/Ninurta, the patron deity of Kalah, so that one can assume that the deed took place there.[13]

What value do these details have for our perception of Isaiah as a biblical figure? First and foremost they confirm the impression that Isaiah's prophetic activity was deeply influenced by his political context and so can only be appropriately understood in light of it. His warnings against anti-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian positions in Judah and Jerusalem continued in the years 703–701. This stance placed him at loggerheads with Hezekiah's politics, which threatened to bring the southern kingdom to the brink of disaster. The fact that this catastrophe never materialized led to the creation of a Hezekiah-Isaiah tradition, which presented the king as a thoroughly God-fearing son of David. If Isaiah was uncompromising in his rejection of all political alliances in favour of allegiance to Yhwh alone, then the logic of this position is idealistic. Looking back, we can see that he was not primarily interested in writing political history but the history of faith.

1.5. *Further Effects of the Isaiah Tradition up until the First Deportation in 597 BCE*

The Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition was preserved and cultivated during the long reign of Manasseh (697–642). An indirect witness to this is the legend of Isaiah's murder by Manasseh. Isaiah's call for Judah to abstain from anti-Assyrian alliances fell on fertile ground as far as this son of Hezekiah was concerned. This did not apply, however, to his equally fundamental call to trust in Yhwh alone. Manasseh engaged in *Realpolitik* and thus submitted himself completely to Assyria. As a sign of his faithfulness to his lord he built 'two altars for all the hosts of heaven' (2 Kgs 21.5) in both temple courts. As far as economics is concerned, this king brought about a great boom; as far as religion is concerned, he was considered to be the greatest apostate. 2 Kgs 21.10 reports that during the time of Manasseh Yhwh

13. Mayer, *Politik*, p. 379.

sent his servants the prophets to proclaim his will and announce immanent judgement. This is probably more than just a Deuteronomic perspective, it is evidence for a prophetic tradition that offered this king political resistance. The theological problem of how such a bad king could reign for so long was later solved by Chronicles, which portrays Manasseh as having experienced a conversion (2 Chron. 33.11ff.). The prophets who spoke in God's name during his reign (2 Kgs 21.10) become 'the seers who spoke to him in the name of Yhwh God of Israel' (2 Chron. 33.18).

After the death of the last great king Assurbanipal (669–627), the Assyrian empire drew towards its end, not least because of the growing strength of the Medes (Kyaxares, 625–585) and the Neo-Babylonians (Nabopolassar, 626–605). A coalition of these two emerging powers caused the city of Assur to fall in the year 614 BCE, followed by the Assyrian capital Nineveh in 612. In this final phase of the Assyrian empire King Josiah (639–609) managed to reclaim the independence of Judah and Jerusalem. He undid the assimilation policies of his grandfather Manasseh, introduced a far-reaching cultic reform, and removed all symbols of the Assyrian deity from the Jerusalem temple (2 Kings 22–23). Whereas during the reign of Manasseh the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition was largely kept underground, many exegetes assume that during these decades the tradition experienced a surge of growth as a result of the impression that the prophecies of judgement against the Assyrian empire were being fulfilled (cf. Isa. 8.23b–9.6; 14.24-27; 17.12-14; 28.23-29; 30.27-33; 32.1-5, 15-20).[14] This would mean that an epochal transition in the region of the eastern Mediterranean was the impetus for a literary extension (*Fortschreibung*) of the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition in terms of a theology of history. The result is the bulk of the current form of Isaiah 1–32. With regard to further developments up until the first deportation in the year 597, the time of Josiah was a period of consolidation for the tradents of the Isaiah tradition. Yet this period was only the quiet before the storm!

A period of high drama commenced with Josiah's death in 609 BCE when he attempted to block the Egyptian pharaoh Necho II (610–595) at Megiddo, a strategically risky decision. The pharaoh had been moving north in order to stake his claim against the Neo-Babylonians concerning the inheritance of Assyria. Josiah's campaign proved fatal, as 2 Kgs 23.29b bluntly states: 'When Pharaoh Neco met him at Megiddo, he killed him' (2 Chron. 35.20-24 turns his death into the death of a hero on the battle field). It is possible that Josiah had been inspired by highflying expectations of a Davidic restoration and so faced the Egyptians in order to defend his newly won independence from Assyria. The attempt failed miserably, yet the Egyptians themselves were not to remain on the scene for much longer. Although the

14. The standard work is still Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*.

pharaoh's troops were able to hold their ground in the north at the battle of Carchemish in the year 605, they were wiped out by the Neo-Babylonian crown prince Nebuchadnezzar on the northern banks of the Euphrates. The Egyptian *intermezzo* was thereby put to an end. The House of David, Jerusalem, and Judah now found themselves caught up in the whirlpool of events that led to the deportation of the royal family in 597 BCE. This was followed ten years later by the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple as well as the deportation of the upper classes.

It is possible that the Hezekiah-Isaiah narratives, as they now stand in 2 Kings 18–20 (par. Isaiah 36–39), were also edited for the purpose of strengthening the resistance of the Jerusalem population during the years between the first deportation (597 BCE) and the second (587 BCE).[15] Accordingly, the main historical-theological idea would have been as follows: Just as the Assyrian Sennacherib could never have conquered Jerusalem and Zion, so will it be impossible for the Neo-Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar, as long as those who are besieged put their trust in Yhwh and his protection. One indication for this is the observation that 2 Kgs 20.17-18 (par. Isa. 39.6-7) only reports the plundering of the royal treasury and the deportation of the Judean princes to Babylon, not, however, the destruction of the city and the temple and the deportation of the upper classes. This suggests that the report only applies to Nebuchadnezzar's first punitive action in the year 597. If this is correct, then these years would have seen the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition supplemented by chaps 36–39, taken in slightly modified from the book of Kings. In contrast, however, the end of state independence, the destruction of both the city and the temple, as well as the deportation of the upper classes in 587 BCE (cf. 2 Kings 24–25; Jeremiah 52) find no mention in the Isaiah tradition. The capture of Jerusalem had put an end to the historical and theological parallel between the Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian threat; the defeat of the city of God was a flat contradiction of the Zion Theology of the Isaianic tradents. Whereas the tradents of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel traditions could handle the fate of Jerusalem with greater ease—the exile was nothing other than the fulfilment of Yhwh's threats of punishment and judgement that he had announced through his prophets—the disciples of Isaiah had a more difficult task. One of their basic theological principles, faith in Yhwh's protection of Jerusalem and Zion, had been heavily affected. The Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition, with its strong emphasis on Zion as the unshakeable mountain of God, had apparently hit a dead end (in the book of Ezekiel the term 'Zion' does not appear at all). A solution could not be found, so they had no other choice but to accept the conclusion of the Hezekiah narrative in order to save Isaiah's reputation: '"The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good". For he

15. See Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit*.

thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"' (2 Kgs 20.19; par. Isa. 39.8). For the Isaianic tradents, this was another way of saying that during the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah there had not been such a national and religious disaster. They may also have been inspired by Isaiah's attitude during the reign of Ahaz, who concluded his instruction to his disciples with the following words: 'I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him' (Isa. 8.16-17). Thus, the hypothesis that the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition received its first conclusion with Isaiah 39 in 597 BCE has much to recommend it.[16] Not only are we missing an actualizing postscript, such as the note in 2 Kgs 25.27-30 that the Judean King Jehoiachin received mercy in Babel in 562 BCE, the exile itself—apart from the announcement of the deportation of the royal family—is intentionally not portrayed in the book of Isaiah. In both literary as well as theological perspective, this is an important characteristic of the book. The time of the Babylonian exile is effectively ignored: In the book of Isaiah, Zion can and may not fall!

2. *Exiled Temple Singers in the Babylonian and Early Persian Periods*

The report of Isaiah ben Amoz's meeting with Hezekiah in chapter 36 is the last we hear of him, although there are still many chapters to be worked through until we reach the end in chapter 66. This is a further distinctive feature of this prophetic book. Up until the development of the historical-critical method, this was not seen as a great problem. The 8th century Isaiah was considered *unisono* to be the author who had received from God the ability to foresee the future of Jerusalem, Judah, and the nations. This can be seen in the superscription in Isa. 1.1, in Sirach's praise of the fathers in Sirach 48, as well as in the New Testament and early Jewish and Christian documents up until the end of the pre-modern period. An exception is the Jewish exegete Abraham Ibn Ezra, born in 1089 in Tudela (northeast Spain), who claimed that Isaiah 40ff. referred to the Babylonian exile and beyond that the exile of the Jewish people.[17]

2.1. *Excursus: Background of the Deutero-Isaiah Hypothesis*

With the development of historical-critical interpretation, it was no longer possible to refer to Isaiah's visionary capabilities in order to bridge 'the ugly historical ditch' of 150 years that separated the historical Isaiah of the 8th century from the end of the Babylonian exile in the second half of the 6th century BCE. Exegetes and theologians found the idea increasingly problematic that the prophet not only announced the future through vague hints, but

16. See Feuerstein, *Deuterojesaja*, p. 132.
17. See Reventlow, *Bibelauslegung Vol. II*, pp. 256-57.

also explicitly mentioned the name of Cyrus (Isa. 44.28; 45.1), the Persian ruler who only appeared on the world stage 150 years later. By the end of the 18th century progressive thinkers of the Enlightenment stood at loggerheads with conservative circles within the church. The issue of authorship was not primarily a matter of what Isaiah ben Amoz did or did not say. The problem was more fundamental than that, for it concerned the very plausibility of prophetic speech when measured in light of critical, Enlightenment reason. In the course of this debate the hypothesis was developed that an anonymous prophet of the Babylonian Exile had authored chaps 40ff. This opinion was first held by Johann Christoph Döderlein (1746–1792), Professor at the Frankish University of Altdorf. In the third edition of his Isaiah commentary of 1789 he states that as of chapter 40 the voice of the author ('oratio') is not to be ascribed to Isaiah ben Amoz but to an anonymous or homonymous prophet—i.e. one with the same name—living at the end of the exile. This marked the first step towards a golden mean between conservative and progressive exegesis. Although Isaiah 40–66 had not been written by Isaiah ben Amoz, this did not make it any less authentic, for it had been written by a genuine exilic prophet whose name has remained unknown. It took another hundred years until Bernhard Duhm gave this idea its major breakthrough and lasting popularity with the publication of his large Isaiah commentary in 1892. It was Duhm who gave Döderlein's anonymous prophet the (artificial) name 'Deutero-Isaiah', while attributing chaps 56–66 to another unnamed prophet, 'Trito-Isaiah'. He also denied that the exilic author was responsible for any of the four servant Songs in Isaiah 42; 49; 50; 53 nor the polemic against idols. As a result, Duhm has become immortalized as the one who named Deutero-Isaiah and discovered Trito-Isaiah. Critical voices such as that of Wilhelm Caspari, who called the hypothesis of Deutero-Isaiah a 'house plant on the scholar's desk',[18] have long been overheard and marginalized.

Given that only one prophet appears in the entire book of Isaiah, namely Isaiah ben Amoz—for the last time in chapter 39, in a meeting with King Hezekiah—how is it the case that the hypothesis of a second prophetic figure with the artificial name 'Deutero-Isaiah' received such acclaim in modern exegesis? The answer has to do with a Christian understanding of Old Testament prophets as inspired men of God who proclaim the coming of the final revelation in Jesus of Nazareth. This was all the more important for chaps 40ff. because the texts about the expansion of the offer of salvation to include the nations and the suffering of the servant of God were of great significance for the NT and Christian writers. Joachim Becker's estimation from 1968 continues to be valid today: The artificial figure of a second Isaiah was created in order to save chaps 40ff. from being consigned to the anonymity of miscellaneous writers and editors. The anonymity of this

18. Caspari, *Lieder*, p. 244.

figure remains problematic. 'Precisely because we do not know this author by name, it is likely that an arranger or an editor is at work here. Genuine prophetic figures do not remain anonymous; the opposite is true, however, for the great editors of the biblical books, and that for good reason'.[19]

As is the case for the other writings in the OT, the prophetic books are to a large degree the fruit of the work of groups of scribes. In support of this, look at the way in which hymnic verses have been used to structure chaps 40–55. The effect is that the whole has been transformed into a literary oratorio of hope. The proximity of the linguistic and conceptual world of these chapters to that of the Psalms has long been noticed, but a plethora of other Old Testament traditions have also been taken up. Among them are the Patriarchal and Exodus traditions, the prophetic message of judgement, a few proto-Isaianic expressions such as 'the Holy One of Israel', appropriations from Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Deuteronomic theology of the word, the Priestly coupling of creation and history, and the Jerusalem tradition with its motifs of Zion, the nations, and David. All in all, the focus is not on the temple (cf. Ezekiel) but upon Zion and Jerusalem, upon the mountain of God and the city of God with Yhwh as king for the just within Israel *and* the nations. This comprehensive interweaving of traditions along with their innovative structuring cannot be work of an individual author. It is more appropriate to assume the presence of a group of literarily trained tradents concerned with the cultivation of tradition. The most likely candidates are deported temple singers who, having returned home with the first great return movement in 520 BCE, proclaim to Judah and Jerusalem the message of comfort.[20] This is the only way one can make sense of the fact that Isa. 40.1 is not concerned with comforting the Babylonian Golah but with comforting and rebuilding Jerusalem and its cities. This group of comforters (Isa. 40.1: 'Comfort, comfort my people') is the vanguard of those who are returning and presents itself as a 'herald of good news' (41.27; 52.7). The proximity to the world of the temple singers has often been seen, yet always in connection with the exilic prophet Deutero-Isaiah. This hypothesis of a biographical authorial personality, however, is being increasingly abandoned in favour of a theory of literarily schooled circles. The existence of such literarily schooled temple singers in the exilic period is proved by the collective laments in the Psalter, whose *Sitz im Leben* may, among other places, have been ceremonies of fasting and lament. A unique representation of Jews carrying lyres in c. 700 BCE provides iconographic evidence that temple and cultic music was a well-known tradition in Judah long before the Babylonian exile.[21]

19. Becker, *Isaias*, p. 38.
20. See Berges, *Farewell*.
21. Cf. Keel, *Jerusalem Vol. 1*, p. 734; image 497.

The book of Lamentations also belongs to the Jerusalemite milieu of exilic and early post-exilic communal laments.[22] As such, it is likely that the Babylonian colleagues of those singers who had been left behind in Jerusalem would engage in an analogous activity, namely the developing of a literary drama of hope that would have its consummation in the return of 520 BCE.[23] The close relationship between the authors of the book of Lamentations and those of Isaiah 40–55 is proved by the connections between the two textual corpora. For example, the refrain 'there is no one to comfort' (Lam. 1.2, 9, 16, 17, 21) finds its positive echo in Isa. 40.1: 'Comfort, comfort my people'. Similarly, the penultimate verse of the first collection of Isaiah 40–52, 'Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord' (Isa. 52.11), is cited almost *verbatim* in Lam. 4.15: 'Away! Unclean! … Away! Away! Do not touch!' The temple singer hypothesis that is being suggested here is also supported by the close connections between Isaiah 40ff. and Psalms 92 and 98, which sing of Yhwh's universal kingship.

In what kind of a situation did that part of Jacob/Israel live that had been deported to Babylon? It is difficult to reduce the data about the number of deported Judeans in the three expulsions of 597 (2 Kgs 24.14, 16; Jer. 52.28), 587 (2 Kgs 25.11; Jer. 52.29) and 582 BCE (Jer. 52.30) to a common denominator, although c. 20,000 people has been calculated (with the double amount, c. 40,000, remaining in the land).[24] In contrast to the Assyrians, the Babylonians did not scatter the deported nations throughout their empire; they let them live next to one another on foreign soil, with the result that a certain preservation of identity was not only possible but even encouraged. The reference in Psalm 137 to deportees sitting on the banks of the rivers, i.e. the water canals, of Babylon and the request for them to sing the songs of Zion provides us with evidence of a group of singers living together on foreign soil. This experience led to a deepened sense of identity.

The historical scope for Isaiah 40–55 is far narrower than for Isaiah 1–39. Clues for its historical context are 'Babel/Chaldea' (43.14; 48.14, 20) and 'Cyrus' (44.28; 45.1). The polemic against foreign gods along with the provision of evidence from prophecy also make most sense in the context of the Neo-Babylonian period. The breakthrough to a form of reflective monotheism took place in the context of an inner-Babylonian religious conflict between the worshippers of Marduk and the worshippers of the moon god Sin. According to the Cyrus Cylinder, it was Marduk, the chief deity of Babel, who had predestined the Persians to be the new overlords from abroad:

22. Cf. Berges, *Klagelieder*.
23. See Berges, *Jesaja 40–48*.
24. See Albertz, *Exilszeit*, pp. 77ff.

> 'He examined all the nations, he surveyed his friends, he took hold of a just prince by the hand, Cyrus, the king of Ansan. He gave him a name to rule over the entire universe … He commanded him to move to his city Babel, he cleared for him the path by going with him side-by-side like a friend and a comrade and his multitude of troops, who were as uncountable as the water of a flood, marched with him in battle array. Without battle or fight he let him move into his city Babel, and he saved Babel from its distress. Nabonidus, the king, who did not honour him, he handed over to him. All the inhabitants of Babel, the entire land of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors, bowed down before him, kissed his feet, rejoiced over his rule, their faces shone'.[25]

For the poets and theologians of the exiled Jewish community it was not Marduk who was at work in Cyrus' triumphal march but Yhwh, who had already called Abraham out of the East and who therefore guaranteed the greatest possible continuity between announcement and fulfilment (cf. 41.1-4, 25-29; 45.9-13; 46.9-11; 48.12-16). Cyrus marched into Babel on October 29, 539 BCE without a fight and surrounded by rejoicing. Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, had returned to the city from Haran just one year earlier, having neglected the worship of Marduk for the sake of the moon god Sin and having spent ten years living in the desert oasis of Tema. As a result of the king's absence the annual New Year Festival in honour of Marduk had to be cancelled, which deeply outraged Marduk's priests in Babel. For this reason, the priests sympathized with Cyrus even before his victorious entrance, for they hoped that he would liberate them from the renegade Nabonidus and reinstate the ancestral cult. Nabonidus's mistaken decision to return to Babel after the dice had already been cast in favour of Cyrus also bolstered the idea that Yhwh was in control of history and that Babylonian divination and prophecy was useless.[26] Yet although the Golah greeted Cyrus as a liberator, indeed as Yhwh's 'anointed' (33.28; 45.1), the Persian also caused the cult of Marduk to flourish once again. This is where the interests of the exiled theologians of Israel and the Babylonian priests parted. The high expectations of the Golah that come to expression in Isaiah 40–48 were only partially fulfilled, for although the Babylonian empire had been defeated, its gods were anything but deprived of power.[27]

Despite the Chronicler's understanding of the edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1.1-4,[28] namely that the reconstruction of the sanctuary in Jerusalem and the return to the Judean homeland took place simultaneously in 538 BCE, it is to be assumed that the main repatriation took place under Darius I (522/521–485). The probable catalyst was the Babylonian revolts, which erupted after the death of Cambyses II and which were firmly suppressed by Darius I in

25. Galling, *Textbuch*, p. 83 (translated into German by R. Borger).
26. See Albani, *Der eine Gott*.
27. So Kratz, *Kyros*, p. 170.
28. The Aramaic base text in Ezra 6.3-5 is silent concerning repatriation.

the years 522/521 BCE. This may have been interpreted by the Golah as a sign that they should return to their homeland.

If it is correct that the oratorio of hope (Isaiah 40–48*) was composed by Levitical temple singers on Babylonian soil before being brought to Jerusalem during the first great return migration of 520 BCE (this is also the year of the beginning of the reconstruction of the temple [Hag. 1.1; 2.1, 10; cf. Zech. 1.1, 7; 7.1]), then it is likely that it was attached to the Isaiah tradition that had been left in Jerusalem in 597 BCE (Isaiah 1–39*) in order for it to be placed under the undisputed authority of the prophet. This was particularly necessary as the tradents of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel traditions could also make reference to higher prophetic authorities who stood behind their texts. The connection with the older Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition was certainly made easier by their common Zion theology. Isaiah ben Amoz would naturally have been known to the authors of Isaiah 40ff, but the thesis that from the very beginning they were interested in extending his words[29] does not have enough evidence to back it up. The tradents of the Jerusalem-Isaiah tradition who had treasured Isaiah 1–39* also greatly benefited from the addition of Isaiah 40ff., for it extended their tradition into the post-exilic period. The great caesura of the exile was thereby overcome and the oracles of Isaiah ben Amoz could be read anew in relation to the future. Once Isaiah was considered the authority behind the one scroll editorial work continued apace, not only at the end of the book but also more intensively at its beginning. In this manner, Isaiah ben Amoz was turned into a visionary of the entire history of Israel, indeed of the history of the entire world (cf. Isaiah 24–27).

3. *Scribal Prophecy in the Persian and Early-Hellenistic Periods*

After the Jerusalem–Isaiah tradition and the work composed by the once deported temple singers had been brought together following the exile, the connections between the three corpora (Isaiah 1–39; 40–55; 56–66) continued to be strengthened in the post-exilic period. In contrast to the concept of 'Deutero-Isaiah', Duhm's thesis of a further anonymous author behind Isaiah 56–66 with the artificial name 'Trito-Isaiah' never managed to find general acceptance. It is now generally accepted that the third section of the book of Isaiah does not consist of the oracles of a single prophet but is a product of scribal prophecy (*schriftgelehrte Prophetie*). This form of prophecy involved the interpretation of a tradition that had already become textualized (Isaiah 1–55*). Its purpose was to apply the Word of God to a Jerusalem that found itself within a new historical context, the Persian period, now part of the province of Yehud. In their capacity as scribes, the prophetic

29. E.g. Williamson, *Book*, pp. 240ff.

singers who had been responsible for Isaiah 40–55 now became responsible for preserving and expanding the entire Isaianic tradition. This is the group that generated the impulses that led to the last significant literary insertions in Isaiah 24–27 ('the large Isaiah-Apocalypse') and Isaiah 34–35 ('the small Isaiah-Apocalypse'). The allusion to Scripture became a characteristic criterion of scribal prophecy, as Isaiah 34.16 explicitly states: 'Inquire in the book of the Lord and read: Not one of these shall be missing'.

In contrast to chaps 1–39 and 40–55, the third section does not name either foreign kings or native leaders. There is no talk in Isaiah 56–66 of Cyrus (Isa. 44.28; 45.1; cf. Ezra 1.1ff.; 2 Chron. 36.22-23), Darius (Hag. 1.1, 15; 2.10; Zech. 1.1, 7; 7.1; Ezra 4.5, 24; 5.5ff.; 6.1, 12-15; Neh. 12.22), Joshua the high priest (Hag. 1.1, 12, 14; 2.2, 4; Zech. 3.1ff.; 6.11) or the provincial governor Zerubbabel (Hag. 1.1, 12, 14; 2.2, 4, 21, 23; Zech. 4.6-10; Ezra 2.2; 3.2, 8; Neh. 7.7; 12.1, 47), not even of Nehemiah or Ezra. This makes it difficult to situate these chapters historically. As a result, conjectures can only be made on the basis of the biblical texts themselves. The *terminus a quo* can be set in the period of Darius I, i.e. after 522 BCE. The *terminus ad quem*, however, remains contested. Do some of the texts date as late as the Hellenistic period, i.e. after Alexander the Great (333; e.g. Isa. 27.7-11)?

Despite diverging opinions about the historical context of Isaiah 56–66, there is a consensus that the core of the third section lies in Isaiah 60–62. This section is to be dated to the period between the re-consecration of the temple in the year 515 BCE and the construction of the wall under Nehemiah in 445 BCE. There is much to be said for the thesis that these chapters were developed against the background of the restoration efforts in Jerusalem. Further evidence that these chapters belong to the first half of the fifth century BCE is the theme of social injustice, which also deeply bothered Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 5). Many smallholders in the Persian province of Yehud were forced to pledge their sons, daughters, fields, vineyards, and houses. Indeed, some even had to sell their children as slaves. The prophetic announcement of release from debt slavery (Isa. 61.1), which was otherwise only reserved for the 'Sabbath' or 'Jubilee' year (cf. Lev. 25.10; Ezek. 46.17; Jer. 34.8, 15, 17), underscores the highly precarious situation of the Jewish community in this period.

The literary expansion of Isaiah 58, which belongs to a redactional layer in Isa. 56.9–59.21 demanding repentance and the implementation of acts of justice, proves that the proclaimed liberation had still not taken place. The concluding verse of this 'redaction of repentance' (*Umkehr-Redaktion*), which dates to the second half of the 5th century BCE, makes its goal and programme clear: Yhwh, the *go'el*, i.e. the liberator and redeemer, will only come to those who turn from the transgressions committed within Jacob. Only they will benefit from his covenant and the communication of his

word (Isa. 59.20-21). Their positioning of this section before the 'chapters of light' in Isaiah 60–62 makes a clear statement: The light of God cannot ascend over a Jewish community that is anti-social and repressive of its own members.

The final redaction ('redaction of the servant community')[30] reveals that social and ideological tensions continued to intensify. The inner-Jewish schism between the devout and the wicked, which also exercised an increasing influence on the Psalter, has left clear marks in Isaiah 65–66 and can be seen in all its severity in the final verse of the book (Isa. 66.24). The community of the devout, in continuity with the Golah that had arrived in Jerusalem around 520 BCE and constituted the true servant Jacob/Israel, understood itself to be the offspring of the maltreated servant and the humiliated Lady Zion. In contrast to the Pentateuch, which is dominated by the Deuteronomic and Priestly traditions (cf. also Ezekiel), this community of the 'servant' propagated openness towards the nations. This openness had already begun to take symbolic form in the admission of proselytes into the divine covenant (cf. Isa. 56.1-8).

This utopian concept of a cultic service that unifies the righteous of all the nations could not be implemented in reality. Yet in no way did this mean the end of the dream, as can be seen in chaps 24–27. In this so-called 'great apocalypse', the scene is set for the 'Last Judgement'. This judgement will not be indiscriminately applied to all the world's inhabitants, it will only affect those who have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the eternal covenant (Isa. 24.5; cf. Sir. 17.11-14). As in the days of Noah, the criterion concerning judgement or salvation is ethical and not ethnic. Just as the righteous person and his relatives found refuge in the ark before the great flood, so should righteous individuals take refuge in secure quarters, i.e. on Mount Zion, and there await the storm of Yhwh's judgement (Isa. 26.20-21). Despite all necessary restraint concerning absolute dating, one may and indeed ought to assume (cf. the great Isaiah roll from Qumran; see below) that the 'Vision of Isaiah ben Amoz' (Isa. 1.1) was available in its entirety around 250 BCE.

30. See Berges, *Buch Jesaja*, 481ff.

Chapter B

The book of Isaiah as a Literary Cathedral

The brief sketch of the historical background of the book of Isaiah in Part A has demonstrated that it is anything other than the work of a *single* hand from within a *single* context. Rather, it is a complex literary composition that took shape gradually over a period of roughly 450 years. The most recent research paradigm within biblical studies no longer considers the biblical texts to be heaps of disordered sayings which must be excavated for the oldest and most authentic divine oracles. In contemporary research they are seen as 'literary cathedrals' that have been continuously constructed over hundreds of years by ancient Israel's literati. Just as each stone within the edifice has its own history and function, so too does each saying within the total structure of the prophetic book. Whereas in the past the focus of attention was upon what was supposed to be the most ancient individual sayings, today it is the structure of the books as a whole that has taken centre stage. Whoever wishes to discover the prophet, cannot avoid the book. This is the only place where one can hear the echo of his voice.

The creation of such extensive and complex texts is inconceivable without the presence of tradents. In contrast to earlier opinions, we are not dealing with simple collectors or even unimaginative epigones, but rather with trained literati who brought old and new, tradition and originality, into dialogue with each other, thereby extending and actualizing the prophetic traditions for their time. When read as a whole, the book of Isaiah gives us an insight into a theological debate in the exilic and post-exilic periods about the future of the people of God. Important motifs within this debate are the opening of the Yhwh-religion for non-Israelites, the focus on Zion/Jerusalem, and the focus on the ethical responsibility of the individual.

A reading of this prophetic drama which pays attention to its literary characteristics reveals the following structure:

Act I: Chapters 1–12: Zion and Jerusalem between judgement and salvation.
Act II: Chapters 13–27: Zion's enemies and friends—the kingship of Yhwh.
Act III: Chapters 28–35: The divine king and the congregation of Zion.
Act IV: Chapters 36–39: The threat and deliverance of Jerusalem and Zion.

Act V: Chapters 40–48: Jacob/Israel in Babylon and his liberation by Cyrus.
Act VI: Chapters 49–55: The servant and the restoration of Zion/Jerusalem.
Act VII: Chapters 56–66: The division of the community into the wicked and the righteous.

The term 'act' refers to compositional units of a literary and not a theatrical nature. Asserting the latter interpretation would require the assumption that there was a tradition of such performances within biblical Israel. For this, however, there is no evidence.[1] The book of Isaiah is a 'Drama of Zion' in which the readers or hearers witness the transformation of Jerusalem from a place of judgement into a place of eschatological salvation for both the people of God and the nations.[2] The audience has a privileged position in this process, for Yhwh's will to save has already been revealed from Isa. 2.1 onwards. In light of this basic perspective, the readers can witness the process by which God's plan for Israel and the nations unravels. They participate in 'the vision of Isaiah' (Isa. 1.1) and appropriate this vision in the process of reading—yet only as long as their hearts are not hardened towards the message of the book (Isa. 29.9-14, 18, 24; 32.3).

One noteworthy feature of the book of Isaiah is the central position of chaps 36–39, which can also be found with small differences in 2 Kings 18–20. The account of the Assyrian threat to Jerusalem by Sennacherib is not simply a 'biographical' appendix taken from the book of Kings and inserted into the Isaiah scroll in order to provide the reader with historical information about Isaiah's life. Rather, these chapters represent the centre of the textual world of the scroll as a whole. The salvation of Zion is the visible worldwide guarantee that Yhwh and no one else enforces his historical plan for Israel and the nations. All the nations which attack Israel will fail miserably due to the God of Israel who dwells on Zion. Those nations which turn to the universal king in Jerusalem, however, will find their salvation in Zion.

1. *Act I: Chapters 1–12. Zion and Jerusalem between Judgement and Salvation*

The superscription ascribes the entire body of texts to the prophet and visionary Isaiah ben Amoz. He is their authority and the source of their discourse. The superscription is followed by the first act, which portrays Zion and Jerusalem as situated in the tension between judgement and salvation, a sinful present and a godly future.

1. Contra Baltzer, *Deutero-Jesaja*, with his theory of a historical tradition of theatrical performance of Isaiah 40–55 in post-exilic Jerusalem.
2. An example of a consistently synchronic interpretation is van Wieringen, *Jesaja*.

As is so often the case in the First/Old Testament, a significant key for the determination of compositional structure is the identification of those internal and external sections that are grouped around a centralized middle point. In Isaiah 1–12 this centre is to be found in Isa. 5.1–8.18, which is followed by an epilogue in 8.19–9.9. Whereas the common designation of this section as an 'Isaianic memoir' (*jesajanische Denkschrift*) emphasizes the role of the prophet as the founder of the tradition, the term 'Immanuel Document' (*Immanuelschrift*) provides us with an important indication of its content. The theme of the Immanuel remained a virulent topic throughout the centuries-long literary and theological development of the rest of the book of Isaiah, from the time of King Ahaz during the Syrian-Ephraimite war until the post-exilic expectation of an eschatological successor to the Davidic throne.[3] This Immanuel Document consists of two first-person accounts (6.1-13; 8.1-18) and a third-person narrative in the centre (7.1-25). This switch in perspective indicates that a group of disciples is at work. This indication is confirmed by the concluding section of 8.16-18, which reports the sealing up of the prophecy among the disciples of the prophet. The centre is surrounded by a prologue, the Song of the Vineyard (5.1-7), and an epilogue, the proclamation of a renewed son of David (8.19–9.6). The Song of the Vineyard is followed by a series of woe-oracles (5.8-30) which exemplify the lack of justice that had been the subject of the conclusion of the Song. The final section (9.7–10.4), with its refrain of the 'outstretched hand' (9.7-20) and its woe-oracle (10.1-4), was placed at the end of the expanded Immanuel Document.

This multi-framed Immanuel Document was then prefaced by a double overture (1.2–2.5; 2.6–4.6). The content of this preface is not the Davidic-messianic ruler but Zion/Jerusalem as the chosen location for the fulfilment of the final eschatological salvation of Israel and the nations. In order for this vision to become a reality, the Jerusalemite community must be purified from cultic sin and social crimes. Only then can it become a place from which divine instruction may go forth and to which the nations may make pilgrimage. The sequence of pilgrimage of the nations (2.1-5) and purification of Zion in order to sanctify it (4.2-6) has its counterpart at the end of the book in 66.18-23 (pilgrimage of the nations) and 66.15-17 (judgement on all flesh).

1.1. *The Double Overture (1.2–4.6)—Jerusalem's Sin, Purification, and Future Salvation*

After the reader has passed through the portal of the literary cathedral with its superscription: 'The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and

3. See Schmid, *Herrschererwartungen*.

Hezekiah, kings of Judah' (1.1), he or she hears the voice of Yhwh calling the heavens and the earth to be witnesses in his lawsuit against his sinful people (1.2-3). The issue that is up for negotiation is not whether Israel has turned away from him or not—this is undisputed—but whether it was legitimate for Yhwh to have punished his rebellious children to such a degree that no part has been left unafflicted.[4] The conceptual background to this statement, which appears so scandalous to the modern reader, is the idea that parents have the right to physically discipline their children (a common concept from the ancient world until the early modern period). Just as parents who have laboriously raised their children ought to be treated by them with respect, so is Yhwh, as the father of his people (cf. Isa. 45.10; 63.16; 64.7), entitled to be shown loyalty by Israel. He has been bitterly disappointed, however, so that he must punish his people 'with beatings', i.e. by means of military campaigns carried out by enemy powers. In comparison with the Mosaic ordinance concerning the stubborn son who should be stoned by the village commune if he consistently resists parental instruction (Deut. 21.18-21), Yhwh's actions are restrained, for not all of his sons are carried off; a small remnant still exists. Moreover, it is this community out of which the future is to take shape. The punishment of the rebellious children is not only a matter of divine pedagogy, it also agrees with the threats that Yhwh had made to his people if they should ever break his covenant. At the end of the Torah of Moses, i.e. at the conclusion of the Pentateuch, Israel is told it would experience destruction equivalent to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29.22; cf. Gen. 19.24-25). The allusion to this text is confirmed by the invocation of heaven and earth (Isa. 1.2), which can only be found in this form at the beginning of the Song of Moses in Deut. 32.1 (these two also appear as witnesses in Deut. 4.26; 30.19; 31.28). Just as at the end of the books of Moses (Deut. 32.28-29), so also at the beginning of the book of Isaiah: Yhwh regrets his people's lack of insight (Isa. 1.3). The text is not concerned, however, with threatening Israel with the punishments found in the Pentateuch (cf. also Lev. 26.14-33), for these have already been meted out. Rather, the purpose is to underline the continuing validity of the word of God (cf. Isa. 1.2, 20). Just as Isaiah's oracles of judgement have become a painful reality, so will his oracles of salvation find their fulfilment. By linking the book of Isaiah to the curses and blessings of the Pentateuch, the tradents of the Isaiah tradition have turned Isaiah ben Amoz into a successor of Moses (Deut. 18.15, 18) and the prophetic scroll into an actualization of the Mosaic Torah!

The punishment of Israel's unwillingness to listen does not result in their total destruction, but in the creation of a remnant. This remnant introduces itself to the reader in first-person plural speech: 'If the Lord of Sebaoth had

4. Cf. Kustár, *Krankheit und Heilung*.

not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah' (Isa. 1.9). This is an important detail, for right at the beginning the reader is confronted with the question of whether he or she also wishes to belong to this remnant (cf. 4.3; 7.22; 10.20-22; 11.11, 16), the one within which God will perpetuate the history of his people. After the destruction, which is compared to the felling of an oak tree whose stump has been further cut off, a shoot is left over, which is the 'holy seed' (6.13). In light of this, the name of Isaiah's first son, Shear-jashub, 'A-Remnant-Turns Back' or 'A-Remnant-Will-Return' (Isa. 7.3), receives a deeper significance: Only those who turn away from their sin and return to God (cf. 59.20) will be a part of this community of the remnant, will belong to the disciples of Isaiah and the hearers of the book.

The symbolic name of the future Davidic heir to the throne, Immanuel (7.14), fits seamlessly into this picture, for 'With-Us-God' is the only personal name in the OT that contains a collective element! It refers to the 'we group' that is progressively constituted throughout the book of Isaiah and which is open for all readers throughout the centuries. This we-group does not have its home somewhere in Judah or in the Diaspora, it belongs in Zion, the religious centre of the people of God.

The cultic and social criticism found in Isa. 1.10ff. with its rebuke of those cultic enthusiasts who prefer sacrificial offerings to ethical conduct had always been an issue of concern, not least during the time of the post-exilic restoration. The instruction offered by the we-group in the name of Isaiah does not consist in a total rejection of sacrifices but rather in a commitment to the priority of ethics over any form of cultic activity. If Yhwh was to accept sacrificial offerings from the hands of the wicked, he would be no different to a judge who accepts bribes!

The 'teaching of the two ways' in 1.19-20, which vividly presents us with the alternative between listening and not listening, alludes once again to the blessing and curse formula in the Mosaic Torah (cf. Lev. 26; Deut. 28; 30.15-18). The content of the decision that Yhwh's word demanded of its hearers did not change in the post-exilic period. What becomes clearer is that it is the individual who is exposed to prophetic critique, as opposed to the pre-exilic period's condemnation of the nation *en bloc*. In the post-exilic period, punishment only affects the wicked (Isa. 1.29-30) and not the entire nation. The reference at the end of the first chapter (v. 31) to the inextinguishable fire that threatens the rebels is the great bridge to the final verse of the book (66.24).

The urgency of committing oneself to a life of obedience to Yhwh's instruction can be seen in the dirge in Isa. 1.21-26. It was composed for the corrupt city of Jerusalem and its leaders. In other words, the adversaries do not come from the outside the community, they destroy it from within. The only thing that can guarantee a future is conversion to law and justice. Only

in this manner can there be salvation, the redemption of Jerusalem (1.27). Whoever resists it and thus rebels against Yhwh will die (1.28). The separation of the righteous from the wicked that dominates the final two chapters of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 65–66) has already been established at the end of the first chapter.

The judgement that will lead to the restoration of Jerusalem as the 'city of righteousness' (1.26) is followed by the image of the future pilgrimage of the nations to this centre of law and justice (2.1-5). The opening verse in 2.1 emphasizes the Isaianic authority that is attributed to the vision of the worldwide pilgrimage, which is otherwise found word for word in Mic. 4.1ff. Just as the Mosaic Torah possesses a twofold tradition of the Decalogue at Sinai or Horeb (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), so does the Prophetic Torah possess a twofold tradition of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (Isaiah 2; Micah 4). The precondition for the international turn to the mountain of Yhwh and to the house of the God of Jacob in order to receive Torah (2.3) is that Jerusalem become a city of righteousness. Only in this capacity is she of interest to the nations. That which the nations seek and find there is not a set of cultic-religious rules but a God who arbitrates between them as a fair judge so that they can finally stop waging war. A contrasting programme can be found in Joel 4.10: 'Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears'. In Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 the final showdown is not presented as an eschatological battle for Jerusalem with the shedding of much blood but rather the peaceful settlement of all conflicts. The concluding invitation, 'O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!' (Isa. 2.5), illustrates how the community of the remnant, the we-group, courts the post-exilic people of God. The salvific future can only dawn when Jacob turns away from his sin and towards Yhwh and his righteousness. The free gift of Torah is taken as a task to be fulfilled.

The second overture (2.6–4.6) consists of four segments of text: the poem about the day of Yhwh against all that is 'high' (i.e. proud) (2.6-22), two depictions of the judgement of Jerusalem's male leadership (3.1-15) along with their opulent wives (3.16–4.1), and a concluding description of the purification of Zion at the advent God (4.2-6). As in 1.2–2.5, so here: A disastrous present is juxtaposed with a blessed future. In reference to the pilgrimage of the nations, this judgement against all that is high is only consistent, for every act of hubris conflicts with the unique 'highness' of Yhwh. This theme runs throughout Isaiah 1–39 like a red thread (5.15-16; 9.8; 10.12, 33; 13.11, 19; 14.11, 13; 16.6; 23.9; 25.11; 28.1, 3; 37.23). The things considered 'high' are wealth and the weaponry that is bought with it (2.7), as well as the impressive foreign gods that are overlaid with silver and gold (2.8, 18-20). Participants in these signs of hubris are the leadership, i.e. the warriors, judges, prophets, fortune-tellers and elders, all of whom have

plundered God's vineyard. They have robbed the simple people of their property and 'grinded their face', i.e. their reputation (3.12-15). Under these kinds of conditions (cf. Nehemiah 5) there will never be a pilgrimage of the nations to Zion. This is an unambiguous rejection of any concept of eschatological salvation that excludes the divine judgement of the perpetrators of social injustice. If Zion is to be a sanctuary of salvation it must be a shelter for the poor and oppressed (10.2; 11.4; 14.30, 32; 25.4; 26.6; 29.19; 32.7, 41.17-20; 57.1-15; 58.6ff.; 61.1ff.).[5]

The double overture is concluded by a proclamation of salvation in 4.2-6. A sprout (*ṣemaḥ*) will grow out of the destruction of the elite, one that will signify majesty, glory, and genuine adornment (4.2). At first sight this imagery simply looks like a metaphor for growth, yet it is politically loaded. This can be seen in the messianic texts in Jer. 23.5; 33.15 as well as in the name Zerubbabel (= sprout of Babel; cf. Zech. 6.12). The latter figure was a source of hope for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy in the early post-exilic period, a hope which was bitterly disappointed. Here, it is the prophetic community of the remnant on Zion that understood itself to be the sprout of Yhwh. This community is the small, still inconspicuous plantlet of the godly restoration (cf. Isa. 37.30-32). Whoever belongs to this remnant in Zion will be called holy and will be written in the book of life in Jerusalem (4.3). The designation 'holy' (*qāḏôš*) reminds one of Ezra 9.2, where it is lamented that the holy seed (*zeraʿ haqqōḏeš*) has polluted itself through mixed marriages. In contrast to post-exilic genealogical records that guaranteed the right to citizenship (cf. Ezra 2.62; Neh. 7.5, 64; 12.22-23), the criterion here for the right to divine citizenship, i.e. permanent communion with Yhwh (cf. Exod. 32.32-33; Pss. 69.29; 87.6; 139.16), is inclusion in the book of life.

The sanctified remnant, which is also open for adherents from the nations, can be as certain of divine protection as the Israelites who were once led out of Egypt by Moses (Isa. 4.5; cf. the pillar of cloud and fire in Exod. 13.21; 14.19, 24; 33.9-10; 40.34; Num. 10.11, 34; 14.14; Deut. 1.33). Whoever returns to Zion from among the nations will experience his Exodus there, his meeting with Yhwh just as at Sinai. 'Here, Zion becomes the mountain of the revelation of torah and the sanctuary!'[6] The Feast of Tabernacles is alluded to by means of the keyword 'booth' (*sukkâ*). This coincides with Zech. 14.16-20, where the nations are called upon to participate in the annual pilgrimage to Zion for Sukkot. Here too the theme of holiness plays an important role. Zion/Jerusalem, the temporary 'booth' in the cucumber field (Isa. 1.8), will become a lasting Sukkah as a salvific sign for Israel and the nations!

5. See Berges, *Arm und Reich*.
6. Fischer, *Tora*, p. 29.

1.2. *The Multi-Framed Immanuel Document (5.1–10.4)*

Having passed through the 'vestibule' of the double overture, the reader enters the literary cathedral of the book of Isaiah. In the opening chapters, Jerusalem was arraigned for being a sinful community. This was followed by the proclamation of its coming purification, whereby great hope was set upon the post-exilic community of the remnant that would survive this act of judgement. In this scene, we discover how Isaiah and his disciples constitute the foundation of this community.

A threefold ring surrounds the central section in 6.1–8.18. It consists of a series of woe-oracles (5.7-24; 10.1-4), a poem with the refrain 'an outstretched hand' (5.25-29; 9.7-20), and the hinge-verse referring to the 'darkness upon the earth' (5.30; 8.22). This composition is interrupted by the prophecy of the messianic child (8.23–9.6).[7] It continues the theme of the Davidic successor to the throne in 7.10-16 and serves as an impetus for the third tableau in 11.1-10. The prophecy of the Immanuel in the middle of the original composition of 6.1–8.18 had such a powerful effect that it developed into a messianic triptych (Isa. 7.10ff.; 9.1ff.; 11.11ff.). This series was to receive a widespread christological interpretation in the New Testament and throughout the history of Christianity (see below).

In 5.1-7 we find an allegory of a vineyard, its owners, and dashed hopes of good fruit. It is full of juridical language. Its final verse (v. 7) makes clear that both Israel *and* Judah stand under the righteous judgement of Yhwh. In light of the cultic and social accusations in the overture (Isaiah 1–4), this conclusion is not surprising. The following woe-oracles explicate why the people of God, Yhwh's vineyard, only produce bad fruit, 'stinking rot'. Yhwh had hoped to harvest genuine righteousness, yet all he got was the cry for help by those deprived of their rights (v. 7). Such an oppressive community cannot become a light to the nations, the sign of a just order. Instead, it must be condemned to judgement. Out of the community thus judged will grow a small shoot bearing the seeds of the future (6.13). The allegory, it should be added, knows nothing of a transferal of the responsibility for the harvest to other vintners who deliver their fruit at the right time (Mt. 21.33ff.; Mk 12.1ff.; Lk. 20.9ff.)!

The series of seven woe-oracles is concentrically ordered and may be understood as the cry for help by the disenfranchised. In other words, the cries for help are given literary form by the cries of woe concerning social evils.

1st woe (5.8-10): social offenses (unjust acquisition of wealth)
2nd woe (5.11-12): drunkenness
3rd woe (5.18-20): scepticism concerning Yhwh's plan
4th woe (5.20): the calling of evil 'good'

7. See Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, p. 130.

5th woe (5.21): considering oneself wise
6th woe (5.22): drunkenness
[7th] woe (5.23): social offenses (an unjust judicial authorities)[8]

The threat of a drastic reduction in the produce of the vineyard in the first woe oracle (5.10) ensures a thematic connection with the preceding Song of the Vineyard. The wealthy, who have usurped so much territory that in the end they will remain alone in the land, have made a profound mistake. Their houses will become uninhabited and the once fruitful earth will have a weak yield. The copious consumption of alcohol clouds the ability to perceive the threatened judgement of God and thereby leads directly to catastrophe, exile, and the total loss of the land (vv. 11-13). Because of their crimes the guilty have brought as if with cart ropes their punishment upon themselves. They mock the Holy One of Israel: That which he plans ought to be quickly fulfilled, so that they may see it (vv. 18-19). This wish will be sooner fulfilled than can possibly be comfortable for them, for the fire of judgement has already started to burn (5.24).

The ensuing wrath of Yhwh (5.25; cf. 10.5; 13.3, 9, 13; 30.27) is not so much an emotional reaction as a political act, whereby the (divine) ruler combats that which is wrong. The outstretched arm has the function of executing punishment and judgement. For Isaiah the term referred to Assyria, later tradents interpreted it in relation to Babylon. As long as this divine arm remained stretched out (5.25; 9.11, 16, 20), darkness and distress would be the order of the day (5.20; 8.22).

The specification of time in the phrase 'In the year of the death of King Uzziah' (Isa. 6.1) builds a bridge to Isa. 1.1, where we are told that Isaiah's visions started during the reign of this king. As a result, chapter 6 depicts neither his first vision nor the moment of his prophetic commissioning. It depicts his reception of a particular mission, one that has been specifically connected with the death of Uzziah and the accession to power of his grandson Ahaz. This explicit chronological reference is not coincidental, for the switch in reigns coincides with the outbreak of the Syrian-Ephraimite crisis in 734 BCE (cf. 7.1). It is interesting to note that the reign of Jotham, the father of Ahaz, receives no mention here (cf. 2 Kgs 15.32-38). This may have been to suggest that Isaiah's vision of the heavenly court took place at a time in which Yhwh alone was king in Jerusalem. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Isa. 6.5 conspicuously speaks of the 'King (*hammelek*), Yhwh Sebaoth' (cf. 24.23; 33.22; 41.21; 52.7) as well as of his dwelling upon a high and lofty throne (6.1). The kingdom of Yhwh here functions to critique human rule rather than to legitimate it. This

8. It is possible that the 'woe' in 5.23 was deleted when the cry of woe in 10.1 was added as a frame, thereby retaining the number seven.

interpretation is supported by the fact that the messianic heir to the throne (Isaiah 7; 9; 11) is never called a 'King' (*melek*)!

Priestly power is also viewed critically in these chapters, for when Isaiah enters the innermost part of the sanctuary (even if this is only in his vision) he sees the King, Yhwh Sebaoth, with his own eyes (6.5). This non-priest experiences one of the most immediate encounters with God, an event that strikes mortal fear into his heart, for whoever sees God must die (Gen. 32.31; Exod. 19.21; 33.20). This seeing of God makes Isaiah resemble Moses who, like no one else before or after him, knew Yhwh face to face (Deut. 34.10; Exod. 33.11). Furthermore, the purification of the prophet (6.6-7) does not take place by means of priestly atonement; it is effected by Yhwh himself. In the post-exilic period the priestly service became increasingly significant due to an increased focus on the act of atonement. The effect of this portrayal, however, is that such service is at least relativized.

Yhwh's absolute holiness is expressed in the threefold cry of 'holy' (*qādôš*; 6.3). Faced with this reality, Isaiah confesses the sinful existence that he shares with his people. His sin and guilt are then burnt away by the heavenly seraph. He thereby becomes the first one of all those who will survive God's judgement. At the same time, he is equipped for further prophetic ministry. This consists, among other things, in confronting the nation with the holiness of God (8.12-14). God's holiness and the people's sin now stand in diametric opposition to each other, for the sermon of judgement (chaps 1–4) has born no fruit; the owner of the vineyard has harvested foul instead of good grapes (chap. 5). Now that that has happened, the people's unwillingness to listen is exacerbated by the hardening of their hearts. Yet the intractable hardening that has been provoked by the call to repentance (6.8-10; 29.9-10) will one day be removed in the future kingdom of righteousness (32.3). Thus, even though Isaiah's preaching made the hardening even more unavoidable, the words of his book will also serve to enable the deaf to hear and the blind to see (29.18). This will not take place without the prior judgement, however. It is only after the implementation of the punishment (6.11-13) that the dry land will again rejoice, the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf become unstopped (35.5; cf. 41.20). At that time the hardening of hearts will finally belong to the past. With its roots in the proclamation of Isaiah, the Isaianic corpus becomes both a means of hardening as well as an instrument for the opening of eyes and ears.[9]

Within the Immanuel Document (6.1–8.18), the central promise of 'Immanuel' (7.10-16), the Davidic heir to the throne, is bracketed by passages concerning two sons of the prophet: 'Shear-jashub' (7.1-9) and 'Maher-shalal-hash-baz' (8.1-3). Each of the three names has a particular theological profile which, taken together, generate a dynamic that goes well beyond the

9. See Berges, *Hören und Sehen*.

horizon of these chapters. The names of the two sons of Isaiah, 'A-Remnant-Returns' and 'Speedy-booty-hasty-prey', stand for the divine succour that will shortly come when the threat of Damascus and Ephraim will be removed (7.7-9; 8.4). This promise, however, is only valid as long as both the house of the king as well as the nation as a whole put their trust entirely in Yhwh. The Hebrew pun on the root 'Amen' in 7.9, 'If you do not stand firm in faith, you will not stand firm at all',[10] already indicates by its use of the negative that the challenge to believe will fall on deaf ears. Although Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom survived the Syrian-Ephraimite crisis, the test of faith met with failure, for Ahaz refused to respond to the prophet's request by asking for a sign. This is an illustration of the prophet's commission in 6.9ff. to harden hearts. In a paradoxical manner, Yhwh answers the refusal to believe with the promise of a child with the salvific name Immanuel, 'With-Us-God' (7.14). The pregnant woman that is referred to is the wife of King Ahaz. The Hebrew word *'almâ* denotes a young woman up until the birth of her first child (cf. Gen. 24.43; Exod. 2.8; Ps. 68.26). The aspect of the virgin birth belongs to an interpretation that is dependent upon the Greek ('*parthenos*') and Latin ('*virgo*') translations (Mt. 1.23; Lk. 1.31; see below).

The failed test of faith does not only lead to the announcement of Immanuel (7.14), it also leads to a new proclamation of judgement (7.17-25). Assyria, the shearing knife in the hand of God, is a nation that Ahaz and the house of David should genuinely fear, for every place with a thousand vineyards worth a thousand pieces of silver shall become full of briers and thorns (7.23, 25). In this manner, the devastation of the vineyard that Yhwh had resolved to carry out in 5.6 will become a reality through the Assyrian invasion. Those who remain within the devastated land will nourish themselves on curds and honey, symbols of a meagre lifestyle (7.21-22). The fact that Immanuel will also eat curds and honey until he is able to distinguish between good and evil (7.15) indicates the substantial affinity that exists between him and the community of the remnant. The unique collective element in the meaning of his name underscores the group-specific aspect of this future heir to the throne.

In a further compaction of the theological understanding of history, Assyria becomes a forerunner of all the enemy nations that will forge plans against the city of God and the waters (of Siloam) that flow peacefully within her, plans that will fail because of 'Immanuel' (8.8, 10; cf. 7.7). The intertextual relationship to the psalms of the Korahite temple singers (Pss. 46–48) is significant, for there the call to trust in 'Yhwh-Sebaoth-With-Us' (Pss. 46.8, 12; cf. 'we/us' in 46.2; 47.4; 48.2, 9, 10, 15) has a similar emphasis on the group character.

10. This is the NRSV's rendition of the pun.

The challenge to trust and believe applies all generations. Depending on how one responds, Yhwh will prove himself to be either a 'sanctuary' (*miqdāš*) or a 'trap' (*môqēš*) (Isa. 8.14). In this connection, the disciples of Isaiah function as role models, for they are the ones in whom he has sealed his prophetic torah. They are a warning sign for the time when Yhwh hides himself from the House of Jacob and his judgement takes its course (8.16-18). The prophet and his students (*limmûḏîm*) form thereby the first members of the community of the remnant (cf. 1.9; 4.3). They are the ones for whom the Immanuel is the embodiment of God's promise. The torah that has been sealed among the disciples will become the prophetic book (cf. 30.8) that can only be read and understood by those whose ears and eyes have been opened (29.18; 32.3-4). The one who can read and understand the book belongs to the disciples of the prophet!

The following royal song in 9.1-6 concludes the 'memoir' (*Denkschrift*) as an epilogue. The motif of darkness has already been prepared for in the historicizing note of 8.23b (cf. 8.22, 23a). The background for this text is the annexation of the north-eastern regions of Ephraim (including Galilee) by Tiglath-pileser in 733 BCE (2 Kgs 15.29). The song concerns the birth or enthronement of a royal child, which emphasises that even these regions will one day find their way out of the darkness and into the light. The supplementary literary development of the Immanuel prophecy is evident, especially since the collective aspect 'God-with-*us*' (7.14) continues in the joyful cry, 'A child has been born to *us*' (9.5). In the place where the naming of the royal house would have been expected ('a son has been born to the house of David'), we find the programmatic 'for us' (*lānû*), which indicates a 'democratization' of the concept of king. The following elements indicate that the prophecy of Nathan in 2 Samuel 7 provides the conceptuality for this song: 'being a son' (9.5; 2 Sam. 7.14), 'permanence of the throne' (9.6; 2 Sam. 7.14); 'name' (9.5; 2 Sam. 7.9), 'Midian' as a reference to the time of the Judges (9.3; 2 Sam. 7.11). This hoped for ruler, however, will not be called 'king' for, as far as the circle of tradents of the Isaianic tradition were concerned, Yhwh alone is king (6.5; 33.22; 52.7). The future reign should be of a different kind than the one that was endured during the time of the monarchy. Thus, the 'Day of Midian' (9.3) refers to Gideon's victory over the hostile Midianites with God's help alone during the period of the Judges (Judges 7–8). After this victory he was asked to become the head of a dynasty: 'Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have delivered us out of the hand of Midian' (Judg. 8.22). Gideon rejects this offer, however, on the grounds that Yhwh alone is ruler in Israel: 'I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; Yhwh will rule over you' (v. 23). Gideon's son with the highly symbolic name 'Abimelech' ('My-Father-Is-King') sees things very differently. After a bloodbath against his brothers he is made king (Judg. 9.6). The 'Day of Midian' in Isa. 9.3,

therefore, refers to an act of salvation that could have led to the establishment of a kingdom, something that did not occur under Gideon. The royal child in Isaiah 9 is equipped with the same power to save, yet without receiving the title of king. Although the term 'kingdom' (*mamlāḵâ*) is used, this does not make the future ruler a king; it simply shows that he will function as a representative of the divine king Yhwh. Justice and righteousness also play a significant role for the Davidic kings (2 Sam. 8.15; 1 Kgs 10.9), yet only the throne of Yhwh is said to be founded upon them (Pss. 89.15; 97.2).[11]

The Davidic theme is taken up once again in Isa. 11.1-16. The imagery here contrasts with the image of total devastation at the end of chap. 10. Whereas the trees and high places of the enemy powers have been wrecked, a shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse that will bear fruit (11.1). This is the point where the announcement of the birth of Immanuel (7.14) and the proclamation of his throne name (9.5-6) find their continuation and fulfilment. The destruction in the midst of the earth that has been ordained by the Lord of hosts and that will take place through the oncoming flood of his righteousness (10.22-23) will bring forth a Davidic shoot whose rule will be characterized not by violence but by the divine gifts of the spirit for the securing of world peace. The place where this will happen is Zion. This is the place where a form of peace will reign that will transform all deadly animosities into peaceful coexistence (cf. 65.25). The impossible will become possible and the unthinkable will become reality. Evil and violence will have no place in this utopia (11.9).

This vision of the rule of the Davidic shoot in terms of its consequences for the foreign nations is worked out in several phases (11.10-16). The reconciliation of the once hostile kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim (11.13-14) that finds its expression in their joint plundering of their neighbours (Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites) cannot be reconciled with the image of peace in the preceding verses. Why does there have to be war and violence once again after the just ruler has already settled all conflicts in the power of Yhwh? Whether in the period of the production of the text or its later interpretation, visions of peace never had it easy when confronted with acute contemporary conflicts.

Isaiah 12 stands like a beacon of light at the conclusion of the first act (chaps 1–12) while casting a glance forwards to the following collection of oracles against the nations (13–23). This chapter is a song of thanksgiving for salvation and it is sung by Isaiah, the prophet of the book, to the remnant of the people of God who are pilgrimaging to Zion. The threefold mention of the word 'salvation' (*yᵉsûʿâ*) (vv. 2-3) is a direct allusion to the name 'Isaiah' (*yᵉšaʿyāhû*), which is briefly mentioned afterwards (13.1). As

11. See Beuken, *Isaiah 1–12*, p. 254.

in chap. 1.2ff., Isaiah's citation of a line from the victory song of Moses (Exod. 15.3a; Ps. 11.14) in 12.2b ('Yes, Yh Yhwh is my strength and my song' [Yah = the short form of the name of God]) renders him the legitimate successor of Moses. When those who have been saved from among the nations come to Zion with singing and with joy draw from the fountain of salvation, i.e. the torah (55.4-5; Ps. 87.7), they will become proclaimers of his lofty name among the nations. The motif of 'comfort' (*niḥam*) (v. 1) builds a bridge to Isa. 40.1, the beginning of the second major section of the book (cf. 49.13; 51.12; 52.9; 61.2; 66.13). The rejoicing 'inhabitants of Zion' (*yôšeḇet ṣîôn*) in 12.6 are the equivalent of 'Zion, herald of good tidings' (*mᵉḇaśśeret ṣîôn*) in 40.9. Zion can only function as an 'evangelist' when the holy remnant within her sing their song of liberation to the entire world.

2. *Act II: Chaps. 13–27. Zion's Enemies and Friends—the Kingship of Yhwh*

Chapters 13–27 constitute a single interpretive unit. The oracles concerning the nations (Isaiah 13–23) and the eschatological perspective (Isaiah 24–27) are to be read in relation to each other. An interpretation which takes chaps 24–27 to be a self-contained 'Apocalypse of Isaiah' accords with neither their genre nor the goal that is being pursued by their arrangement in sequence. Oracles against or about the nations are known from other prophetic books (cf. Jeremiah 46–51; Ezekiel 25–32; Zephaniah 2; Amos 1–2; Obadiah; Nah. 2.2ff.). Contained in these oracles is the idea that the righteousness of Yhwh, as reflected in his judgement of Israel and Judah, cannot leave the nations untouched. Although the nations are invited to partake of salvation (cf. Isa. 2.2-4), they cannot ignore the criterion of ethical practice and devotion to the only true God. Whatever is true for the people of God is also true for the foreign nations. Only this perspective can explain the function of Isaiah 24–27, for in these chapters we hear the praise of a humanity that has been saved from global judgement.

Just as the song of thanksgiving in Isaiah 12 closes the first act, so do the songs of the saved in Isaiah 25–27 close the second. Whereas Isaiah 13–23 refers mostly to individual nations, in Isaiah 24 the whole world comes into view. The oracles against the foreign nations and the people of God have achieved their goal when Yhwh is proclaimed as king in Zion: 'for Yhwh of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem' (24.23). Before that can happen the human kingdoms must be judged for their pride and the wicked must be destroyed from the earth. After this, both the remnant of Israel as well as those of the nations who have escaped the judgement will be invited to the festal banquet on Zion (25.6-8). As such, the nations in these oracles are not a *massa damnationis* whose destruction only serves to allow the salvation of the people of God to shine more brightly. The fall of the arrogant

nations, especially the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, is the necessary prelude for the final rule of God on Zion.

2.1. *Isaiah 13–23: The Oracles of the Nations in the book of Isaiah*

The most obvious structural marker for the organization of the text is the tenfold appearance of the term *maśśā'*, 'saying', literally 'weighty saying' (*Lastspruch*) (13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1). This term came to prominence at the end of the 5th century as a designation for prophetic messages, as can be seen in Hab. 1.1; Nah. 1.1.; Zech. 9.1; 12.1; Mal. 1.1. The superscription, 'The saying concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw' (Isa. 13.1), functions both as an introduction to the following oracle as well as a link back to the first act (cf. 1.1; 2.1). Just as in Isaiah 1–12, chaps 13–27 stand under the prophetic authority of Isaiah. This is confirmed by the symbolic prophetic act in the centre of the collection in 20.1-6, which is preceded and followed by five oracles (Isaiah 13–19; Isaiah 21–23). Both five-fold series are introduced by sayings about Babylon (13.1–14.22; 21.1-10) and both are concluded with six oracles that begin with the phrase 'on that day' (*bayyôm hahû'*). The downfall of the Babylonian world-power is a prelude to the rule of Yhwh over all rulers and authorities. The fact that Assyria is also placed under judgement (14.24-27) even though it had already been replaced at this point by Babylon may seem surprising, yet in the historical perspective of the book of Isaiah both Mesopotamian superpowers are identical. Because neither of them understood themselves to be tools in the hand of Yhwh, considering themselves instead to be like God (cf. Isa. 10.5ff.; 14.12ff.; 37.23-24), they are both equally condemned. God mobilizes his holy warriors and heroes in the announcement of the day of Yhwh against Babylon (13.2-22). These are identified in 13.17 as Medes (cf. Isa. 21.2; Jer. 51.11, 18; 2 Kgs 17.6), whereby Persians *and* Medes are meant (cf. Esth. 1.3, 14, 18-19; 10.2; Dan. 8.20). The verb *ʿwr* II. ('stir up') in the causative stem (Isa. 13.17) builds a bridge to the stirring up of Cyrus in 41.2, 25 and 45.13. As a result, the calling of the Persians that follows the Babylonian chapters in Isaiah 13–14 and 21 is no longer surprising for the reader; instead, they confirm Isaiah's vision of history.

The multi-layered oracle against Egypt (Isaiah 19) closes the first series of five oracles before the symbolic act in Isaiah 20. In a certain sense it constitutes a parallel to the oracle against Babylon/Assyria (Isaiah 13–14). Superpowers on the Euphrates, Tigris, and Nile determine global politics and, along with their gods, constitute Yhwh's greatest opponents. As such, it is logical that the gods of Egypt are specifically named (19.1, 3) and unmasked in all their impotence. Following this, the wisdom of Egypt, i.e. its political calculations that had been supported by its gods, is taken *ad absurdum* (vv. 11-15). If the gods cannot help because they are unable to resist the spirit of confusion that Yhwh has poured out, then

even Pharaoh's wise advisors are preaching a lost cause! At the end are five oracles that are each introduced by the phrase 'on that day' (vv. 16, 18, 19, 23, 24). Even for Egypt, the judgement of Yhwh is not only geared towards destruction but also conversion to the God of Israel. First of all, the Egyptians will have to recognize whose hand it is that has brought about these catastrophes and whose plan it is that they are resisting (vv. 16-17). Homage will be paid to Yhwh upon an altar in Egypt in the language of Canaan (Hebrew), so that Egypt as a whole will become the people of Yhwh who experiences his protection when it turns to him. Neither the worship of Yhwh nor liberation remain limited to Israel, rather they extend beyond all borders. The nation that was once the oppressor of Israel will call to Yhwh for help and will receive from him a saviour, its own Moses. The universal scope of salvation is often testified to in the OT, especially in Isaiah 40–55, yet never in such international-political dimensions (cf. Mal. 1.11; Jon. 1.16; Zech. 14.16-20; Zeph. 3.9). That which Israel always was, the people of Yhwh, all nations may become—after the judgement of every wrong and all hubris. The idea that various nations belong to Yhwh is not entirely unique to this section (cf. Zech. 2.15; Pss. 47.10; 82.8; 100.3), neither does it diminish Israel's position, for Yhwh's torah still goes out from Zion (cf. Isa. 2.2-4).

In the middle of the collection of oracles to the nations we find the report of Isaiah's three year long public nakedness. This act symbolizes the status of prisoners of war and thereby warns against a false policy of alliances. After the symbolic act in Isaiah 20, the prophet will only play a role again in chaps 36–39.

The second series of five oracles begins in Isaiah 21 and ends with Isaiah 23. As before, this compilation begins with a saying about Babylon (cf. 13.1ff.). The downfall of Babylon caused by the Elamites and Medes (21.2) is the central concern of this prophetic perspective on history. This vision thus sketches out the later calling of Cyrus (41.2, 25; 44.28; 45.1) and the end of Babylon (46–47; Jeremiah 50–51). The position of the oracle against Jerusalem (22.1-14) and against the two royal administrators (22.15-25) amidst these oracles to the nations is at first surprising, yet its function is to interrupt the potential misreading that the destruction of the nations means *ipso facto* salvation for Israel. This is not the case, so that Yhwh's judgement of the nations and superpowers should have led to repentance within Jerusalem rather than untimely rejoicing (22.11-14). The final oracle against the rich harbour cities of Tyre and Sidon is aimed at the high finance of the eastern Mediterranean (Isaiah 23). Neither military nor economic strength can match Yhwh (v. 9). He will shake the trading nations to the core and deprive them of their power. Even though Tyre recovered after seventy years (cf. the period of the exile in Jer. 25.11-12; 29.1) and once again whored economically with the other kingdoms, her prostitute's wages

will no longer belong to her but to those who dwell before Yhwh so that they may finally eat to their satisfaction and be well-clothed (Isa. 23.17-18).

2.2. *Isaiah 24–27: Eschatological Perspective on History*

Despite the common designation of Isaiah 24–27 as the 'Apocalypse of Isaiah', these chapters are not concerned with the unveiling of cosmic events but with an eschatological perspective on history in a global context. The imposition of the rule of Yhwh upon individual nations is here applied to the world as a whole. The broadest possible parameters are set by both the repetition of the term 'earth' sixteen times in chap. 24 and the judgement of the anonymous city. A basic theme of the oracles to the nations is continued in the feast of the nations on Zion (25.6-12) and the gathering of the dispersed on the holy mountain in Jerusalem (27.13): Blessing and life within Zion is prepared for those from Israel and the nations who turn to Yhwh. In addition to this, the reference to a time before the division of the nations into various nations and languages is a theological reference to scripture, in particular the great flood (Genesis 6–9) and the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The term used to denote Yhwh's scattering of the inhabitants of the earth (*p̲ws̲*) in 24.1b is a key word taken from Genesis 11 (vv. 4, 8, 9). The judgement of the world does not occur haphazardly, it aims at the destruction of those who have transgressed the instructions (*t̲ôrōt̲*) and have broken the eternal covenant (*bᵉrît̲ ʿôlām*) (Isa. 24.5). It follows, then, that the instructions must be valid for all people and as such can only refer to the commandments of humanity in general that are violated by the wicked, arrogant, and scoffers (cf. 13.9, 11) at all times and in all places. Judgement consists in the cursing and devastating of the earth, the end of all joy (24.1-12). After the time of the judgement of the world there will be a gleaning process. In a similar manner, Yhwh had saved Noah from the flood because of his righteousness. That which is true at the beginning of creation is true for its consummation: Only the just will survive and live! In the eschatological time Zion will be that which the salvific ark was in the time of Noah.

The rejoicing of those who escape will be on a global scale (24.14-16a). The joyful cry 'adornment for the righteous one' (*ṣᵉb̲î laṣṣaddîq*) (v. 16a) apparently refers to Yhwh and means the saving righteousness of God that calls perpetrators of violence to account and rehabilitates the victims of violence ('*violentia*') and wrong. In the context of the parallels with Noah, one can also hear the praise of the righteous in the midst of the earth: The saving and righteous God is an adornment for the righteous of Israel and the nations! Therefore, only the 'righteous nation' may enter the city of God (26.2).

These events have not yet been realized, for the visionary shudders at the violence ('*potestas*') with which Yhwh is bringing forth the final judgement. It is like a worldwide earthquake with tidal waves. This leads to the

disempowerment of all the kings of the earth. They are confined as prisoners in a cistern and, after many days, must answer to Yhwh for their deeds (24.22). No act of violence that has been perpetrated by the powerful will remain hidden, all will be held to account for their actions. If someone should want to hide themselves behind the moon and sun as guarantors of their lordship, they will be disappointed, for the heavenly bodies will similarly hang their heads in shame. All this makes clear what the name Yhwh Sebaoth means: Lord of all powers and authorities. 'For Yhwh Sebaoth will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders he will manifest his glory' (24.23). This statement marks the climax of chap. 24 and surpasses the earlier vision of Isaiah where Yhwh had sat upon his throne as the high and lofty lord of the world (6.1, 5). That which the seraphs had proclaimed, namely that 'the fullness of the earth is his glory' (6.3), has now established itself and become a reality. The revelation of the divine glory before his elders alludes to the scene with Moses and the seven elders (Exod. 34.9ff.). If Sinai was the mountain of God for Israel, then the mountain of Zion is the place of revelation for the righteous from Israel *and* the nations.

Just as the righteous Noah, the saviour of humanity, had found refuge in the ark before the divine tribunal, so do the congregation of the righteous on Zion. They too must lock themselves behind closed doors for a little while until the wrath is past (Isa. 26.20)—a reminder of the passing over of the punishing angel during the night of Passover (Exod. 12.23). Yhwh's disclosure of the bloody deeds committed by the inhabitants of the earth and his punishment of evil (cf. Gen. 4.10; 9.4-6) depicts a situation that is analogous to Noah's flood. Yet this time Leviathan, the quintessence of chaotic evil, will no longer remain unpunished. In the past the floodwaters had been unable to harm the sea monster; this time, however, Yhwh will kill it with 'his heavy and great and strong sword'. Thus, even this enemy will be conquered (Isa. 27.1; cf. Ps. 74.12ff.; 'Rahab' in Ps. 89.10-11; Isa. 51.9).

At the end of the great flood Noah planted a vineyard (Gen. 9.20). We also find one in Isa. 27.2-6 (cf. 5.1-7). This new vineyard is Jacob and Israel and it will put out roots and blossom. Where else should this vineyard be planted than upon Zion, the mountain that will provide blessing for the whole world? The judgement of the sinners in Israel and the nations has resulted in a vineyard. Its fruit is righteousness and peace and it will fill the entire earth.

3. Act III: Chaps. 28-35. The Divine King and the Congregation of Zion

The clearest marker for the division of the third act is its fivefold cry of woe (28.1; 29.1, 15; 30.1; 31.1). This is followed in 32.1 by 'behold' (*hēn*), to which has been attached a final woe in 33.1. This arrangement is concluded

in 33.24 with the statement that the sin of the people on Zion has been forgiven. Isaiah 28–33 is concerned with the question of what the people of God must look like if Yhwh is to rule from Zion as a righteous king. For a start, the corrupt leaders must be made answerable for their deeds (Isaiah 28). Yhwh, who is no human king, will be a glorious crown and a magnificent diadem for the 'remnant of his people' (28.5). The population of Zion will be freed from their blindness, hardness of heart, and guilt. They will see their divine king in their midst in all his beauty (33.17) and will solemnly confess: 'Indeed, Yhwh is our judge, Yhwh is our lawgiver, Yhwh is our king; he will save us!' (33.22). Yet before this happens there is still one more obstacle that needs to be removed: 'Ah, you destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed; you treacherous one, with whom no one has dealt treacherously!' (33.1). In this chapter, Yhwh's battle for the salvation of the righteous and the punishment of all pride is staged once again. Here, the 'We' have a chance to speak, beginning with hope (33.2) and concluding with a confession (33.22). Yhwh activates his power with dramatic effect: '*Now* I will arise, *now* I will lift myself up' (33.10). Both those who are near as well as those who are far, i.e. the nations and Israel, will be confronted with his sin-consuming and sinner-consuming presence (33.10-16).

The term 'king' and the repeated 'we' closely bind chapters 32 and 33 together; they are completely missing, however, in Isaiah 34 and 35. In their place are a host of other terms that bind these two chapters together (e.g. 'vengeance' 34.8; 35.4; 'streams' 34.9; 35.6; 'jackals' 34.13; 35.17; each time a threefold 'there', 34.14-15; 35.8-9). The double image of the destruction of Edom (chap. 34) and the salvific future of Zion (chap. 35) that is also occasionally called a 'small apocalypse' possesses two thematic points of contact with Isaiah 33. Yhwh's demand that his power be recognized (33.13) is developed into a call to the nations to be present at the judgement of Edom (34.1). Furthermore, the sole kingship of Yhwh in Isaiah 33 is confirmed by the statement that Edom will no longer have a kingdom (34.12).

The downfall of Assyria (10.5-34), Babylon (13–14; 21), Egypt (19), and all the other nations is followed by the downfall of Edom in order to make space for the kingship of Yhwh. Within this sequence the judgement of Edom is made parallel to that of Babylon (e.g. 'sword' 13.15; 34.4-5; 'day of Yhwh' 13.6, 9; 34.8; 'chaos animals' 13.21-22; 34.11ff.). This connection between Babylon and Edom reminds one of Ps. 137, where specific mention is made of the Edomites in a psalm that is about Babylon (v. 7). The depiction of Edom's total devastation does not only draw upon the judgement of Babylon for inspiration. The list of the creatures of chaos (34.11-17) does not only draw upon the animals in 13.21-22 but also the ones in Lev. 11.13-19; Deut. 14.12-19; Jer. 50.39; Mic. 1.8; Zeph. 2.14, and Job 30.29. In this manner, the authors are postulating a scribal completeness (34.16). This note was added in a late if not final phase in the development of the

Old Testament. Edom is no longer the southern neighbour that was hated because it possessed a portion of Judah in the exilic and post-exilic period (cf. Jer. 25.15-25; 49.7-22; Ezek. 35; Lam. 4.21-22); it has now become a symbol for the enemies of God and Zion at all times.[12]

As a counter-image to the destruction of Edom, Isaiah 35 paints a picture of Zion's salvific state using the brightest possible colours. Multiple motifs from Isaiah 32 and 33 are drawn upon in the process. The well-wooded and fruitful regions which were wilting in 33.9 are now radiant in all their splendour for the benefit of Zion (35.1-2). Whereas the unthinking were promised insight (32.4), in 35.4 they are called upon to display strength and fearlessness. Whereas the streets were deserted (33.8) so that no one walked on them anymore, now there is a street, a holy way, upon which the unclean may not travel (35.8). Whereas it had been announced that even the lame would participate in the plundering that would take place in the period of salvation (33.23), now the lame will leap like a deer (35.6). The reversal of the hardening of hearts and the end of all physical disabilities take up corresponding motifs and formulae from 29.18; 30.21; 32.3-4; 33.24. The call to make oneself strong in Yhwh (*ḥzq*) (35.3-4) anticipates chapters 36–39, the central character of which is the king whose name is programmatic: Hezekiah ('Yhwh strengthens'). Just as those who are in despair are not to be afraid (35.4), so is Hezekiah exhorted to be fearless when Sennacherib threatens him (37.6). The fact that Yhwh saves (35.4) is also emphasized in Hezekiah's prayers (37.20; 38.20). Only those who trust in Yhwh as their saviour and flee to him will not be ashamed.

4. *Act IV: Chapters 36–39. The Threat and Deliverance of Jerusalem and Zion*

Contrary to the widespread opinion that these chapters are only an 'historical appendix', the accounts of the Assyrian threat and divine deliverance of Jerusalem (36–37), the disease and cure of King Hezekiah (38), and the visit of the Babylonian envoys (39) are the centrepiece of the dramatic unfolding of the book as a whole. The downfall of all powers that revolt against Yhwh and his kingdom finds its climax in Isaiah 36–39. Yhwh' enemies are destroyed whereas those who trust in him are miraculously saved. Some stumble over the cornerstone in Zion, others find protection and security there (cf. 28.16). The book of Isaiah is therefore consistent when, in contrast to 2 Kgs 18.14-16, Hezekiah does not pay Sennacherib any tribute (no more than in 2 Chronicles 32). As a pious king he chooses instead to trust solely in Yhwh's help. This stylization of Hezekiah is more pronounced in Isaiah 36–37 than in 2 Kings 18–19 (cf. 2 Kgs 18.5) and it is this version of his persona that left its imprint in Sir. 48.17-23 (see below).

12. See Beuken, *Isaiah 28–39*, p. 286.

The reference to the year of the reign of the Judean king in Isa. 36.1 both continues the chronology of the book of Isaiah (cf. 1.1; 6.1; 7.1; 14.28) and concludes it, for here we arrive at the final king who is mentioned in the superscription to the book as a whole (Isa. 1.1: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah). The fourteenth year of Hezekiah as the date for Sennacherib's conquest has been calculated by the author on the basis of 2 Kgs 18.2 (29 regnal years) and 2 Kgs 20.6/Isa. 38.5 (15 years after his convalescence). The threat to Jerusalem, therefore, occurred in the middle of his reign. This, in turn, fits with Hezekiah's song: 'I said: In the midst of my days I must descend to the gates of the underworld' (38.10). The identification of the meeting place with the Rabshakeh in Isa. 36.2 ('the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field') alludes to the meeting between Ahaz and Isaiah at the same spot (7.3). The test of faith that Ahaz failed (7.10ff.) will now be passed by Hezekiah, yet even he is not the flawless successor to the throne of David (see Isa. 39). The names of Eliakim and Shebna (36.3, 22; 37.2) allude back to the oracle in 22.15-24 and shows that these narrative accounts of Hezekiah and Isaiah are not foreign bodies in the book as a whole.

The mocking speech of the Rabshakeh, the highest royal cupbearer, can only be truly understood in the context of the message of the prophet Isaiah and his tradents, for the attack was not only aimed at Hezekiah and his city but at Yhwh and his promise of protection and deliverance. Both Sennacherib and Hezekiah communicate through envoys. Because Hezekiah's delegates fear the demoralizing effect of the Rabshakeh's Hebrew-language speech, they ask him to speak in Aramaic. This was the diplomatic language of the period (cf. Dan. 2.4; Ezra 4.7) and would not have been understood by the majority of those who were being besieged. The Assyrian spokesman rejects this request, for these are precisely the people he wants to address. Isaiah 36.11-13, therefore, leads on to the second speech of the Rabshakeh (vv. 14-20). Whereas the first was dedicated to the issue of trust, the second is about deliverance (vv. 15, 17, 18, 19, 20). It is introduced in the style of a prophetic message ('Listen', 'thus speaks'), as if it was not a human but a divine word from the 'great king' that the Rabshakeh had to proclaim. In contrast to the first speech, the second is directed against Yhwh. All restraint is now dropped: Yhwh cannot save, for no other divinity has been able to protect its city from the attack of Assyria, not even Samaria. The message culminates in the claim of the king of Assyria to be like God: 'Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that Yhwh should save Jerusalem out of my hand?' (36.20). What a difference to the end of the first speech in v. 10 ('Yhwh said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it)'! At stake is nothing less than Yhwh himself. If he cannot save Jerusalem, he is no different than the useless deities (36.18-20; 37.12-13). Motifs of the divine promise of land (Deut. 8.8;

33.28; cf. 1 Kgs 5.5; Mic. 4.4; Zech. 3.10) are picked up in the Assyrian's promise that those who are besieged would live safely in the land if they surrender. It is the king of Assyria rather than Yhwh who is praised as the giver of life. This is the sense in which the turn of phrase in 36.16 is to be understood: 'Conclude a blessing with me'. Capitulation would be a blessing (*bᵉrāḵâ*) for Jerusalem. If this were true, then the entire Zion theology of the book of Isaiah would have been taken *ad absurdum* (cf. 14.32; 28.16; 30.15).

After Hezekiah receives the news from his messengers he tears his clothes as a sign of mourning. Unlike his father Ahaz, who was seized with panic when confronted with news of the attack-plans of Aram and Ephraim (7.2), Hezekiah goes into the house of Yhwh (37.1). His response to the mortal threat is not fear and trembling but rather a visit to the sanctuary. From there he sends his messengers to the prophet who then encourages him to trust in God (37.5-7). As soon as Yhwh announces through Isaiah that the Assyrians will abandon Jerusalem due to a rumour (*šᵉmûʿâ*) (v. 7), it happens: After hearing that his lord has departed from Lachisch, the Rabshakeh finds him engaged in a battle against Libna. Afterwards, the Assyrian king hears that Tirhakah has set out to attack him (v. 9). News, even when only a rumour, can write history!

The second narrative (37.9b-38) similarly starts with the keyword 'listen' (*šmʿ*). Sennacherib informs Hezekiah by letter that he should not interpret the interruption of the siege falsely, for all the other nations have succumbed to the Assyrians (vv. 10-13). The use of the medium of a letter to communicate his message indicates that the Assyrians had already departed for the campaign against Cush. This time, in contrast to his previous response (37.1), Hezekiah receives the message with composure (37.14). The encouraging word 'do not fear' (v. 6) has had its effect. The 'perhaps' of the petition directed to the prophet (v. 4) has given way to his own prayer for deliverance. Here, the 'your God' of v. 4 has turned into the 'our God' of v. 20. The blasphemer's plans are not only thwarted by Zion, they are thwarted by the prayer of the pious king. Whereas Hezekiah's prayer in the house of Yhwh brings him deliverance, Sennacherib's act of worship in the house of his God, Nisroch, brings him death (v. 38). The battle for Jerusalem becomes a dispute over the exclusive deity of Yhwh and the vanity of the gods. The deliverance of Zion should lead to worldwide recognition of the uniqueness of Yhwh (cf. 43.10-11; 44.6-8; 45.5-7, 18-25). That which Hezekiah confesses at the beginning of his prayer, 'you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth' (37.16), should also be recognized by these kingdoms (v. 20). The confession of faith in Yhwh is the only correct response to Sennacherib's threat and blasphemy.

The report of the trouble and salvation of the city of God comes to its conclusion in Isa. 37.36-38. The appearance of the divine messenger

evokes the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, the house of slavery (Exod. 14.19). Just as the delivered Israelites saw the dead Egyptians (Exod. 14.30), so do the liberated Jerusalemites discover the corpses of the Assyrian soldiers in the morning. This event marks the fulfilment of the anti-Assyrian oracles (cf. Isa. 8.8b-10; 10.12, 16-19, 24-27; 14.25-27; 17.12-14; 29.5-8; 30.31-32; 31.5, 8-9; 34.3). At the end of the book we hear that the corpses of those who have rebelled against Yhwh will lie before the gates of Jerusalem (66.24). The number 185,000 in 37.36 has no historical value, in particular because 'thousand' can also simply denote a large contingent of people (Exod. 18.21, 25; Num. 31.5, 14; cf. Isa. 60.22). Just as the messenger of God struck down the Assyrian army, so do the princes kill their father (37.36, 38). This blasphemer can find no refuge from the retribution of God, not even within the circle of his family and the house of his deity. Whereas Hezekiah finds protection and deliverance through his prayerful presence in the house of Yhwh (37.1, 14-15, 21), the house of Sennacherib's god becomes the venue for his death.

The following narrative of the illness and recovery of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38 is set in parallel to the report of the threat and deliverance of Jerusalem. The condition of the city and the king are inextricably connected. A comparison with 2 Kgs 20.1-11 reveals important differences that make the particular intention of the Isaianic version clear. In the book of Isaiah the narrative tension that is created through the mortal illness of the king (v. 1) is only resolved in the second to last verse (v. 21), and even there only in reference to the future: 'Let them take a lump of figs and apply it to the boil, *so that* he may recover'. In contrast to 2 Kgs 20.7, the healing is not reported as a fact. Hezekiah remains a convalescent and a clear limit it set to his life. Even here the king and the city of the king are connected, for even though Jerusalem has been saved from Sennacherib, it will fall by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Whereas in Isa. 38.7 it is Isaiah who offers the king a sign, in 2 Kgs 20.8-11 it is the king who demands one; he even rejects the first offer as too simple! In the Isaiah version the sign alone suffices to confirm the divine word; Hezekiah shows no scepticism. The intention of this portrayal is clear: A pious man of prayer does not demand a sign, it is given to him as a gift from God. According to 2 Kings 20, the prophet participates in the miraculous healing by calling upon Yhwh; in Isaiah 38, in contrast, God alone is the one who acts. An important element that is unique to Isaiah is the prayer of Hezekiah (38.9-20). This prayer is missing in 2 Kings 20 and would not accord with the image of Hezekiah found there, for the king could not have demanded a difficult sign and then afterwards spoken such a pious prayer! In the Isaianic version, on the other hand, one can perceive a move towards a climax: First Hezekiah goes into the temple and asks Isaiah to pray (37.1-4), then he offers a prayer himself (vv. 15-20), and finally he formulates a

prayer of thanksgiving in written form (38.9-20). Just like Moses (Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32–33) and David (2 Samuel 22; Psalms 18), Hezekiah authors a song of thanksgiving in which he sings of his deliverance from death. Yet whereas in the songs of Moses and David it is human beings who appear as the aggressors, here it is Yhwh himself who brings Hezekiah to the gates of Sheol.

The seriousness of the emergency can be seen in the fact that Hezekiah simultaneously turns to and against God: 'What can I say, and what can he say to me, for he is the one who has done it?' (v. 15a). Here one can clearly see the consequences of a consistent monotheistic faith. Because God is the one who has beset him, only God can save him. 'You will make me strong again and let me live!' (v. 16b). After his dramatic near-death experience, Hezekiah identifies himself as one who is living: 'The living, the living (*ḥay ḥay*), they thank you, as I do this day; a father makes known to his children your faithfulness' (v. 19). This statement reveals how great is the difference between the fate of the persecutor and the formerly persecuted. While Sennacherib is killed by his sons in the house of his god (37.38), Hezekiah proclaims to his sons the faithfulness of Yhwh. This image does not work with his son Manasseh, however, who was his successor to the throne (cf. 2 Kgs 21.1-18). As such, the authors of this text want to communicate a more subtle message. It is not his physical sons and daughters to whom Hezekiah is proclaiming the faithfulness of God but the community of the remnant (the 'we') that orients itself towards him as children to a father. This interpretation is confirmed by the switch from the singular to the plural in the final verse of the psalm: 'Yhwh will save *me*, and *we* will sing to stringed instruments all the days of *our* lives, at the house of Yhwh' (38.20). This 'we' is the group of singers that composed Hezekiah's psalm and placed it in the book of Isaiah. The heart of the poem is not the priestly sacrifice in the temple but the praise of God 'at' (*'al*) the house of Yhwh. The house of Yhwh (*bêṯ yhwh*) is only spoken of in the final part of the book (Isa. 56.5, 7; 60.7; 64.10; 66.1, 20) and the incorporation of the psalm—a composite text from various sources—took place at a late period in the development of the Old Testament literature. There is a possible wordplay on the verbs 'protect' (*gnn*) (31.5; 37.35; 38.6) and 'to play a stringed instrument' (*ngn*) (38.20) which have been bound together by the keyword 'save' (*yš'*) (37.35; 38.6). Accordingly, the response to salvation consists in musical thanksgiving 'all the days of our life'. Hezekiah's concluding request for a sign that he will once again ascend to the house of God (38.22) lacks the critical undertone that is found in 2 Kgs 20.8ff. Here he is solely concerned with presenting along with his children, the post-exilic we-group of the pious, his psalm within the temple as quickly as possible.

Hezekiah's actual cure is not reported in Isaiah 38 but it is referred to in the following chapter in the context of the Babylonian envoys. There we

read that Merodach-baladan, the king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah letters and gifts upon hearing of his convalescence (39.1). In the context of Sennacherib's previous letters, this report does not bode well for the reader. This ominous impression is confirmed when Hezekiah does not present the letters to Yhwh as he had done before but rather gives the Babylonians an insight into his treasure house. The keyword 'house' appears in 39.2 three times! This contrast between the Hezekiah who prays in the house of Yhwh and who sings his song of thanksgiving there after his recovery, one the one hand, and the Hezekiah who is proud of his own strength, one the other, appears again in the final verb of 39.1. Here we are told that Merodach-baladan had heard that Hezekiah had been sick and had become strong again (*wayyeḥ^{e}zāq*). This is a play on the name 'Hezekiah'. Is Yhwh his only strength, or does he trust in his store of precious metal and weapons after all? Historically, Hezekiah would not have had anything left in his treasure house after the heavy tribute he had to pay to the Assyrians (cf. 2 Kgs 18.13-16). But the point that is being made is theological and not historical. Although Jerusalem has been delivered from the Assyrian threat (Isaiah 36–37), the Babylonian exile is still to come (Isaiah 39)! Just like Hezekiah, Josiah would later not be able to hold back the catastrophe of the year 587/586 (2 Kgs 22.19-20). Isaiah 39 places particular emphasis on the end of the Davidic dynasty when it says that the royal princes will serve the king of Babylon as court officials/eunuchs (*sārîsîm*) (v. 7). This is a clear rejection of any possible hope for the re-strengthening of the Davidic monarchy.

5. *Act V: Chaps. 40–48. Jacob/Israel in Babylon and His Liberation by Cyrus*

One of the greatest peculiarities of the book of Isaiah is that the events of the exile are not portrayed, even though the announcement of the deportation of the royal house (39.6-7) would have provided ample opportunity for mentioning them. Given that the authors had already imported the Sennacherib narrative from 2 Kings 18–20 into the Isaianic scroll, they could at least have weaved in a reference to the conquering of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kings 25). This would even have served to legitimate their prophet, for they could assert that that which Isaiah had prophesied had now in fact taken place! The silence concerning the events of the exile in the book of Isaiah cannot, therefore, be accidental; it must an intentional part of the message of the authors. It was the concept of Jerusalem as an unconquerable refuge for all those who trust in Yhwh (28.16) that prohibited the authors from thematizing the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. The victory over Sennacherib rather than the defeat under Nebuchadnezzar is given a central place in their theology of history. With the cry to comfort God's people in Isa. 40.1 the decades of Babylonian exile are seen as lying

in the past. Isaiah, the prophet *in* the book (chaps 1–39), now becomes the prophet *of* the book (chaps 40–66). His voice thereby penetrates the past, present, and future of the people of God and the nations. Chapters 40–55 are structured by hymns (42.10; 44.23; 48.20-21; 49.13; 52.7ff.; 55.12-13). They draw upon the Yhwh-kingship tradition of the psalms (especially Pss. 96 and 98) and the motif of the 'new song', which is only mentioned in Isa. 42.10 and the Psalter (Pss. 33.3; 40.4; 96.1; 98.1; 144.9; 149.1).

The basic theological themes of these chapters may be summarized as follows: Yhwh has intervened powerfully in history by calling Cyrus. In contrast to the liberation from Egypt, this salvific event is taking place before the eyes of all the nations and their gods. Yhwh has thereby proven himself to be the only true God and king; his earthly dwelling is on Zion, to which all people from all the nations are invited to make a pilgrimage. The precondition for this journey is that they abandon their foreign gods. The particular monotheism that finds its pointed credo in the 'Shma' Yisrael' ('Yhwh, *our* God, is the only one; Deut. 6.4) is thereby freed from all limitations: 'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other!' (Isa. 45.22). The new orientation of the Yhwh religion can only then be successful when the servant Jacob/Israel casts off his blindness and deafness (cf. 42.18.-19) and thereby become a witness to the people of God and to the nations (43.10; 44.8) of the uniqueness of Yhwh.

Isaiah 40–48 is a compositional unit, not least because it is the only place where the themes of 'Jacob/Israel as servant', 'Cyrus and Babylon', and the 'vanity of foreign gods' play a role. In Isaiah 49–55 we hear nothing more of Babylon and its gods. This is because the setting has switched from the land of exile to home. The blind and deaf servant Jacob/Israel also no longer stands at the centre of attention. Instead, we have the city of Zion/Jerusalem personified as a sceptical-doubting woman who refuses to trust in the message of comfort that has been directed to her.

5.1. *Isaiah 40: The Two-Part Overture to Zion/Jerusalem and Jacob/Israel*

Chapter 40 opens a prelude that consists of two parts. The first is addressed to Zion/Jerusalem (40.1-11), the second to the servant Jacob/Israel (40.12-31). The programmatic cry 'comfort, comfort my people' (v. 1) is neither a command to heavenly beings nor does it portray the calling of an exilic prophet ('Deutero-Isaiah'). The speaker is Isaiah, the prophet of the book, who is telling heralds to announce to Zion/Jerusalem that her penalty has been paid and that Yhwh's salvific arrival is now immanent. This command is followed by a debate among those who have been addressed, portrayed by means of alternating voices (vv. 3, 6). The issue is whether it is remotely realistic to proclaim such a message of hope to a people who are so disillusioned and fickle. The heralds are told that they should build upon the idea of faith in the word of 'our God', which stands forever (v. 8). Only when

comfort has been established within Zion can she herself become a herald of good news (*mᵉbaśśereṯ*) to the cities of Judah (v. 9), one who announces the victorious return of Yhwh in the capacity of jealous shepherd and king (vv. 10-11; cf. 52.7-10).

Instead of imperatives, the second part (40.12-31) is structured by rhetorical questions (vv. 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 25). They lead to a genuine question: Why does Jacob/Israel say that his right is disregarded by Yhwh (v. 27)? In vv. 1-11 the focus had been on the will of God to comfort his people; here it is on his power to accomplish his will. The switch from a plural (vv. 18, 21, 25) to a singular 'you' (v. 27) indicates that the post-exilic people of God consists of those who allow themselves to be addressed and convinced. In a similar manner to the contemporaneous Priestly Document, the authors derive Yhwh's ability to control history from his authority within creation. Because he is the only one who can measure creation, for he is its creator (*br'*: vv. 26, 28; cf. Gen. 1.1), he is the only one who can hold history in his hands. 'Yhwh is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth' (v. 28). Just as no one can measure Yhwh's creative activity, so can no one fathom his historical plan for Israel and the nations (v. 14). The contours of this statement are sharpened when read against the background of the worship of the main deity of Babylon: Marduk (Cyrus had reintroduced this deity into the cultic centre of Babylon in 539 BCE against Nabonidus' advocacy of the moon god Sin in Haran). Unlike Marduk, Yhwh did not consult with any other gods. Both creation and history are equally the domains of the God of Israel—before him all other powers and authorities are invalid and void (vv. 17, 23). This incomparability is an important element of his holiness. Isaiah 40.25 is the only place in the entire book of Isaiah where the absolute form of the noun is used as a title for Yhwh: 'the Holy One' (*qāḏôš*).

5.2. *Isa. 41.1–42.12: The Impotence of the Nations and their Gods—Yhwh's Renewed Commitment to Jacob/Israel*

The first main section of Isaiah 40–48 comprises 41.1–42.12. It presents, on the one hand, the impotence of the nations and their gods, and on the other hand a renewed promises of salvation to Jacob/Israel. In contrast to 40.12-31, the foreign gods are not declared to be null and void from the outset; rather, they are challenged to enter into a lawsuit. The battle for the one and only God is waged with words and not weapons, i.e. by means of theological discourse. Biblical Israel does not break through to a reflected monotheism out of a position of strength but out of a position of great political impotence.

Within the context of this fictive lawsuit, Yhwh challenges the nations to bring forth their gods so that their power over history may be tested. Only the deity who has announced and then brought about the events of history,

i.e. the triumphal march of Cyrus, is the true God (41.14; cf. 41.22-27; 42.8-9; 43.18-19; 48.3, 6). After the conclusion of the lawsuit, when the opposing party has fallen silent (41.28), Yhwh presents his servant. His task is to bring to the nations that which is right (*mišpāṭ*). The debate concerning the identity of the true God, therefore, is also part of 'the right' to which the servant Jacob/Israel should bear witness. The lawsuit against the gods of the nations and the appointment of the servant for Israel and the nations are to two sides of one and the same coin.

Yhwh considers the fact that he and no one else had called the victorious hero out of the East (vv. 2, 25) to be sufficient evidence for his control of history. He had called Abraham in a similar manner from land where the sun rises (cf. Ur in Chaldea; Gen. 11.31; 15.7). Just as Abraham had been able to successfully pursue kings (Gen. 14.15), so will this one from the East (vv. 2-3). It is therefore no coincidence that Abraham is mentioned by name in Isa. 41.8, something that occurs only rarely in the prophets (Isa. 29.22; 51.2; 63.16; Jer. 33.26; Ezek. 33.24; Mic. 7.20). It is a unique characteristic of Yhwh that he comprehends all times. 'I, Yhwh, am first, and will be with the last!' (41.4). The self-introduction 'I am the one' (*ʾanî-hûʾ*) pervades these chapters (41.4; 43.10, 13; 46.4; 48.12; 52.6; otherwise only in Deut. 32.39) and evokes Yhwh's self-introduction to Moses as the one who will be who he will be (Exod. 3.14). The NT will later pick upon this phrase with Jesus' statement *egō eimi* (e.g. Mk 14.62; Lk. 24.39; Jn 4.26; 6.20).

The 'I' of Yhwh seeks its counterpart in the 'you' of Israel/Jacob (41.8). The honorific title 'servant' (*ʿeḇeḏ*) is applied, *inter alia*, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Isaiah, the prophet after the image of Moses. It is even applied to Zerubbabel and Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25.9; 27.6; 43.10). The title denotes one's belonging to and servitude to one's divine lord. Interestingly, the designation 'servant' is never used for priestly officeholders. The divinely elected servant Jacob/Israel has no reason to fear, despite his powerlessness ('worm Jacob') (41.14), for Yhwh is his redeemer (*gōʾēl*) (e.g. 41.14; 43.14; 44.6, 24).

Yhwh has called both Cyrus and the servant and their tasks are complimentary. The Persian is responsible for destroying Babylon and liberating the people of God; the servant is responsible for proclaiming the correct interpretation of the epochal change in events. The Persian creates the facts, the servant, in his capacity as mediator of the covenant for Israel and as light for the nations, interprets these facts in relation to Yhwh (42.1-9). Cyrus follows the plan without knowing Yhwh. God's spirit, however, has been laid upon the servant so that he might bear witness before Israel and the nations to that which is right, i.e. Yhwh's power to control history. The servant is the Golah that is willing to return home and it advocates this reality not with many words but by its own destiny. The historical salvation of Jacob/Israel will demonstrate to the nations that the purposes of the one

and only God are not oriented to domination but liberation. This is not something that can be fought for, for fighting always yields victims. It must be advocated with one's own person and personality. Whereas in the past the islands had fallen silent (41.1), now they are called upon to join in the new song (42.10-12). Whoever encounters the liberating God in the servant Jacob will join in the song of praise. Where salvation knows no limits, there the worship of God is also unlimited.

5.3. *Isa. 42.13–44.23: Yhwh's Dispute with the Deaf and Blind servant*

This section consists of two speeches that have been composed in parallel to one another (42.13–43.13 and 43.14–44.8), followed by a detailed polemic against idols (44.9-20). The conclusion consists of a renewed call for the comprehensive praise of God (44.23). Whereas before it was the lawsuit against the foreign gods that stood in the foreground, now it is the dispute with the blind and deaf servant Jacob/Israel. Can Yhwh overcome his scepticism so that he will allow himself to be used as a witness? If not, then Yhwh will have to enter his lawsuit against the gods without his own witnesses.

The despondency of the people makes it necessary to first offer a promise of salvation in order to evoke trust in God's new initiative to act in history. After having been silent for so long, Yhwh now takes control. Those who trust in their home-made gods will be ashamed (42.13-17). There is no promise without a challenge and for this reason the oracle of salvation is followed by a disputation with the goal of moving the addressees to put aside their blindness and deafness. It is only when that happens that they will be able to categorize their experience of tribulation and misery as a just punishment of God (42.18-25). The following oracle of salvation (43.1-7) builds upon this: Jacob/Israel no longer needs to fear (43.1, 5). The formula of encouragement 'do not fear', which in the ancient oriental context is only spoken to kings, is here spoken to the entire nation. Yhwh will change history for the good and instigate the ingathering from of the dispersion. He will not do this for political reasons but because Jacob/Israel is endlessly precious in his sight (43.4). In the following judgement scene (43.8-13) the people of God is called upon to advocate Yhwh's unique power to control history. They may be blind, but they do have eyes; they may be deaf, but they have ears (43.8). They should finally open their eyes and ears for the new salvific decree of Yhwh and assume the office of witnesses. 'You are my witnesses … and my servant whom I have chosen' (43.10; cf. 43.12).

The second speech (43.14–44.8) is similar to the first in terms of structure and content. Once again, an oracle of salvation opens the sequence, whereby here the liberation from Babylon and the liberation from Egypt are seen as one. Just as the Chaldeans in their gloriously decorated boats will perish—an allusion to the festive boats in honour of Marduk at the New

Year festival in Babylon—so did Yhwh cause the war chariots, horses, and soldiers (of Egypt) to perish. Yet the addressees should not be content with this historical comparison, for that would bind them too much to the past. For this reason we have a prohibition that is unique in the Old Testament: 'Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old!' (Isa. 43.18). Only in this manner can the new thing that Yhwh is beginning to create be recognized: 'I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?' (43.19). That which is new is not the liberation by Cyrus, for Yhwh has wrought salvation again and again throughout history. The new thing is formed in the nation that praises Yhwh in the midst of the metamorphosing wilderness. The ascendancy of Cyrus and the downfall of Babylon prepare the way for the new thing, but they are not themselves the new thing.

The shoots that are sprouting through the dried up soil are those individuals within Jacob/Israel who have put aside their deafness and blindness and thereby become witnesses to Yhwh's control of history (43.10, 12; 44.8). Yhwh pours out his spirit and blessing upon them 'so that they shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams' (44.4). They commit themselves both to Jacob/Israel and to Yhwh (44.5)—and this in the midst of a people whose faithfulness is as frail as the grass that is green today and withered tomorrow (40.6-7). This nation, elected in the midst of the tribulation of exile, has been formed by Yhwh in order to declare his praise (43.21). The thesis that the authors of these texts belong to the Levitical temple singers is further corroborated by the presence of a generic element belong to the songs of thanksgiving (cf. Pss. 9.15; 78.4; 79.13; 102.22). The difference, however, is that here a promise is not being made to praise God in the future; that praise, is already beginning to take place this very moment. The praise of God (*ṯ^ehillâ*) is not proclaimed by the witnessing servant Jacob/Israel after he has passed through the wilderness, but already in the midst of it while it is in the process of being transformed. Before this can happen, however, he must recognize that the exile was justified because he had served Yhwh with sins rather than sin offerings (43.24-25). Yhwh will no longer think of these offenses, however. Instead, he will wipe them away so that they no longer stand between him and his folk. What is currently at stake is not Yhwh's forgiveness (cf. Jer. 31.34) but rather the willingness of Jacob/Israel to accept it (cf. Isa. 40.2) and thereby to acknowledge his own history of sin. This should not be too difficult for those being addressed, for it is already that case that 'your first father sinned' (43.27a), a reference to the tradition of Jacob as a fraudster from his youth on. This accusation is repeated in Isa. 48.8 (cf. Gen. 25.24ff.; 27.18ff., 36; Hos. 12.4; Jer. 9.3; Mal. 3.6-7). The designation 'first' (*ri'šôn*) here does not only refer to a temporal beginning but to a fundamental characteristic of the nation: Just as the patriarch Jacob is characterized by sin

and election, so are all those who belong to him (cf. Isa. 41.8-9; 43.10; 44.1-2; 48.10; 49.7). It is only when Jacob/Israel acknowledges that his sins have been forgiven by Yhwh that he can integrate this renewed election into his exilic/post-exilic identity. It is therefore no coincidence that directly following the theme of sin (43.22-28) the theme of election is emphasized twice (44.1-2).

Before the conclusion of the unit with an oracle of salvation (44.21), admonition (v. 22), and a hymn (v. 23), there is a long polemic against idols (44.9-20). It makes the alternatives that confront Jacob/Israel unmistakably clear: Either he understands himself as formed by Yhwh (*yṣr*) (43.1, 7, 21; 44.2, 21, 24) or he forms his own idols (44.9, 10, 12). It should be clear to him that before Yhwh no god had been formed (*yṣr*) and after him none will exist (43.10). This is what Jacob/Israel should bear witness to. It is not those who cut down trees for the construction of their deities who will come to a knowledge of the only true God, but rather the poor and oppressed, for whom Yhwh will plant trees in the wilderness (44.20). While some make for themselves idols which then serve their needs, Yhwh has formed for himself a people that will stand by his side in order to proclaim his divinity to the world. The servant Jacob/Israel should not forget this (twice 'servant' in 44.21, just as in 44.1, 2), nor should he doubt the forgiveness of his sins (44.22; cf. 43.22-28). Jacob/Israel should turn to Yhwh (*šûḇ*) (cf. 55.7), the Go'el, his redeemer, which requires the renunciation of any form of idol worship. It is only when this re-orientation to Yhwh has been completed that the universal praise may be sounded.

5.4. *Isa. 44.24–45.25: Yhwh's Triumph Through Cyrus and the Persians*

In this final section Cyrus and his triumphal march are introduced *expressis verbis* as evidence for the Yhwh's control of history. The demarcation of the section on Cyrus as a unit is established by two hymnic verses, one at the beginning (44.23) and one at the end (45.25). Isaiah 45.25 is certainly no call to worship in the imperative mood; it does, however, hold out the prospect for such praise (*hll*). The praise of God (*ṯ^{e}hillâ*) (cf. 42.8; 43.21; 48.9) will be realized when the survivors of the nations (45.20), all the ends of the earth (v. 22), and every knee or every tongue (v. 23) will participate.

Compositionally, 44.24-28 constitute the preparation for the Cyrus-oracle in 45.1-7 (it has been expanded by 45.8). To this has been attached the woe-oracles in 45.9-10. Altogether this creates a three-fold structure. The actual addressee of the Cyrus-oracle is not the Persian but the people of God. They are the ones who must come to terms with Yhwh's unusual steering of history. Just as Nebuchadnezzar was God's tool of punishment and therefore the servant (!) of Yhwh in Jer. 25.9, so is Cyrus the military instrument of Yhwh's liberation. Those individuals from Jacob/Israel who commit themselves to Yhwh and his new historical intervention through

the Persians belong to the witnessing servant with his prophetic task (cf. 42.19). These messengers of Yhwh (44.26) stand in open contradiction of the Babylonian mantics who interpret the course of history by consulting liver and intestines or by interpreting the stars (Isa. 44.25; cf. Jer. 14.14; 27.9; 29.8; Mic. 3.6-7; Zech. 10.2). The reference to the plan (*ʿēṣâ*) of the messengers in 44.26 is an allusion to the announcement of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and Judah; even the verbal form *yašlîm*, 'he fulfils', could be an onomatopoetic allusion to Jerusalem (*yᵉrûšālaim*). Yhwh's confirmation of the word of his messengers, the witnessing servant, not only creates a bracket with Isa. 40.8 and 55.10-11, it also accords with the divine legitimation of true prophecy (cf. 1 Sam. 3.12; 1 Kgs 2.4; 8.20; 12.15; Jer. 38.6; 29.10).

It is only after the servant has been mentioned that the Persian is mentioned by name (44.28). The new world power does not shape history by itself. Without realizing it, it is dependent upon Yhwh. In accordance with the ancient Near Eastern worldview, the realms of history and myth are interwoven. For this reason, the drying up of the depths of the sea means nothing other than the restoration of a world that has fallen into chaos (cf. Isa. 50.2; 51.9). In a similar manner Yhwh had dried up the Red Sea so that those he had redeemed could pass over into freedom (Exod. 14.16, 22, 29; 15.19; Pss. 77.16ff.; 106.9). Earlier it was Moses who had been the shepherd of his people (cf. Isa. 63.11; Ps. 77.21), now this honorary title has been transferred to Cyrus. Even the Davidic prerogatives of the royal shepherd (cf. Ps. 78.70-72; Jer. 23.1-6; Ezek. 37.24; Zech. 11.15-17) are transferred to the Persian. Cyrus is the shepherd of Yhwh and not of Marduk, as almost all the Babylonian rulers had claimed for themselves. This title, however, was unknown to the Achaemenids.

Given that the address 'my shepherd' is followed by the title 'my anointed' (45.1), the transfer of the Davidic royal dignity to the Persian is irrefutable. After the removal of Saul, only David and his descendants had been given these titles (e.g. 1 Sam. 2.10; 16.6, Pss. 2.2; 18.51; 20.7; 28.8; 84.10; 89.39, 52; 132.10, 17). The two possessive pronouns 'my' emphasize that the Persian is entirely subordinated to the majesty and sovereignty of Yhwh. Just as Yhwh implements the council of his messengers, so does Cyrus implement the divine will in its totality (44.28). He is presented as God's perfect representative.

The formula 'thus says Yhwh' in 45.1 that marks the opening of the Cyrus oracle is not an independent preface to the speech, it remains dependent upon 44.24 with its hymnic expansion. These words are not directed towards the Persian but towards the servant Jacob and the elected Israel, for the benefit of whom Yhwh has commissioned Cyrus as his anointed. This cross fading of the levels of communication can further be seen in that the relation between Yhwh and Cyrus is first described (v. 1: I-he) before the

direct discourse begins (vv. 2-5). Only here does the expansion of the messenger formula not serve to glorify Yhwh as the lord of creation and history (e.g. 42.5; 43.1, 14, 16; 44.24; 45.18) but rather the establishment of the nature of his relation to the Persian king. This reveals just how difficult it must have been for the people of God to accept the Persian king as not only the new ruler of the world but also as one who is acting at God's behest. The provocation of this twist of history was enormous, for the anointed one of Yhwh did not even know him (45.5)! The transfer of the Davidic prerogatives to Cyrus was not limited to him alone but included the entire Persian dynasty of the Achaemenids.

The motif of the grasping of the hand in 45.1 picks up a further element of the ancient Near Eastern royal oracle and can be found in a similar formulation on the Cyrus Cylinder. There we are told that Marduk had sought a righteous king after his own heart and had grasped him by the hand. At the same time, there is a connection to the oracle of salvation in Isa. 41.13, where Yhwh grasps Jacob's right hand (*ḥzq*). In contrast to the builders of idols who grasp their idols (41.6-7), the living God has grasped the hand of his servant (42.6). This metaphor connotes unfailing protection and vigorous support. The calling by name is also applied both to the servant Jacob/Israel (41.9; 43.1; 49.1) as well as the Persian (45.3-4; 46.11; 48.15), which underlines their cooperation in Yhwh's plan. Whereas Cyrus and his dynasty are Yhwh's political-military tool among the nations, the task of the servant is to witness to the uniqueness of God.

In 45.1-3 the military component moves into the foreground. The stripping of the kings' belts refers to military disarmament (1 Kgs 20.11), for weapons were worn on belts (cf. 2 Sam. 20.8; Neh. 4.12). Although the connection between the opening of the gates of Babylon in v. 1 and the destruction of the bars in v. 2 is not in itself an absolute contradiction, one gets the impression that an editor has retrospectively taken the peaceful capture of Babylon in October 539 BCE into account. The emphasis on the handing over of rich treasures cannot refer to the capture of Babylon alone; it will have included the Persian's success over the legendarily wealthy King Croesus of Lydia, who had already been conquered in the year 547 BCE. This event paved the way for his conquest of the wealthy trading city on the western coast of Asia Minor. Yet Yhwh's ultimate purpose for Cyrus was not to give him wealth but the knowledge of Yhwh as the only true God (v. 3b). The connection between 'knowing' (*yd*ʿ) and the preposition 'so that' (*lᵉmaʿan*) can also be found in Isa. 43.10 where the servant, i.e. the witnesses, are elected 'so that you know … that I am the one'. Both the servant as well as the Persian royal house are called to know the one true God. Did the authors actually believe or hope that the Achaemenids would convert to Yhwh? One must take into account the function of these verses as a word of salvation to the people of God. The central point of the message is not that

Cyrus confesses Yhwh, but that the people of God accept that Yhwh has called the Persian royal house as part of his plan—indeed, for the sake of Jacob/Israel (v. 4). What an idea: The new world power has been called by Yhwh for nothing else than to serve servant Jacob! Cyrus is thus certainly a shepherd and anointed one but he cannot be a servant and witness, for in order to be that he must know Yhwh. This makes the greatness of Yhwh even greater. He is the only divinity (*ʾĕlōhîm*) who can claim that he controls all of reality, including all its dark sides. 'I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I, Yhwh, do all these things' (Isa. 45.7; cf. 54.16). In contrast to the Priestly Document (Genesis 1), God is not only presented as one who integrates pre-existing chaos into creation—darkness becomes night, the primal ocean becomes the sea—he is also the one who creates darkness (*ḥôšeḵ*) and catastrophe (*raʿ*) themselves. Elsewhere, Yhwh appears as the lord over darkness during the liberation from Egypt (Exod. 10.21-22; 14.20; Amos 8.9; Ps. 105.28). Darkness is one of the elements that surround him during his theophany on the mountain of God (Deut. 4.11; 5.23; cf. 2 Sam. 22.12). It is only because the darkness is subordinated to Yhwh that he can illuminate the darkness of the one who prays to him (2 Sam. 22.29 = Ps. 18.29; cf. Ps. 139.11-12). In addition to this, however, he can also lead him out of light into darkness (Lam. 3.1; Job 19.8). Light and darkness, war and peace, weal and woe, are all dependent upon Yhwh as the creator of reality in its totality.

Isaiah 45.9-13 concludes the framework surrounding the Cyrus oracle (cf. Isa. 44.24-28). That which was praised *before* the Cyrus oracle, namely Yhwh's activity as liberator and creator of his people, is problematized *afterwards*. Does Yhwh have the right to act so differently and unexpectedly through Cyrus and the Achaemenids? His deeds within history make him appear like a potter whose vessel complains that it has no handles (v. 9). The criticism is refuted, for who can accuse a father for what he has sired, or a woman, for what she has given birth to?! The implicit accusation that Yhwh is doing business with the Persian empire by liberating his people in exchange for other nations is similarly rejected (45.14ff.). The listing of the conquered nations does not serve to glorify the victorious deity, a common practice in the ancient Near East, but to proclaim belief in the saving God who cannot be represented by a cultic image. 'Truly, you are a God who hides himself, Israel's God, Saviour!' (v. 15). Yhwh is not hidden because his activity is imperceptible ('I did not speak in hidden places'; v. 19), but because he cannot be represented visually. The invisible yet saving God is juxtaposed with the visible yet helpless gods of the nations that have been conquered by the Persians. Shame and humiliation is all that remains for those who worship cultic images and who do not want to recognize Yhwh's uniqueness (45.16-17, 20, 22). Israel's God can only become visible in history and that history is characterized by the declaration and realization of

his will (vv. 19, 21). The power of this history is his word that does not return to his mouth as if he had never spoken it (v. 23; cf. 40.8; 55.10-11).

5.5. *Isaiah 46–48: The Downfall of Babylon and its Gods; the Purification of Jacob/Israel*

After the presentation of Cyrus and the consequences of this historical twist for Israel and the nations (44.24–45.25), the following chapters are concerned with the downfall of Babylon (chap. 46), the end of the Babylonian empire (chap. 47), and the purification of Jacob through the hardships of the exile (chap. 48). This can be summarized as follows: If Bel and Nebo have fallen (46.1), then Babylon, the daughter of the Chaldeans, must also fall from her throne and down into the dust (47.1, 5). The command to flee from Babylon and the Chaldeans (48.20) does not only refer to the fallen centre of power but also to the place where the foreign gods were worshiped. It is compositionally significant that the satirical song about Babylon (chap. 47) is surrounded by accusatory words directed to Jacob/Israel (46.3, 12; 48.1, 4). Babylon's fall ought to function as a warning to the people of God to abstain from worshipping foreign deities. Whoever wishes to commit themselves to Yhwh in truth and righteousness cannot remain in Babylon. They must flee Chaldea and make their way to the Holy City (48.1-2, 20).

Chapter 46 consists of five strophes. The first two (vv. 1-2, 3-4) are connected by the theme of 'bearing burdens', the final two (vv. 8-11, 12-13) by the theme of 'transgressors/the stubborn of heart'. The main emphasis of the whole poem is found in the third strophe (vv. 5-7) and concerns the worship of foreign gods. The representation of the fallen gods Bel (= Marduk) and Nebo follows a course that is diametrically opposed to the religious politics adopted by Cyrus who had reintroduced the cult of Marduk to its former position. Theologically, however, it is Cyrus who, in his capacity as shepherd and anointed of Yhwh, has put an end to the gods of Babylon and the city of the worship of foreign deities. All of this has happened as a warning to the people of God, so that the first strophe (vv. 1-2) constitutes the basis for the following personal challenges to Jacob/Israel (vv. 3, 5, 8, 9, 12). Only here is the 'I' of Yhwh and the 'you' of his addressees missing. The relationship of Yhwh to his people is portrayed as a contrast to the relation between the gods of Babylon and their people. The Babylonians celebrated their New Year Festival with processions of images of deities. These processions were occasions for the statues of the deities to journey to the capital city in order to visit it or, in the case of military defeat, to be evacuated from it. For the poets of Israel, however, it is not Jacob/Israel that transports Yhwh, but Yhwh who has borne his people from the womb onwards! The Babylonians break down under the weight of the statues of their gods, deities that cannot even

rescue themselves. Yhwh, however, is the one who carries, transports, and saves (v. 3). The main deity Marduk-Bel and Nebo, the god of wisdom, are exposed as false saviours as they 'stoop' before the literary artistry and the determination of their own destinies (particularly at the New Year Festival). The participle *qōrēs* ('he/it stoops'; in v. 2 as a finite verb) appears to refer by way of onomatopoeia to *kôreš* ('Cyrus'), possibly as an implied criticism of his re-introduction of the New Year Festival. The Golah should not allow itself to be misled by the revival of the cult of Marduk in Babylon, for Marduk and his entourage cannot save!

The following verses (vv. 6-7) concern the total dismantling of the images of the gods. Contrary to the established views of their devotees, these images do not reflect the primal relation between heavenly prototype and earthly type; rather, they are the product of human artistry. The basis for such an image of a god, therefore, does not lie in the heavenly spheres but in donations of gold and silver and the skill of a craftsman. The craftsman's work is completed after he has mustered all his skills and finally set his workmanship securely in its place. Yet by doing this he makes his image immovable! It remains a normal object before, during and as well as after its fabrication. Even when put to ritual use, it does not answer when one cries to it, it cannot save when one is in need (v. 7). Whereas the cultic image does not save (*yš*ʿ) (cf. 47.13, 15), Yhwh is the saviour of all who put their trust in him (43.3, 11, 12; 45.8, 15, 17, 20-22).

The fourth strophe begins with a twofold imperative. The 'remember' in v. 8 refers back to the uselessness of the worship of cultic images, whereas the 'remember' in v. 9 looks ahead to Yhwh's control of history. With the calling of Cyrus the contrast between Yhwh and the cultic images of the nations has become completely visible. Whereas the latter cannot even be moved from their pedestal, Yhwh calls the bird of prey from the East, the man from a foreign land who will steer history as Yhwh wills (v. 11). The 'rebels' (*pôšᵉʿîm*) (cf. 1.28; 66.24) who should take this to heart are those within Jacob/Israel who feel drawn to the images of the deities of the nations and for this reason have become as blind as the idol makers themselves (cf. 44.19).

According to the exact wording there appears to be a contradiction between the call to remember the former things (*zkr*) in v. 9 and the imperative in 43.18. Yet whereas the prohibition emphasizes discontinuity and thereby creates space for the new, the command to remember refers to the continuity within the divine historical plan. Regardless of how far back the people of God goes in its history with Yhwh, it will not meet anyone other than the one who says of himself, 'I am God, and there is no other; deity, and there is no one like me' (v. 9). This claim about God's own identity sums up the previous formulations of uniqueness and incomparability (cf. 43.12; 45.5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22).

Similar to v. 3 in the second strophe, v. 12 in the fifth starts with a plural imperative to listen. This time, however, the imperative is directed to the appellation 'mighty of heart' (*'abbîrê lēḇ*), those who are far from righteousness, rather than the house of Jacob. The parallel colon makes clear that this unique designation is to be understood negatively (cf. Ezek. 2.4: 'hard of heart'), in contrast to the epithet of Yhwh as 'the Mighty One of Jacob' (cf. Gen. 49.24; Isa. 1.24 [Mighty One of Israel]; 49.26; 60.16; Ps. 132.2, 5). It is possible that the 'mighty of heart' designates those who, in the face of the exile—especially now after 539 BCE—do not believe that Yhwh is responsible for the change in events, those who only trust in what their eyes can see, namely the reinstatement of the cult of Marduk by Cyrus, the liberator of Babylon! The final verse (v. 13) reacts to this scepticism by emphasizing that Yhwh has brought his righteousness a step closer; it is not far off, and as for his deliverance, it will not tarry. This summarizes well the emotional state of the exile. Although Cyrus has brought about decisive events, as far as the people of God was concerned the most significant question remained unanswered: What does the future hold for Zion and for Israel? Yhwh responds to this scepticism as well with a promise: 'I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory' (v. 13).

The downfall of Babylon is sealed in chapter 47 as a contrast to the future of Zion. Astrology and fortune telling haven proven to be powerless compared to Yhwh's word. The arrogant metropolis must go down into the dust and see its plans go up in flames. The first strophe (vv. 1-4) begins with a series of new imperatives directed towards the city of Babylon, personified as a female ruler. In the end her shame is revealed to all (v. 3a). The event is applauded by a we-group, who confess: 'Our Redeeemer, Yhwh of Sebaoth is his name, the Holy One of Israel' (v. 4). The descent of the queen into the dust to work on the handmill with a pulled-up garment is a radical and irreversible fate. Work with handmills was a task for female slaves (Exod. 11.5), something dishonourable for men to do (Judg. 16.21; Lam. 5.13). The verb 'grind' (*ṭḥn*) can have sexual connotations (cf. Job 31.10; Lam. 5.13) which, given the increasing exposure, cannot be excluded here (cf. Lam. 1.8-9; Jer. 13.22; Ezek. 16.37, 57; Hos. 2.12; Nah. 3.5). The address 'young woman, daughter Babylon' (cf. Zion in 2 Kgs 19.21 = Isa. 37.22; Lam. 2.13) underlines her beauty and strength. If Marduk-Bel and Nebo have fallen (46.1-2), then Babylon too must leave her throne. The opposite applies to Zion as the bride of Yhwh. She will put on beautiful garments (52.1) when Yhwh, the victorious king, returns to her (52.7).

The reason for the downfall is Yhwh, the one who takes vengeance (v. 3b). This is action is not an expression of blind rage but rather aims to restore a broken legal order. It is only when Yhwh intervenes in vengeance that Jerusalem, the maltreated women and city, can rise up from the dust; it is only

then that the post-exilic restoration may be successful (cf. Isa. 34.8; 35.4; 59.17; 61.2; 63.4).

Babylon will be fully deprived of power (vv. 5-7), she will no longer call herself 'mistress of the kingdoms', a reference to her former hubris. Only Yhwh may be said to be 'eternal' (Isa. 40.8, 28; 42.14; 44.7; 46.9, etc.). The 'I will be' (*'ehyeh*) in the mouth of Babylon is reminiscent of Yhwh's introduction of himself in Exod. 3.14. Is there greater hubris than the belief that one can never fall (v. 8)? As a result of this claim, Babylon is subjected to that which she sought to avoid: widowhood and childlessness. Yhwh's sovereignty is emphasized in Babylon's sudden affliction with destruction ('shoa', cf. Ps. 35.8), which carries their mantic efforts at self-preservation *ad absurdum* (cf. vv. 12-15). None of their diviners can save Babylon (v. 15), for only Yhwh is the saviour (cf. 43.4, 11; 45.15, 21; 49.26).

The first main section of the chapters 40–55 is concluded in Isaiah 48. In this chapter all the themes that have been treated so far (election of Jacob, Yhwh's control of history, the rise of Cyrus, the downfall of Babylon and her cult) are bundled together. A tone of rejoicing, however, is unexpectedly lacking in this résumé. Instead, there is an unmistakably critical tone directed towards Jacob, the addressee of the chapter (cf. 42.18-25; 43.22-28). Isaiah 48's strongly reflective character is underscored by its host of intertextual references (e.g. profanation of the name, Ezek. 20.9, 14, 22; purification of Jacob, Jer. 6.27-30; obstinacy, Deut. 9.6, 13; 31.27; missed opportunity for a radiant future, Pss. 81.13-16; 95.7). The whole chapter is pervaded by the theme 'hear/let hear' (vv. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20). The addressees are those within the house of Jacob who have committed themselves to the people of God and to Yhwh, yet not in truth and justice (v. 1; cf. 46.12). The process of purification will eliminate them (cf. v. 10) so that only a cleansed remnant will be left over to start the journey home—in contrast to those who are content to merely pay lip service to Yhwh and his holy city. Following the downfall of the foreign gods, Yhwh's proof from prophecy in vv. 3-5 is no longer addressed to them but to the obstinate people of God. The reference to the iron sinew of their neck within the context of their obstinacy evokes Jacob's identically termed sciatic nerve which was damaged while wrestling with God at the Jabbok (Gen. 32.33; this is the context where Jacob received the name Israel). The hearing of the word of God should lead to its being made heard (Isa. 48.6). The switch from the singular 'you (sing.) have heard' to the plural 'and you (pl.), will you not declare it?' shows once again that the issue is the individual decision of those who belong to Jacob/Israel (cf. 43.10). The evidence of fulfilled prophecies ought to give the addressees the certainty that the new things that have begun to be created will be consummated as well (cf. 42.9; 43.8-13; 44.6-8). The rise of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon do not belong to these new things for they already lie in the past (cf. Isaiah 45–47). The

new things refer to Jacob/Israel, who is to appear before the world as a witness to Yhwh. Only those who are willing to participate will be able to sing the new song, for they belong to that which is new (42.9-10). This absolutely new thing is announced by use of the niphal of *br'* ('create') (cf. Exod. 34.10; Ps. 102.19). Yhwh did not mention it earlier so that Jacob, who has been rebellious since his youth, would not be able to say that he already knew about it (v. 8). The Jacob typology is of decisive significance for Isaiah 40–48 (cf. 43.22-28; 48.), for the people of God has not only inherited its name from this patriarch ('Contender with God'), it has also inherited his contentious character. Through the process of smelting in the furnace of affliction (cf. Deut. 4.20) Yhwh has chosen for himself a purified people and for this reason alone has he restrained his wrath from fully destroying them (Isa. 48.9-10; cf. Exod. 32.7-14; Num. 14.10-19; Ezek. 20.6-9). Yhwh follows his harsh comment about Jacob's being 'rebellious from the womb' with an effort to solicit Jacob/Israel as his chosen one (cf. 41.9; 42.6; 43.1). God remains faithful to his people as the one who is the first and the last. He pleads for their acceptance (48.12-13) of his intervention through Cyrus ('Yhwh-loves-him'), the one who is to execute the divine will against Babylon. If the nation *in toto* had obeyed Yhwh, it would have experienced a greater abundance of peace, righteousness, and offspring than is currently the case (48.18-19). The responsibility for the reduction of the bounty of salvation lies with Jacob/Israel, not Yhwh. Chapters 40–48 conclude with a call to those who listen and render witness to depart from Babylon. In contrast to the exodus from Egypt, the departure from Babylon has global consequences. Whoever sets off on the road from Babylon to Zion will encounter the God of the Exodus, the one who provides water from the rock (v. 21) (cf. Exod. 17; Num. 20; Ps. 105). In this departure, however, there is not a word about murmuring!

The final verse—'no peace for the wicked' (v. 22)—has been inserted from Isa. 57.21 and underscores the problem faced by the people of God in the post-exilic period: the insufficient implementation of justice and righteousness. We thus already see the division of the people of God into servants (as of 54.17) and adversaries (esp. 65–66).

6. *Act VI: Chaps. 49–55. The Servant and the Restoration of Zion/Jerusalem*

Isaiah 40–48 was primarily concerned with the development of a blind and deaf Jacob/Israel into a seeing and hearing servant capable of rendering witness to the uniqueness of Yhwh. Isaiah 49–55 is primarily concerned with how, following the end of the exile, this servant may do justice to his prophetic calling to become a covenant for the people (of God) and a light to the nations (Isa. 42.6). Will he succeed in letting the covenantal promise that was originally made to the whole people of God become such a reality

in relation to himself that he will eventually become a light to the nations? Despite Jacob's release from Babylon (48.20) (perf. *g'l*), the glorification of Israel has still not come about (impf. *yitpā'ār*) (49.3; cf. 33.23; 46.13). For this to happen, the servant is required. Despite the resistance he will receive, he must not shy from his mission of being a keen-edged sword and sharp arrow in the quiver of Yhwh. As resistance to his message grows, the interpretive category of prophetic repudiation steps more clearly into the foreground (cf. Isa. 50.4ff.; 52.13ff.). In the end, Yhwh's glorification succeeds. In 55.5 it is considered to be completed: Yhwh has glorified (perf.) himself within Israel.

6.1. *Isaiah 49: The Mission of the Servant and the Scepticism of Zion*

This chapter clearly divides into two parts. The first part consists of the second Song of the servant (vv. 1-6), complete with its additions (vv. 7-12) and hymnic responsory (v. 13). This is followed by the scepticism of Zion (vv. 14-26), who has still not at all been persuaded that things will change for the better. The verb 'say' (*'mr*) (49.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 20, 21, 22, 25) underscores the style of address and reply that is found in this chapter. The promise of the universal knowledge of God in which all will recognize that Yhwh is the saviour and redeemer of Zion constitutes the conclusion (v. 26). It is noteworthy that the epithet 'Mighty One of Jacob' occurs in this final position, for 'Jacob'—an indispensible term in Isaiah 40–48—does not appear again until 58.1.[13] At the same time there is a parallel in 48.20, where 'servant Jacob' also stands in a concluding position in a context concerned with Yhwh's salvific activity. Altogether, in chap. 49 the servant Jacob presents himself to Zion as one who is ready to depart and indeed already departed. In a certain sense he becomes blended with her. When she takes up his message of joy, she will become the messenger of joy to the cities of Judah and a light to the nations.

In the first servant Song Yhwh had introduced his servant by means of the double mission of being a covenant to the nation and a light to the peoples (42.1-9). In the second Song the servant himself makes reference to this calling (49.1-9), this time before the entire world (v. 1). Those who present themselves as the servant who has been called from the womb are the Golah. Immediately following the command to depart in 48.20 they are portrayed as ready to leave Babylon and witness to God's salvific power for the whole world. This servant is equipped with the word of God, as are all true prophets. The designation of the servant as 'Israel' in v. 3 was inserted later in order to create a parallel with 48.20, where we are told that Yhwh has saved his servant Jacob (cf. *inter alia* the parallels Jacob/Israel in v. 5). The servant's confession that he has already fully exhausted himself in carrying out

13. 'Israel' appears again in Isa. 52.12; 54.5; 55.5.

his mission of bringing the entire nation of Jacob/Israel back to Yhwh (vv. 4-5) is an expression of the resignation that was felt because only a small part of the exiled and scattered nation had responded to the call to return home to Zion/Jerusalem. The servant is not disillusioned, however, for he knows that Yhwh alone is his honour and strength. The experience of the threat of failure is part of the prophetic mission (cf. Moses, Num. 11.14-15; Elijah, 1 Kgs 19.4ff.; Isaiah, Isa. 8.16-18; Jeremiah, Jer. 15.10ff.; 20.7ff.). The servant's reward for all his efforts is not the easing of his mission but its expansion. As a light to the nations he is to make the salvation of Yhwh visible to all the ends of the earth (v. 6; cf. 42.6). Success can only occur if and to the extent that as many members of the people of God as possible set out on the journey back to Jerusalem. In this manner the servant becomes the mediator of the covenant, the covenant of the people (*liḇrîṯ ʿām*), in order to establish the land and apportion devastated inheritances (49.8). If a Mosaic motif plays a role in the literary recourse to the wilderness wanderings (cf. 48.21; 49.10-11; Exod. 17.1ff.) then the theme of the distribution of the land shifts the servant into the sphere of Joshua (cf. Josh. 13).

The reason why Isa. 49.12 only mentions returnees from the North, West, and South (Syene) but not the East is that this part of the Golah had already returned. Zion must be convinced by Yhwh during the period when the returnees are on the way home that the time for her childlessness is coming to an end. She will soon have more children than she could ever have imagined (49.14-26). Yhwh himself is the one who takes care of Zion, just as earlier he was the one who took care of the servant in Babylon. The worldwide rejoicing because Yhwh has comforted his people (perf.) and shows mercy on his poor ones (impf.) (49.13) counteracts Zion's despair that Yhwh has abandoned and forgotten her (49.14). Jacob/Israel had made the similar complaint that his right had been disregarded by God (40.27). Zion will not let herself be comforted, for her pain over her loss is too deep. In response, Yhwh appeals to her as a mother (vv. 14-15) with the characteristic of 'mercy' (cf. *reḥem*, 'womb'). The root for 'to have mercy' (*rḥm*) is thus a key word in this chapter (49.10, 13, 15; 51.3; 52.9; 54.8, 10; 55.7; 60.10). Yhwh presents himself as a motherly God who, like a woman in childbirth, discharges new life (42.13-14), who bears his children from birth onwards (46.3-4), and who does not forget his nursing child (49.14-15).[14] The blessing of children that Zion can expect stands in contrast to the childlessness that effects Babylon (47.8-9). The banner (*nēs*) that Yhwh had once set up for the Assyrian troops to attack Jerusalem (5.26) becomes a banner for the nations to bring Zion's children home from the foreign lands (49.22). Whereas it was once Assyria who was the mighty one from whom no one could wrest his plunder, now it is Yhwh who is the truly

14. See Løland, *Silent or Salient Gender?*

mighty one out of whose hand no one can remove the returning children of Zion (49.24-25). These references suggest that the builders who are quickly approaching to rebuild Jerusalem are also to be understood as a contrastive image to Isa. 5.26, where the conquerors flew at God's behest towards Jerusalem in order to destroy it. The atrocities committed by that Assyrians that had once driven the besieged to become cannibals (cf. Isa. 36.12) now occur to their former oppressors. Now they shall eat their own flesh and drink their own blood as freshly pressed, unfermented wine (49.26).

6.2. *Isa. 50.1–51.8: The Servant and the Doubt of the Children of Zion*

The previous section was concerned with Zion's disappointment for having been abandoned by her husband, Yhwh. This section is concerned with the doubt of her scattered children. This new unit is marked by the change in addressee ('your [pl.] mother') (v. 1) and it continues until the beginning of a poem in 51.9 that is constituted by imperatives. Yhwh once again responds to objections ('thus says Yhwh') (v. 1), though this is the only example in this passage of the verb 'say/speak' (*'mr*) that has otherwise been so prominent so far. Listening (*šāmaʿ*) rather than speaking is the central theme here (50.4, 10; 51.1, 7). Yhwh takes exception to the children of Zion's accusation that the events of the exile have proven that he has separated himself from their mother. Yhwh counters this by saying that their accusation is unfounded since there is no certificate of divorce that he could have written. According to the Mosaic Torah, a man is forbidden to take back his divorced wife after she has become the wife of someone else (Deut. 24.1-4; cf. Jer. 3.1). None of this is relevant to Yhwh and Zion: There is no certificate of divorce and the fact that Zion's children have been scattered is not her fault but theirs. They are currently in the Diaspora because of their own offenses and evil deeds (50.1). Even the argument that Yhwh has proved himself to be too weak to end the dispersion is not valid, for he has already called them to return, but no one has answered (50.2)!

The third servant Song (50.4-9) has the genre of a psalm of trust followed by commentary (50.10-11). The fact that a collective identity rather than an individual stands behind this figure is made clear by the twofold talk of *limmûḏîm*, 'disciples/students' (v. 4). Just as Isaiah and his disciples had waited in hope for the revelation of the punishment of God (8.16-18) so that the announcement of judgement would be shown to be correct, so does the congregation of the servant hope for the immanent revelation of salvation. The result is that their prophetic word concerning the end of their travail and the reconstruction would prove to be true, despite all the sceptics and adversaries. The fear of Yhwh is made manifest in obedience to the voice of the servant, who turns to those who wait for God in the darkness. The adversaries, however, will be exterminated by firebrands taken from the fire they themselves have kindled (50.10-11). Those who perish in

the light (*ʾûr*) of their fire bolts are a counter-image of the servant, who is a light (*ʾôr*) to the nations (42.6; 49.6; 51.4). The more the children of Zion set out on the homeward path from out of the darkness of the nations among whom they have been scattered, the brighter his light will shine! The story of Abraham and Sarah should be enough to convince the addressees that the limited number of returnees is no grounds for scepticism, for Yhwh had blessed even this couple and made them numerous (51.1-3).

Yhwh's call to 'his people' (*ʿammî*) and 'his nation' (*lᵉʾûmmî*) in 51.4 to hearken to his voice indicates that the addressees are to be found in the Diaspora, for *lᵉʾôm* otherwise always refers to foreign nations (e.g. Isa. 34.1; 41.1; 43.4, 9; 49.1; 60.2). God's righteousness (*ṣeḏeq*) and salvation (*yēšaʿ*) will not tarry, torah and law (*mišpāṭ*) will go out of him in order to teach the nations (50.4-6). The nation that bears the torah in its heart does not need to fear insults and abuse, for just as moths consume clothing so will its enemies disappear without a trace. Just as the addressees share the fate of the servant, they also share Yhwh's promise that their adversaries will come to their end, as if devoured by moths (cf. 50.9; 51.7-8).

6.3. *Isa. 51.9–52.12: The Wake-Up Call and Yhwh's Victorious Homecoming*

The unusual sequence of wake-up calls directed to Yhwh (51.9) and Jerusalem/Zion (51.17; 52.1) confirm that this imperative-filled poem is a compositional unity, one that is concluded by the staging of the victorious arrival of God (52.7-12). The wake-up call directed towards his arm is a response to God's promise that his righteousness would not tarry, for it is his arm that had judged nations and for which the islands had waited (51.5). The arm of the Lord should clothe itself with strength (51.9), in contrast to the clothing of the adversaries, which has been eaten away by moths. Yhwh directs the same appeal to Zion in 52.1, when he calls her to clothe herself in strength and put on her beautiful garments. In the end we have the declarative statement that Yhwh has revealed his arm before the eyes of the nations, i.e. he has become globally visible through the construction of Jerusalem and the comforting of his people (52.10). The beginning of the fourth servant Song picks up this image when it asks, 'Over whom has the arm of Yhwh been manifested'? (53.1; cf. 40.10).

The wake-up call to the arm of God in 51.9-11 alludes to the mythological conception of Yhwh as the primeval conqueror of Rahab the chaos monster (cf. 30.7; Pss. 74.13ff.; 89.11). The battle against chaos, the Exodus, and the miracle at the Reed Sea all enter into the sphere of influence of Zion theology. Those who set out for home will experience Yhwh as their own Exodus-God (cf. 35.10; 43.16; 48.21). The joy that this brings will be eternal (51.11). Yet in contrast to the victory song of Moses, the destination is not the sanctuary ([in Jerusalem]; Exod. 15.13, 17), but Zion as the paradisiacal garden of joy and righteousness (cf. Isa. 51.3).

Yhwh answers the complaint of those who pressurize him with their appeal that he should act (51.9-11) by giving an oracle of salvation. The double imperative in 51.9, 17; 52.1 is taken up by Yhwh in a twofold 'I' that emphasizes that he is not a passive deity but one 'who comforts you' (v. 12) (cf. 40.1; 49.13; 52.9). The 'you' refers to the 'liberated of Yhwh' (51.11) who are returning home with rejoicing. The application of the singular feminine 'you' in v. 12b to the group of returnees (whether actual or willing) can only be a reference to Zion, who should not fear the resistance she will experience. The feminine address switches to a masculine 'you'. Yhwh grants this group of returnees prophetic dignity by laying his words in their mouths (v. 16). The charisma of the servant Jacob/Israel in Babylon is passed on to those within Zion who have followed his call. In 59.21 this prophetic capacity is transferred to the descendants of the returnees. As such, they claim to be the Moses of their time (cf. Deut. 18.18). In a period in which the Torah of Moses was receiving its form, this claim was surely not left uncontested.

The 'poem of imperatives' comes to an end with Yhwh's call to Zion to wake up (52.1); the inclusio with the opening wake-up call addressed to God in 51.9 is unmistakable. The promise that neither the uncircumcised nor the impure will enter Jerusalem is not a criticism of the expectation of a pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (2.2ff.) but rather an expression of the hope that the period of foreign domination by non-circumcised nations such as Assyria and Babylon will be over once and for all. The purpose of the repatriation of the children out of the dispersion is to know and to make know that Yhwh is the one who is present in Zion, who says of himself, 'I am there' (v. 6).

The renewed salvific presence of Yhwh in Zion is brought onto the scene at the end of the poem by means of the announcement of his victorious return to Jerusalem (52.7-12). The return from Babylon and the Diaspora is visible evidence for the power of God. The returnees are the heralds of good news (*m*^{e}*baśśēr*) who say to Zion, 'Your God is king' (v. 7). Yhwh's call to the ruins of Jerusalem to rejoice (cf. 49.19; 51.3) because he has comforted his people and redeemed Jerusalem is another piece of evidence that the restoration has only just begun, it is far from being complete. Those who have already returned to Zion summon those who have stayed behind to leave the places of dispersion ('from there') (52.11) and so to follow their example (48.20). Only then will all the ends of the earth see the 'salvation of our God' (52.10b). In contrast to those once liberated from Egypt who loaded themselves with valuable equipment (Exod. 12.35), the returnees from among the nations should not touch anything impure (cf. Lam. 4.15), for they are entering the Holy City (cf. 52.1). They should separate themselves from the impurity of the nations and keep themselves pure, as if they were bearing the vessels of Yhwh (cf. Num. 3.8; 2 Kgs 23.4). The former

flight from Egypt (Exod. 12.11; Deut. 16.3) is contrasted to a departure without haste. Whereas in those days Yhwh only went before his people (Exod. 13.21; Num. 10.33; Deut. 1.30), now he is simultaneously the rear *and* the vanguard (v. 12).

6.4. *Isa. 52.13–53.12: The Unexpected Success of the Servant*

Yhwh's servant was introduced in the first servant Song (42.1ff.). In the second (49.1ff.) and third (50.1ff.) the servant himself reflected upon his difficult task. Now, in the fourth song, God makes it clear that his mission will be crowned with the greatest success, despite all opposition.[15] The fourth servant Song can be divided into an outer frame (52.13-15; 53.11b-12), in which Yhwh speaks of 'my servant' (52.13; 53.11b), and a middle section (53.1-11a), in which a We-Group reports how its attitude towards this servant has been completely changed. The focus is upon their about-face and not the suffering of the servant. The We-Group's conversion involved going from total rejection to the recognition of his vicarious suffering (vv. 4-6) and is ultimately in agreement with what Yhwh had said about his servant, namely that he would rise and be highly exalted (*yārûm wᵉniśśāʾ*) (52.13). This points to the exalted position of Yhwh that Isaiah had seen in the Jerusalem temple (*rām wᵉniśśāʾ*) (6.1). The elevation of the Servant brings him into the sphere of the divine throne which, in this context, also creates an allusion to the elevation of Zion to the status of royal bride. The connections with Isaiah 6 are manifold: The kings of the nations shut their mouths in the face of the unexpected exaltation of the servant, whereas Isaiah's lips were opened (6.6-8); the 'We' confess that the servant has been crushed because of their offenses (53.5), whereas in 6.7 Isaiah's sins were taken away; while the purpose of the hardening of hearts was that the nation should not convert and be saved (6.10), this group confesses: 'by his wounds we are healed' (53.5). Whoever speaks thus has had the hardening of their heart removed and belongs to the disciples of the prophet and the servant. Just as an offshoot remains after the felling of the oak and the terebinth, which is then called the 'holy seed' (*zeraʿ qôḏeš*) (6.13), so will the servant see his 'offspring (*zeraʿ*) (53.10) after his beatings and illness. As of 54.17, this seed are called 'servants'.

Healing presupposes illness (*ḥᵒlî*). This leads us from the divinely caused illness of the servant (53.3, 4, 10) to the similarly divinely caused illness of the nation (Isa. 1.5; otherwise only in 38.9). The word for 'welts' (*ḥabbûrâ*) appears elsewhere in the book of Isaiah only in 1.6 and 53.5; it otherwise occurs in the context of the *lex talionis* (Exod. 21.25; cf. Gen 4.23). The fate of the servant and the destiny of the divinely punished nation are set in

15. For a detailed analysis of Isaiah 53 and the history of its interpretation see Janowski/Stuhlmacher (eds.), *Der leidende Gottesknecht*.

parallel. The body of the nation in Isa. 1.5-6 is peppered with boils, welts, and wounds accrued from the blows of Yhwh. The servant is similarly disfigured so that he no longer looks like a human being (53.2-3). Whereas the nation in Isaiah 1 was punished for its transgressions, the servant innocently bears the sins of the We-Group. In 1.3 the nation had no knowledge, in 53.11 the servant is sated with knowledge. These connections between Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 1 clarify the identity of those who commit themselves to the suffering servant. They are those who, in contrast to their earlier opinion, see in the returnees from Babylon and the Diaspora the one who has been smitten by God, who has vicariously borne their sins.[16] The confession of the 'We' refers to the integration of those from the exile and dispersion who have found their way home and who had at first been discredited as those who have been smitten by God.[17] Ezekiel 11.14ff. and 33.23ff. (*inter alia*) provides evidence for the existence of economic and ideological disputes between the offspring of the Golah who had returned and those who had not been deported. We hear, for example, in a word of God spoken through Ezekiel (himself belonging to the first wave of deportees to Babylon in 597 BCE): 'You, human, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel say, "Abraham was only one man (*'eḥād*), and he owned the land. And we are many (*rabbîm*)—the land has surely been given us to possess"' (Ezek. 33.24). When one looks at Isa. 51.2 it becomes clear how the dispute over the right to home soil was at the same time a debate about 'Abraham'. One sees the interpretive significance of the foundational period of the people of God. The fourth servant Song, however, is not geared towards confrontation. Hope bursts forth that the descendants of the returnees and those who have remained at home will become a *single* Zion community that awaits the new salvific era as one.

The We-Group cannot be identified with the 'many nations' (*gôyim rabbîm*) and their kings. This can be seen, on the one hand, in that the latter have shut their mouths in amazement (52.15); on the other hand, they cannot say that they have suffered misfortune 'because of the sin of my people' (53.8). The nations and their kings are the worldwide audience that marvels at this inner development within the people of God in the course of the post-exilic restoration.

The 'We' belong to the people of God and are a sub-set of the 'many' (*rabbîm*) (52.14; 53.11, 12). According to Old Testament linguistic usage this expression means the whole people, as is the case, for example, in the songs of complaint and thanksgiving in the Psalter (Pss 3.2-3; 31.12-14; 40.4; 71.7; 109.30). In these texts the psalmist has been liberated by God from his distress and reintegrated into the community of the 'many'. This

16. Cf. Kustár, *Krankheit und Heilung*, pp. 193, 224.
17. This is the main thesis of Hägglund, *Isaiah 53.*

is precisely what happens at the end of the outer frame in Isa. 53.11b-12, whereby the distinctiveness of this reintegration has been preserved by the reference to exaltation in 52.13. The 'We' have heard the message and seen the one who has been smitten by God (53.1-2), thereby finally coming to the realization that he had borne, like a silent lamb, their punishment. This is in contrast to the many nations, to whom nothing has been proclaimed and who only come to their senses when they see the rehabilitation of Zion (52.15). At the beginning of their confession they do not ask who has believed what *they* have proclaimed, but rather who has believed what has been proclaimed *to them* (53.1). They were not the heralds; rather, they were the unbelieving hearers of the message of those who proclaimed to Zion, 'Your God is King' (52.7). In other words, who had believed these groups of powerless, property-less returnees, those who were greatly despised, the servant of rulers (49.7), that the arm of God had been revealed (*ʿal-mî niglāṯâ*) (53.1) over them? Is this the way in which Yhwh's glory should be revealed to all flesh (*wᵉniglâ*) (40.5)? The 'We' have experience a total reorientation. They have recognized that the one who had let them hear of peace (52.7) bore the 'punishment for our peace' (53.5).

Within the framework of the book as a whole the reference to the many who were horrified by the servant of God (52.14) creates a link back to the 'many' in 8.15, those who have failed in the light of Yhwh's holiness, in contrast to Isaiah and his disciples (8.16-18). By means of the transformation of opinion resulting in the recognition of the servant as an instrument of Yhwh's salvation, the 'We' also become disciples of the prophet. In this manner they have overcome the hardening of their heart and have come to true sight and hearing! The connection is strengthened by the fact that the formulation concerning the 'many' who were 'horrified' harks back to the same verb *šmm* as the speech concerning the end of the hardening in 6.11: 'until the cities are desolate' (cf. 1.7; 49.8). Those out of Israel as a whole, i.e. the 'many', who manage to re-evaluate the returnees, belong to the 'We', i.e. to the offspring of the servant and lady Zion, the 'devastated' one (*šmm*), whose children are more numerous (*rabbîm*) than the ones of those who are married (54.1). Potentially, any one of the 'many' can belong to the confessing 'We' as long as they acknowledge the vicarious suffering. What, however, is the reason for the 'We's' change regarding the servant? The reclassification is the result of Yhwh's faithful commitment to his servant. 'The "We"-Group can only grasp the vicarious function of the suffering of the Ebed in the light of the revelation of God's faithfulness to his servant, not because of their own insight'.[18]

Something else is worth considering. The figure of the suffering servant and the figure of the suffering Lady Zion are tightly entwined with

18. Otto, *Krieg*, p. 136 n. 229.

one another, as can already be seen by the fact that Isaiah 53 is positioned between two chapters dealing with Zion (52 and 54). The confessing 'We', who from 54.17 onwards are called 'servants', are the descendants of the servant and Zion. The more numerous they become, the more numerous (*rabbîm*) are the children of the desolated Lady Zion, who 'was not in labour' (*lō'-ḥālâ*) (54.1). Despite the different root there is a possible intentional reference to the 'illness' (*ḥ°lî*) of the servant (53.3, 4, 10). The servant's exultation to the highest height after having received beatings and insults will also occur to the deeply humiliated Zion, who is a royal bride. When that happens, the kings of the nations will shut their mouths and see that which they have not been told and understand that which they have not heard (52.15). 'That which has never been told or heard in the whole world will be revealed. Servant Zion, who has been disfigured by beatings, will arise like a king, high and exalted.'[19]

6.5. *Isaiah 54–55: The Restoration and Future of Zion/Jerusalem*

The central theme of this final subsection in Isaiah 40–55 is the restoration of Zion. The outcast and childless city is presented as the bride of Yhwh and mother of many children. This is the means by which the promise of descendants and a future for the servant (53.10) is fulfilled. This vision stands in such contrast to all human prevision that it is specifically undergirded by a reference to the power of the divine word to accomplish what God purposes (55.10-11).

In Isaiah 54 Zion/Jerusalem is addressed by Yhwh as a woman who is infertile yet who will nevertheless burst into joy because of her abundant children (cf. 52.9-10; 55.12). The motif of the 'infertile mother' runs through the period of the patriarchs (Sarah in Gen. 11.30; Rebecca in 25.21; Rachel in 29.31). Just as with the matriarchs in the past, Yhwh proves himself once again to be the founder—against all expectations—of a future full of blessings. The choice of words in 54.1 and the further mention of Sarah outside of the Pentateuch (Isa. 52.1) demonstrate a particular closeness to the matriarch. Zion is like Sarah, yet at the same time greater, for her husband is not Abraham but Yhwh himself. Yhwh's promise that Zion's children would inherit the descendants of the nations (54.3) surpasses his promises to Abraham (Gen. 22.17) and Rebecca (24.60) that their children would possess the gates of their enemies. An allusion is thereby also made to the tradition of the conquest of the land (e.g. Num. 33.52; Deut. 4.28; 9.1; 11.23; 12.2, 29), a theme which is continued in Isa. 61.7. Here, Zion's inhabitants are promised that they will possess a double portion (*ḥēleq*) of the land in recompense for the double portion of shame that they have suffered. This also represents a concretization of the promise to the servant

19. Otto, *Krieg*, p. 135.

that he would have his portion (*ḥēleq*) with the many, i.e. acquire possession along with the rest of Israel.

In Isa. 54.5 Zion is encouraged by means of an oracle of salvation to accept the promise and to forget her disgrace, for Yhwh Sebaoth, the Holy One of Israel and the God of the whole world, is demonstrating anew that he is her provider, her husband. Although he had abandoned her for a short while, he will gather her again with great mercy. The keyword 'gather' (54.7) is very significant here, for without an ingathering of the dispersed there can be no restoration of Zion. Yhwh now swears an oath to Zion that he will never be angry with her again (54.9-10), just as he once made a covenantal oath following the Great Flood, that he would never again destroy the earth (Gen. 9.16). Having made recourse to the patriarchs, the oracle digs even further back in history in order to strengthen faith in God's trustworthiness.

Behind the precious stones with which Yhwh will rebuild the miserable, storm-tossed, and not-comforted city (54.11; cf. Lam. 4.1-2) are the children who are 'Yhwh's disciples (*limmûḏē yhwh*) (54.13). This designation places them in continuity with the disciples of Isaiah (8.16) and those of the servant (50.4). The promise of great peace to the disciples of Yhwh (54.14b) is to be connected with the 'covenant of my peace' (54.10) that applies to Zion. This community of disciples is provided with the same secure divine protection that has been guaranteed to Zion. Yhwh is able to hinder the enemy's destructive weapons (54.16; cf. 45.7) from causing destruction once again because he is the one who created them. As the sole originator of destruction Yhwh is also the only guarantee of salvation. The promise that Yhwh will take care of Zion's security is the inheritance of the servant (54.17; cf. 49.8; 58.14). Just as the Levites did not receive a portion of the land in order to live entirely from their service to Yhwh (e.g. Num. 18.20ff.; Deut. 12.12; 14.27), so should the servants—a group that will play a significant role in the final chapters of the book of Isaiah (65.8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66.14)—be able to depend entirely upon the protection of God.

The divine assurance to Zion and the servants in chap. 54 is followed in Isaiah 55 by a summons to become a part of this community of Yhwh's disciples. The call '*hôy*' that otherwise introduces woe-oracles (e.g. Isa. 5.8, 11, 18, 20; 10.1, 5; 45.9-10) has here the meaning of 'up!' (cf. Zech. 2.10-11 [ET 2.6-7]). At the same time, this call indicates the decision that is set before the addressees: Either they join the community or they block themselves off from it. It is only with the servants that Yhwh makes his 'eternal covenant' according to his steadfast assurances of mercy to David (55.3). In contrast to Ezek. 34.23ff. this assurance does not apply to a '*David redivivus*' as the servant of Yhwh, but rather the group of the servants. There is therefore not a dynastic continuation of the David tradition but rather its reapplication to the servants. They are the bearers of the Davidic promises (cf. Ps. 89.38, 50). They are the ones who Yhwh has raised to be 'witnesses to the nations',

a leader and commander for the peoples (Isa. 55.4). This is not a reference to political rule; Yhwh, the king of the world had transferred this to Cyrus, his anointed one and shepherd (44.28; 45.1). It refers to to their role in bringing people from among the nations to Yhwh, who glorifies himself in Zion (55.5). This office of being witnesses to the peoples is the continuation of the servant's mission to be a light to the nations (42.6; 49.6). At the same time, the function of being a witness that initially accrued to that part of the Golah that was willing to return home (43.10, 12; 44.8) is now applied to all those who join the community of the servant in Zion.

The invitation to all those who thirst to turn to the spring of water (cf. Isa. 23.3; Pss. 46.5; 65.10; 87.7; Ezek. 47; Joel 4.18; Zech. 14.8) is a reference to the gift of Torah (Ps. 1) that nourishes people (compare Isa. 55.2b with Deut. 8.3). This hoped for turning of individuals from the nations will initiate the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (Isa. 2.2-4).[20] In its capacity as witness, leader, and commander, the community of the servant challenges its addressees to abandon the paths of wickedness and turn to the God of forgiveness (55.7-9; cf. Jer. 29.11; 31.34).

In accordance with the theology of the word in 40.6-8, chapters 40–55 end with the secure hope in the life-giving power of the divine word, one which again and again brings forth life and offspring (55.10). When people turn away from evil and towards Yhwh (55.7), it is like the transformation of thorns and thistles to juniper and myrtle, which is equivalent to Zion as the garden of paradise (51.3). This will be for Yhwh's glory and an everlasting sign that will not be cut off (55.13; cf. Gen. 9.11-12).

7. *Act VII: Chaps. 56–66. The Division of the Community into the Wicked and the Righteous*

In contrast to chapters 1–39 and 40–55, the final major section of the book of Isaiah (chaps 56–66) has a concentric structure. In the centre is the announcement of salvation for Zion/Jerusalem (60–62). Three successive frames are concerned (a) with the admittance of proselytes and eunuchs and the mission to the nations (56.1-8; 66.18-24), (b) with words of complaint that lead to a distinction between the wicked and the righteous (56.9–58.14; 65.1–66.17), and (c) communal complaints that deal with the non-arrival of salvation (59; 63.1–64.11). The admittance of foreigners (56.1-8) and the complaints against Israel's own people (56.9–58.14) are placed before the proclamation of the divine light that will appear over Jerusalem/Zion (Isaiah 60–62). There are two reasons for this: First, this salvific event is open to people from all nations; second, the wicked within the people of God must first convert before the light can come.

20. On this subject, see Haarmann, *JHWH-Verehrer der Völker*.

7.1. *Isa. 56.1-8: The Admittance of Foreigners and Eunuchs*

The central terms 'justice/righteousness' (*mišpāṭ/ṣᵉḏāqâ*) and 'salvation/righteousness' (*yᵉšûʿâ/ṣᵉḏāqâ*) are introduced right at the beginning (56.1). The first pair frequently appears in Isaiah 1–35 (e.g. 1.21, 27; 5.7, 16; 9.6), the second pair occurs frequently in Isaiah 40–55 (45.8; 46.13; 51.5, 6, 8). Both word pairs are combined at the beginning of the third major section, which indicates that the various sections of the Isaiah scroll are now being merged. The addressees are being called upon to behave in a manner appropriate to the fact that salvation is drawing near.

The question as to whether foreigners may be admitted to the community is answered in 56.2-8 with a clear 'yes'. The foreigner who has joined the covenant community must no longer fear that he or she will be removed from it; the eunuch should no longer say that he is a 'dry tree' (56.3). Both of them receive God's sure promise that he will give them a monument and a name (*yāḏ wāšēm*) within his house and his walls, one that is better than that of sons and daughters, an eternal name that will not be cut off (56.5). This is a clear interpretation of 55.12-13, for there the rejoicing trees and the transformation of dry wood into precious plants was an eternal sign for Yhwh that will not be cut off. Even the eunuch (*sārîs*) is a full member of the community and not a 'dry tree'. This can be seen as an abrogation of the Mosaic torah in which men with damaged genitalia are not allowed to become part of the community (Deut. 23.2; cf. Ezek. 44.7-8). According to Isa. 55.12-13, whoever does not agree with the admission of foreigners (cf. Ezra 9.1-4; Neh. 9.2) and Eunuchs rejects the eschatological symbol of the in-breaking age of salvation. The returnees's experience of foreigners has made them open to Yhwh-worshippers from all the nations. God himself will bring them to his holy mountain and happily accept their sacrifices and burnt offerings, for his house is a house of prayer for all nations (56.7; cf. 1 Kgs 8.41ff.; Zech. 14.20-21).

7.2. *Isa. 56.9–57.13: Complaints Against the Upper Classes and the Entire People*

In this speech of reproach the leaders (56.9-12) and the people (57.1-13) are accused of social and cultic offenses. The watchmen, i.e. the those who occupy the leading roles in post-exilic Israel, are reproached for being blind, nothing but silent dogs that neither warn their sheep nor protect them from predators. Their failure is in effect an invitation ('come'; 56.9, 12) to those who only seek their own advantage and who celebrate at the expense of others (cf. Isa. 5.11; 28.7). These accusations stand in stark contrast to the image of salvation in Isa. 55.1ff. where all those who thirst are invited to enjoy the best dishes on Zion free of charge.

Because of this miserable situation the righteous perish without anyone taking their fate to heart (57.1). Where the righteous are oppressed, God's righteousness cannot be revealed and his salvation will not appear (56.1). The

accusation is directed to the children of sorceress, the offspring of the adulteress. This can be a reference to no one else than sinful Lady Zion herself, who is directly addressed in 57.6-13. This is the only negative portrait of Zion in the whole book of Isaiah: Zion does not ascend a high mountain in order to proclaim Yhwh's advent (40.9) but to practice idolatry (57.7). Foreign cults were still strongly practiced in the post-exilic period (cf. Isa. 65.3-7, 11; 66.3; Ezek. 33.24ff.; Zech. 10.2; 13.2; Lev. 17.7; Job 31.26-27; Ps. 40.5) with the result that the cult in Zion was perverted. Whereas Yhwh had promised the eunuchs that they would have a better future than those of biological sons and daughters (56.5), the apostates bring the own children as sacrifices to their idols (57.5). Lady Zion is behaving like Lady Babylon, who had also not taken these negative things to heart (57.11; 47.7). The conclusion is clear: This form of perverted righteousness is of no use (57.12). Whereas Yhwh gathers the dispersed (56.8), Zion gathers her idols (literally: 'that which you have collected'; 57.13). When Zion puts her hopes in her idols, she is abandoned. Only the one who trusts in Yhwh will inherit the land and possess his holy mountain (57.13). The faithful among the people of God and the nations (56.7) will enjoy the right of residence upon the Mountain of God. The new criterion for in- and ex-clusion to membership of the people of God on Zion is not ethnicity but ethics, a lifestyle that accords with Yhwh's will.

The accusations are not intended to proclaim a new act of judgement; they are intended to exhort the wicked to convert. Those who are responsible should remove all obstacles (57.14; cf. 40.3; 62.10), which is an allusion to cultic and social wrongs. The solemn word of God in 57.15 that is oriented towards similar formulations in the book of Isaiah (6.1, 3; 9.5) emphasises, on the one hand, Yhwh's transcendence and, on the other hand, his nearness to those who are oppressed (cf. 53.5, 10). His exaltedness (2.11, 17; 12.4; 33.5; 52.13) does not imply his distance from the downtrodden; it is the ground for his salvific nearness (66.2). God's wrath, kindled by the grievous situation, will not cause a new catastrophe, for he remembers the creatureliness of humanity (57.16-17). The final word is not punishment but healing through comfort: 'I repay with comfort, them and their mourners' (57.18). The peace that results from this is valid for those who are far and those who are near, i.e. for those out of the nations as well as the people of God (57.19), but not the wicked (57.21). The ethnic divide has been replaced by an ethical one!

7.3. *Isaiah 58–59: True Fasting, Keeping the Sabbath, and a Collective Prayer of Repentance*

After Yhwh has declared his willingness to comfort and heal, Isaiah 58–59 is directed to those within Jacob who are ready to turn away from their sin. The eponym 'Jacob' has been placed at strategic points: at the beginning (v. 1) and the end (v. 14) of Isaiah 58 and at the conclusion of Isaiah 59

(v. 20). The concluding verse announces the goal of the entire unit: Yhwh is coming to Zion and to those who turn away from the crimes committed within Jacob.[21] Yhwh makes a covenant with them (plural) and puts his spirit on him (singular), his words into his mouth for ever (59.21). The authors are thereby referring to themselves as the ones who, by means of the prayer of repentance (59.9-14), have proven their willingness to convert. The phrase 'not depart' in the context of the covenant can only otherwise be found in 54.10, where it is directed towards Zion. The promise of a covenant is applicable only to those within Jacob who keep themselves distant from the sin practised in post-exilic Jerusalem and so are counted as the true children of Zion, the disciples of Yhwh.

Whereas the message of accusation in 57.3 was directed towards the children of the sorcerers, Isaiah 58 turns to those who claim to practice righteousness and to not have turned from justice (58.2). Because, in their opinion, they have already fulfilled the requirements of justice and righteousness (56.1), Yhwh should have appeared by now to save them. They feel justified before Yhwh, who has apparently not taken notice of their fasting and self-affliction (58.3a). The issue of fasting fits the post-exilic period. In this period ceremonies of lament with rites of self-mortification were held in memory of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple as well as to challenge Yhwh to intervene as quickly as possible (Lam.; Zech. 1ff.; 8.18-19; Neh. 9.1-2; Ezra 9.5). That which is here criticized is not fasting itself but rather a form of external self-affliction which totally ignores the social responsibilities owed to those who are subordinate and poor. Fasting should open upon the individual to the needs of others rather than close him off from it. Whoever fasts in this manner will find salvation, the light shall dawn upon him, his righteousness will go before him, and Yhwh's glory shall follow behind him. Now it is no longer a matter of a departure from the places of the dispersion (52.12) but rather the Exodus from one's own inner egotism, one which will be newly accompanied by the God of liberation ('rear guard'; 58.8). Here the dawning of the light (60.1; 62.1) is explicitly connected with the practice of righteousness. Jerusalem can only beam with light and be a light to the nations when justice and righteousness are lived out within her. In order for Zion to become the garden of God (51.3) it requires people who are like a watered garden, whose sources of water do not dry up (58.11; cf. Jer. 31.12). They are the ones who will re-establish the community that will not only repair the breaches in the walls but also the cracks in society (58.12).

The following section emphasis the nature of the Sabbath as a sanctification of God by means of the interruption of daily business. This

21. The only other place in the book of Isaiah where 'Zion' and 'Jacob' stand together in a single verse is Isa. 2.3!

underscores the social responsibility (58.13-14; Exod. 20.8ff.; Deut. 5.12ff.) that accrues to all who take part in cultic and social life (56.2, 6). Whoever distances himself from his business dealings on the Sabbath does not need to fear that he will thereby lag behind. God promises that such people will ride upon the heights of the earth and enjoy the inheritance of their father Jacob (58.14). This is also a reference to the description in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32.13) of the salvation that people of God had experienced before they 'became fat' and turned away from their rock. By keeping the Sabbath one is guaranteed the gifts of the hereditary land without needing to hunt them down through restless economic activity.

The prophetic speech of reproach in 59.1-8 is a response to the accusation that Yhwh cannot or does not want to save (v. 1; cf. 50.2). It does this by pointing out the sins of the addressees that have separated them from God. The direct address ('you', pl.) (vv. 2-3) is replaced by descriptive speech ('he/one', v. 4, or 'they', vv. 5-6). This is followed by a communal confession of sin (9-15a). This 'We' has also sinned, but they belong to those with Jacob who have converted (v. 20). In this manner they too change their attitude, just like the 'We' in the fourth servant Song (Isaiah 53). A similar switch in person takes place at the beginning of the book of Isaiah ('they', 1.4; 'you', 1.5-8; 'we', 1.9-10), but there are also other connections. The accusation that the hands of the addressees are stained with blood (59.3) picks up, on the one hand, the message of the prophet in 1.15; on the other hand it also stands behind the theme of the 'Sabbath' (and festivals) (58.13-14; 1.13-14). The phrase 'Yes, the mouth of Yhwh has spoken' is also only found in 58.14 and 1.20. The authors in this final part of the book thereby actualize Isaiah ben Amoz for their own post-exilic situation. They too set their addressees before the alternatives of 1.19-20, where listening is rewarded with the eating of the good gifts of the land, resistance, however, with the sword (cf. 'eating'; 58.14). Yhwh had in the past intervened in punishment; now he is preparing himself anew for battle (59.15b-20). For the community of the remnant Yhwh puts on righteousness like a breastplate, he places the helmet of salvation on his head and wraps himself in the garments of vengeance and zeal (59.17-18). Before he can cloth Jerusalem in garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness (61.10) he must first clothe himself with vengeance and zeal. When he appears in Zion as the go'el for those within Jacob who turn from sin (59.20) he will put an end to the absence of justice, righteousness, and salvation that the 'We' had lamented through their own deeds (59.9, 11, 14). This picks up on 59.19c, where his coming is like a raging torrent. This coming of God determines the following chapters (60.1; 62.11; 63.1). Only now can the motto that stands over the entire final section of the book become comprehensible: 'Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance will be revealed' (56.1). For those, however, who do not

practice justice and righteousness, Yhwh will not come as a saviour but as the avenger of injustice.

7.4. *Isaiah 60–62: The Manifestation of Light Over Zion and Jerusalem*
The concluding verse of 59.21 is the hermeneutical key for understanding the manifestation of the light, the divine salvation over Jerusalem (chaps 60, 62), and the central gift of the spirit for the liberation of the poor (chap. 61). Those, and only those, who have turned from the sin within Jacob, may benefit from Yhwh's covenant. God's spirit rests upon him, i.e. upon this group, and capacitates it and its offspring to become mediators of the word of God—a clear criticism, if not even a declaration of war, directed towards the narrowing of mediatorship to the Mosaic, i.e. the priestly, Torah (cf. 51.16). What is at stake is nothing less than the question of whose opinion will prevail during the period of the restoration in post-exilic Jerusalem.

7.5. *Isaiah 60: The Future Glory of Zion and Jerusalem*
In Isaiah 60 the salvific turn remains in the future; the description is not of things that have occurred but of that which is hoped for. The announcement of the divine coming in 59.19-20 is picked up in 60.1, whereby the masculine singular 'upon you' (59.21) is continued in a feminine singular 'upon you', which applies to Zion (60.1, 2, 5). The revelation of the glory of Yhwh is similarly repeated (59.19; 60.1-2) and the motif of the light (*'ôr*; 7× in Isaiah 60) refers back to the poem that is full of imperatives (cf. 51.17; 52.1). The arrival of the divine light upon Zion indicates that she now takes on the servant of God's function of being a light to the nations (42.6; 49.6). Yet it is no longer the case that the light goes to the nations, rather the nations and their kings make their way towards the light that shines gloriously over Zion (60.3). They do not come in order to learn Torah (cf. 2.2-4) but in order to return the living children of Zion who are among them, along with precious gifts (60.4-9; cf. 49.18ff.). From v. 10 onward the image changes and the gifts are replaced by reparations. The kings become Zion's subordinates and those who do not submit to her will perish (60.12; a reception of Jer. 27.8). The relation of the nations to Zion will not only change materially but also spiritually, for they will call her 'City of Yhwh, Zion of the Holy One of Israel' (60.14). This and similar appellations occur often and give expression to the hope of the post-exilic community (Isa. 60.18; 61.3, 6; 62.2, 4, 12; 65.15; cf. Ezek. 48.35).

In the concluding verse of Isaiah 60 it is Yhwh rather than the nations who is active. Yhwh is the one who replaces good construction material with even better material (cf. the list of construction material in 1 Chron. 22.14). The most important element comes last. Yhwh appoints peace as a watchman and righteousness as an authority. Then one will no longer hear of violence; Jerusalem's walls will be called Salvation and her gates will be

called Praise (60.17-18). The programme of ethical restoration is persistently held to (cf. 56.1). Even cults that worship the heavenly bodies will be useless, for Yhwh will be an 'eternal light' for Zion (60.20).

In the end, Zion is populated only by those who are 'righteous' (cf. 57.1: downfall of the righteous). They have been promised possession of the land and secure growth as the planting of God and work of his hands in order to display his glory (60.21-22). All this points to the 'oaks of righteousness' (61.3) that Yhwh anoints with his spirit, thereby making them into joyful messengers to the poor (60.1). On a synchronic level, the designation of this group as a 'shoot' (*nēṣer*) indicates that this is an actualization of 11.1, undergirded by the gift of the spirit in 11.2 (cf. 61.1). Just as a mighty house grew out of David, the smallest of his brothers (1 Sam. 16.11), so does the group of the righteous hope that it will have strength and influence. This indicates that they were in fact experiencing the opposite. Yhwh's pointed concluding remark that he will accomplish it quickly in his own time (cf. 5.19, also in the similar context of the oppression of the righteous [5.23]) also indicates that the community was experiencing a growth in pressure.

7.6. *Isaiah 61: The Gift of the Spirit to the Righteous*

The gift of the spirit to the congregation of the righteous in Zion is the central theme of Isaiah 61. In the past it had been the Golah that were willing to return home as the servant that Yhwh had equipped with his spirit so that they could implement his will (cf. 42.1; 44.3; 48.16); now it is the ones who have already returned home, i.e. their offspring, who advocate a godly restoration of Jerusalem. Advocacy for release from Babylon and the Diaspora (cf. 42.7; 49.9) has developed into a battle for the release of the economically oppressed. The theologically laden verb 'to proclaim good news' (*bśr*) (40.9; 41.27; 52.7) is now put to the service of social ethics. Social disintegration was not least due to the harsh Persian tax policies under Darius I (522–486 BCE). The decrease in social solidarity among the Judean populace advanced rapidly, as can be seen in, e.g., Isaiah 58 and Nehemiah 5. The targeted liberation of the poor is portrayed as a release from debt servitude, an act that was otherwise only reserved for the Sabbath year or jubilee (cf. Lev. 25.10; Ezek. 46.17; Jer. 34.8, 15, 17). Whoever resists the release of the debt slaves is threatened with a 'day of vengeance by our God'. The keyword *nāqām*, 'vengeance', makes two things clear. On the one hand, the exploiters are not only opponents of the poor, they are also enemies of God (59.17-18). On the other hand, they do not belong to Jacob, but rather to Edom (63.4), who had also hindered the Israelites under Moses from entering into freedom (Num. 20.14ff.). The designation 'our God' indicates a strong sense of group identity and shows that hidden behind the identity of the one who has been gifted with the spirit is not an individual but a group. All those who belong to it are called 'oaks of righteousness', the

'planting of Yhwh to display his glory' (61.3). The name of Jerusalem, which has already been anticipated since 1.26, will be realized in these oaks, in these inhabitants who are all 'righteous' (60.21). It shall be a 'city of righteousness'!

These oaks constitute the pillars of the restoration. As children of the devastated city and Lady Zion (54.1) they will re-build the ancient devastations. They will no longer have to do agricultural work for foreigners. Instead, as a reversal of Isa. 1.7, the foreigners will become their servants. This verse, along with its fourfold 'your', will have played a role in 61.6 with its abrupt shift to the second person plural. Even more important, however, is the intertext Exod. 19.6, which speaks of the priestly function of the people of God in the midst of the nations, for this verse too begins with 'but you' (*wᵉattem*). In Isa. 61.6 it is those who have been equipped with the spirit of God who are told, 'You are the priests of Yhwh' and 'servants of our God'. Prophetic charisma and priestly are combined in the servants, who probably come from temple circles.

The mourners of Zion who have suffered a double disgrace shall be requited with a double portion of the land (61.7). This promise alludes first of all to the double punishment meted out to Zion, a sentence she has served to the full (40.2). It also alludes to the fact that the tribe of Levi were left out of consideration when the land of inheritance was distributed among the tribes (Num. 18.20ff.). The affront will come to an end once they receive a double portion during the hoped for post-exilic redistribution. The proximity to the cult continues in 61.8, where Yhwh says that he loves law and hates robbery with a burnt offering. It was, among others, Eli's sons, the servants of Yhwh (1 Sam. 2.11; 3.1; cf. Isa. 61.6 [servants of our God]), who had not stuck to the law of the priests (1 Sam. 2.13) and who had sinned against Yhwh and those who brought sacrifices. This kind of abuse of one's office should no longer take place on Zion.

Yhwh concludes an 'eternal covenant' (61.8) with the 'oaks of righteousness' (v. 3). Whereas the promises in 55.3 concerned royal-Davidic authority and the promises of 59.21 Mosaic-prophetic honour, here the reference is to priestly dignity (see 61.10). With his final mention of the 'covenant' in the book of Isaiah all authority is passed on to the congregation of the righteous in Zion. Their scepticism concerning the cultic sacrifices ('robbery during sacrifice', v. 8) is evident, in contrast to the emphasis of the 'eternal joy' that belongs to the 'eternal covenant'. The descendants of this congregation of the righteous will be known among the nations as the ones who are blessed by Yhwh (61.9; cf. 59.21). This underscores their openness to the world outside of Israel.

The concluding song of thanksgiving (61.10-11) creates an inclusio with the beginning of the chapter (vv. 1-3). It is only in vv. 1 and 10 that an 'I' speaks; the divine appellation 'lord Yhwh' (*ʾᵃḏōnāy yhwh*) is only found in vv.

1 and 11; the term 'righteousness' is exclusively found in vv. 3, 10, and 11. The introit is taken from Ps. 35.9, a prayer of a persecuted righteous individual who knows that Yhwh will deliver the poor from those who exploit them (v. 10). Thanksgiving and joy grips the great congregation (Ps. 35.18, 27), for Yhwh desires the salvation of his servant (Ps. 35.27). While the opponents have to be clothed in shame and dishonour (Ps. 35.26), Yhwh clothes the congregation of Zion in garments of salvation, in the robe of righteousness, so that they resemble the bridegroom who wears a headdress in priestly style (MT *yᵉkahēn*), as well as the festively dressed bride (61.10). The magnificent garments that Zion should cover herself with (52.1) are the garments of salvation and righteousness (cf. 56.1). Wherever this ethic is lived out Yhwh will let righteousness sprout as if in a garden (cf. 51.3: Zion as a garden) and praise before all nations (61.11).

7.7. *Isaiah 62: Zion's and Jerusalem's Future Glory*

In chap. 62 the congregation of Zion continues its work as advocate for the god-pleasing reconstruction of Jerusalem. Behind the 'I' who will not rest until Zion's righteousness and salvation burns like a torch before the nations (v. 1) are the 'watchers' and 'reminders' (v. 6). They allow themselves no rest and give Yhwh no rest until he has made Jerusalem into the praise of the whole earth.

The new name (62.2) is revealed in v. 4 and includes not only Jerusalem ('my pleasure in her') but also the surrounding area ('married'). The reception of Isa. 54.1ff is clear. More hidden is the reference to 53.10. Just as it pleased Yhwh to crush his servant with illness, now he has found once again his pleasure in Jerusalem (*ḥpṣ* in 53.10 and 62.4). The raising of the servant corresponds to the raising of Zion. She will become a glorious crown, a royal diadem in the hand of God. The crown remains in his hand for he alone is king! The rare word *ṣānîp* (v. 3) denotes the royal headdress (Sir. 11.5; 40.4; 47.6) and, only in Zech 3.5, the high-priestly turban at the investiture of Joshua. The etymologically related *miṣnepeṯ* almost always refers to the headdress of the high priest (e.g. Exod. 28.3, 37, 39; 29.6). The raising of Zion receives thereby a royal *and* a high-priestly dimension. The 'reminders' (*mazkirîm*, v. 6) are also to be understood in this context, for in the period before statehood the *mazkîr* was one of the highest civil servants, the royal secretary (2 Sam. 8.16; 20.24; 1 Kgs 4.3; 2 Kgs 18.18, 37; parallel Isa. 36.3, 22). The authors, as advocates of a social-ethical and foreigner-receptive restoration of Jerusalem, claim a similar position for themselves. The theme of 'praise' (*tᵉhillâ*, cf. 42.10, 12; 43.21; 60.6, 18; 61.3, 11; 62.7) substantiates the proximity of these 'reminders' to the Israelite tradition of song, in particular in their openness to foreign nations (cf. Pss. 48.11; 65.2; 66.2, 8; 100.4; 145.1, 21; 147.1; 148.14; 149.1). The act of remembering contains the request that Yhwh should definitively appear for the sake of

the city of God. This is impressively confirmed in the following prayer of complaint (63.7–64.11).

The praise of God that should sound from within the renewed Jerusalem can only become a reality when those who have worked hard for their food and drink may be able to break out in praise for it (cf. 65.21). God promises this by oath in 62.8-9 (cf. the arm of God in 51.9; 52.10; 53.1; 63.5, 12). The consumption of food in the inner courts of the sanctuary (62.9) indicates the feasts of joy that were part of pilgrimages, whereby the Feast of Tabernacles played an important role (Deut. 16.9ff.; Neh. 8.16; cf. Pss. 65.5; 84.3; 92.14; 96.8; 100.4; 135.2). The exploitation by foreigners (Isa. 1.7) will have an end and the trampling of the inner courts (Isa. 1.12) will give way to god-pleasing worship. It is not the rich gifts of the nations that is expected (60.5ff.; 61.5ff.), it is the hope that the fruit of one's own labours will be eaten with joy in the inner courts of the temple. There is no talk here of the sacrificial cult, only of the praise that shall emanate from the sanctuary.

7.8. *Isa. 63.1-6: The Judgement of Edom*

The counterpart to the combat-ready Yhwh of 59.15b-20 that is presented before the 'chapters of light' in 60–62 is found afterwards in 63.1-6. Whereas 59.20 had said that Yhwh would come to Zion, now we learn that he has come out of Edom (63.1). Yhwh comes powerfully onto the scene: 'I speak in righteousness and am mighty to save' (63.1; cf. the leitmotif in 56.1). The advent of salvation that had been announced in 62.11 is picked up; the year of redemption has come (63.4) for the 'redeemed of Yhwh' (62.12). The question concerning the identity of the one coming out of Edom in red garments (63.1) is directed towards the city sentinels of 62.6. Their job is to announce the arrival of Yhwh, in particular in his capacity of avenger (59.17) against all those who have not turned from the sin that is in Jacob (59.20) and who therefore belong to Edom. The arm of God alone shall accomplish this vengeance (59.16; 63.5). Edom, descendants of Esau the twin brother of Jacob, is a cypher for the enemies of the people of God. Just as, according to the biblical perspective, Edom had made a substantial contribution to the downfall of Jerusalem (Ezek. 35; Ps. 137; Lam. 4.21-22; Obad. 10-16; Mal. 1.2ff.), so do all those who obstruct the godly reconstruction of Jerusalem belong to Edom. Edom is the brother-nation that will never experience restoration, as is made unequivocally clear in, for example, Mal. 1–4. Within the book of Isaiah the connections between Isa. 63.1-6 and the destruction of Edom in Isaiah 34 are equally clear (cf. especially Isa. 63.4; 34.8).

7.9. *Isa. 63.7–64.11: The National Prayer of Complaint*

The national prayer of complaint in 63.7–64.11 consists of a solemn introduction (63.7), a historical review in Deuteronomic style (63.8-14), and a

concluding petition for immediate deliverance (63.15–64.11). The complaint in 59.9-15a did not include such a petition, for the 'reminders' had not yet been appointed. They are the ones who do the speaking and reminding (63.7). It is not surprising that a collective speaks in the first person singular, for in the Old Testament 'I' does not stand for biographical individuality but identification with a social role.

The 'reminders' remind Yhwh of his expressions of grace (cf. 55.3), of his praiseworthy deeds (plural of *t*ᵉ*hillâ*, cf. 62.7) that he had demonstrated to them and to Israel (63.11). The greatest source of distress is the fact that Yhwh is still holding back his mercy (63.15). God cannot continue to do this, he cannot be silent any longer and keep deliverance to himself (64.11; cf. 42.12). A motherly image of the mercy of Yhwh is followed by a twofold characterization of Yhwh as father (63.16; 64.7). This is not unique (Tob. 13.4). It occurs as a comparison (45.10; Ps. 103.13), as a promise of election (Exod. 4.22; Hos. 11.1), and in the context of the royal adoption formula (2 Sam. 7.14; Ps. 2.7). The claim that Abraham and Israel do not know the petitioners (63.16), however, is unusual. This is an interpretation of the tradition in which, in the context of Moses' blessing, the Levite is told that he has neither mother nor father , neither brothers nor children. In this manner the Levites remain entirely focussed upon Yhwh and become interpreters of the Word of God and servants of the sacrificial cult (Deut. 33.8-10). The 'reminders' likewise understand themselves to be dependent upon Yhwh their father and capable of service to him. They call him 'our Redeemer of old' (63.16). They are convinced that Yhwh will act as the only true God towards those who wait for him (64.3; cf. 8.16; 30.18), who practice righteousness with joy and who keeps the memory of Yhwh alive wherever he goes (64.4.). Through their sinfulness the 'reminders' stand in solidarity with the mass of the nation, yet through their confession of their sin they belong to those who have turned from the sin within Jacob (59.20). This admission of sin is framed by Yhwh's wrath (64.4b, 8b; cf. Lam. 5.22). God cannot remember sin forever (64.8), for otherwise those who pray would be destroyed by their father's wrath (64.7-8).

7.10. *Isaiah 65–66: Renewed Complaints, Judgement of the Sinners in Jerusalem, and an Image of Salvation*

Chapters 65–66 together constitute the conclusion of the book of Isaiah. The repetition in 66.22 of the theme of 'new heavens, new earth' that is found in Isa. 65.17 is one of the numerous parallels that bind these two chapters together (cf. 'foreign cults', 65.3-4; 66.17; 'vengeance', 65.6, 7; 66.6; 'servants', 65.8ff.; 66.14). The abuses in Jerusalem and in the temple create a bridge to the first chapter of the book of Isaiah (1.10ff.). In chap. 1, however, the threatened punishment is exile, something now impossible for those who have just returned from exile. Yhwh's punishment also no

longer effects the nation as a whole. Instead, it leads to a separation between the servants and their adversaries (65.8-16a). This division permeates the conclusion of the book of Isaiah and shows how much conflict there was between the factions of the post-exilic restoration.

7.11. *Isaiah 65: The Separation of the Servants and Adversaries in the New Jerusalem*

This chapter consists of three sections. The divine answer (vv. 1-7) to the collective prayer of complaint in 63.7–64.11 the separation of the servants from their adversaries (vv. 8-16a), and the image of the new Jerusalem (vv. 16b-25). The main message is clear: Peaceful and healthy coexistence will only come to Jerusalem after the servants have been separated from their adversaries.

At the beginning (vv. 1-2), Yhwh clarifies that the people would have been able to find him if they had made an effort. Instead, the nation provokes him to his face (v. 3; cf. 1.29ff.; 57.3.ff.; 66.17). Fertility cults and the cult of the dead, believed by the people to be capable of causing their 'sanctification' (v. 5; cf. 66.17), play an important role here. This is totally incompatible with the requirement and the promise that they should be a 'holy nation' (62.12).

When Yhwh continues by saying that something has been written before him (v. 6a), he is not referring to something like a register in which transgressions have been recorded. This is a reference to 62.1a: 'For Zion's sake I cannot keep silent'. At the same time, it functions as an answer to the concluding question in 64.11 of whether God intends to remain silent for ever.

The separation of the servants and the adversaries begins with the messenger formula in v. 8, whereby the image of wine picks up the image of Yhwh's treading of the winepress (63.3). The servants, mentioned seven times in this unit, are the descendants of Jacob, the heirs of his mountains in Judah, his elected ones (*bāḥîr*, 65.9, 15, 22). They are thereby the successors of the servant of God (42.1; 43.20; 45.4), the company of the returnees from Babylon and the Diaspora. The honorary title 'servant' is also applied, among others, to Moses (Ps. 106.23) and David (Ps. 89.4), as well as to post-exilic righteous individuals (Pss. 105.6, 43; 106.5; 1 Chron. 16.13; Sir. 46.1). The servants do not constitute themselves on the basis of their own authority; Yhwh creates them in the process of pressing the wine (cf. the image of smelting in 48.10). It is only because of the blessing that is in them (cf. 61.9; 65.23) that God's treading of the winepress does not lead to total destruction. The urgent petition of the 'reminders' that Yhwh would turn back for the sake of his servants (63.17b) is realized in the divinely carried out separation. Words of salvation apply to the one group, words of destruction to the other. Only after this separation can the servant's radiant future in the new Jerusalem break forth (65.16b-25).

The servants will not only enjoy the right of residence in Zion, the entire territory of ancient Israel from the Sharon Plain in the West to the Valley of Achor in the east will be at their disposal (65.9-10; cf. 57.13; 60.21). Only those who sincerely seek Yhwh (v. 10; cf. v. 2) belong to his people. Those who abandon Yhwh (v. 11; cf. 1, 4, 28) and forget 'my holy mountain' will be subject to divine punishment. As befits the 'nation of holiness' (62.12), the holy mountain is only open to those who honour Yhwh and do not prepare a table for Gad and Meni, the deities of fortune and destiny (65.11; cf. 57.13). The alternative between curse and blessing (cf. Deuteronomy 28) is offered to each individual depending on whether they turn to or away from Yhwh. Whereas Israel was threatened with hunger and thirst if it did not serve Yhwh with heartfelt joy (Deut. 28.47-48), now the servants are promised food, drink, and gladness of heart (Isa. 65.13-14). Just as Zion (62.2-4, 12) received a new name that sealed their positive future, the servants too receive a different name (vv. 15-16). They are called 'those who swear Amen to God' (*bĕ'lōhê 'āmēn*) and who bless themselves in this name. Yhwh is no deity of fortune or destiny; he is the God whose word is reliable. The curse formula that the servants make use of against their adversaries demonstrates how definitive this division within the post-exilic community was: 'The lord Yhwh will kill you' (v. 15).

Following Yhwh's division of Israel, vv. 16b-25 promises a new creation for the benefit of those who he has blessed (v. 23b; cf. 44.3; 61.9). In light of v. 9, this can only refer to either the servants or their descendants. Yhwh stands in the closest relation to them (v. 24) and they are the beneficiaries of the new order of peace upon his holy mountain (v. 25; cf. 11.6-9).

The key phrase 'former troubles' refers back to the juxtaposition of 'former—latter' in Isaiah 40–48 (41.22; 42.9; 43.9, 18; 46.9; 48.3), whereby there too we find the central concept of newness (41.15; 42.9; 43.19; 48.6; cf. 62.2). It is not the old heavens and the old earth that should be forgotten but the old troubles! This is a reference to the slander and social exclusion that the servants suffered. The hope is for peaceful conditions upon Zion, the garden of God (51.3), rather than cosmic upheavals. Analogous to the concepts of paradise among Israel's neighbours, this chapter portrays a salvific royal order from which anything that is chaotic and hostile to life is banned. Whereas in Isa. 11.6-9 this is implemented by the Davidic shoot, here we have no reference to such a royal figure, for the kingship of Yhwh is the focus of attention (cf. 52.7).

7.12. *Isaiah 66: A Final Obstacle Before the Inbreaking of Eschatological Salvation*

The new beginning inaugurated with the messenger formula in 66.1 (cf. 56.1; 65.8) is surprising given the harmonious-peaceful ending of Isaiah 65. The direction of speech has changed too: Whereas before Yhwh had spoken with the adversaries about the servants, now he speaks with the servants

about the adversaries. Apparently there was an important question that still required clarification, one that related to the status of the temple as the site of the sacrificial cult. How is it possible to reconcile bloody animal sacrifice in the house of God with the new order of peace that will reign among all living creatures? Verses 1-6 are neither concerned with a radical rejection of the temple, nor do they intend to play cultic and social activity off against each other. That which is criticised is not the reconstruction of the sanctuary, which was still a long way off from being completed after its consecration in 515 BCE, but rather the claims of those who built it. Whereas they are constructing the temple as the place of divine rest, Yhwh emphasizes that he has made heaven and earth. In other words, he has called the entirety of reality into being (v. 2a). In the foreground is Yhwh's incomparable power as creator rather than a statement of his ownership of the earth. This does not make the temple superfluous but it does put the building activity in the right perspective, for everything depends upon *what kind* of temple cult is to be practiced and *how* people should treat each other. The criticism is as follows: The way in which the temple upon Zion and the community in Jerusalem is currently being constructed can only mean that the place of divine rest is still a long way off. In this manner the servants accuse their adversaries of sacrificing animals and killing people at the same time. Their decision to do that which *they* please (v. 3) stands in contrast to the eunuchs who decide to do that which pleases *God* (56.4)! The servants decry as a scandal the fact that foreigners and those who are castrated yet do Yhwh's will are barred from venerating him, while the constructers of the temple and Jerusalem indulge in cultic and social injustice. They are the ones who tremble at the word of Yhwh[22] (cf. Ezra 9.4; 10.3), i.e. they regard only his word as the guiding principle of their life. The claim made by 'the brothers who hate you and cast you out' that God should finally show himself so that they too may participate in the joy of the servants (66.5) flies back into their face, for Yhwh will appear immediately in vengeance. He himself will remove the abuses that are opposed to his new creation, and he will do so from the very place where they are committed most flagrantly: the city and the temple (v. 6).

Yhwh's vengeance upon the enemies leads to the birth (vv. 7-9) and growth of a new population in Zion (vv. 10-14). The enemies of the servants are now explicitly called the enemies of God (vv. 6b, 14b). These motifs of birth and development are an actualization of the prophetic word concerning the blessing and children-filled future of Zion in 49.21-26 and 54.1-3. Zion is no longer the mother of the returnees from Babylon and the Diaspora, she is the mother of the community of the servants (v. 14). She gives birth to her male offspring so suddenly (v. 7) that there is not even

22. The Quakers took their name from Isa. 66.5; they tremble at the Word of God.

enough time for the birth pangs to set in. Yhwh stands as a midwife by Lady Zion's side during the birth of the community of the servants. This is comparable to the servant of God's unexpected turn of fate (cf. 52.15; 53.1). The offspring that have been promised to him (53.10) are the children of Zion (66.8). They will no longer suffer adversity; instead, they will drink their fill at her comforting breast (v. 11; cf. 60.16) and be carried in her arms (v. 12; cf. 49.22; 60.4). The community of the servant has, as male offspring, appropriated the promise concerning the shoot of Jesse (Isa. 11.1ff.). This reference can be seen not only in the citation in 65.25 but also in the combination of 'nursing' (*ynq*) and 'rejoicing/delighting (*šʿʿ* II.), which otherwise only occurs in 11.8 and 66.12.

The community of the servant continues to experience Yhwh's motherly comfort well into manhood. The motherliness of God had been previously sketched out in 42.14 ('like a woman in labour') and 49.15 ('can a woman forget her nursing child?'). This brings the theme of 'comfort', a key word within the book of Isaiah, to its conclusion (12.1; 40.1; 49.13; 51.3, 12; 52.9). Now, however, this comfort is no longer available to the population of Jerusalem as a whole but for those who mourn in Zion (61.2), i.e. the servants who are truly concerned about the future of Jerusalem. The promise that their bones would blossom like fresh grass picks up on the vegetation metaphor in 41.18; 51.3; 58.11 and at the same time alludes to the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37. The restriction to the servants is, however, clear. Only their limbs will blossom and not those of their adversaries!

The conclusion consists of an eschatological vision of Jerusalem (vv. 18-23) framed by vivid images of the destruction that will come to the apostates (vv. 15-17, 24). In v. 6 Yhwh's vengeance will proceed from within the temple; now we see that his fire and sword will smite all apostates who hide behind their cultic shrines (cf. 1.29-31; 65.1-7; 66.3-4). It is only when Jerusalem is purified of such pagan practices that the nations will make their way towards Zion. In other words, it is not the pilgrims from among the nations who are provoking the pollution of Jerusalem, but the population of Jerusalem itself and her religious personnel!

The judgement of the apostates that had already been spoken of at the beginning of the book (cf. 1.2, 28) has now been definitively implemented. The unquenchable fire (1.31) devours the adherents of pagan practices in Jerusalem (66.24). The cultic offences certainly frame the book, yet the solution is of a different nature. A system of worship that his pleasing to God can no longer be achieved by Israel alone. Instead, he must be glorified by all flesh (*ḵol-bāśār*, v. 23; cf. v. 16), in other words by all those members of Israel and the nations who break away from foreign cults and worship Yhwh. Whoever has thereby freed his or herself from the worship of foreign gods (v. 19; cf. 45.20) receives a task relating to the world of the

nations. This is an extension of the function of the servant (42.6; 49.6) and makes clear that even individuals from among the nations belong to the servant. They are the ones who proclaim Yhwh to those who have neither heard of him nor seen his glory (cf. 52.15; 53.1). The admittance of foreigners to Zion is therefore not simply a matter of the regulation of the congregation, it is part of the divine will for the integration of the nations.

When these nations set off for Jerusalem they will take those Diaspora Jews who still live among them (cf. 49.22-23; 60.4). The comparison with votive offerings in pure vessels (cf. Zech. 14.20-21) appears to emphasize the ability of even these brethren from the Diaspora to participate in the cult, despite the conceit of the Jerusalem priesthood. Even from among them Yhwh will elect Levitical priests. The monopoly of the cultic personnel in Jerusalem who discriminate against their brothers from the Diaspora is thereby broken. Whoever comes from the nations is pure, unlike those in Jerusalem who practice pagan cults! By means of a reference to the new creation that will have its centre in Jerusalem (65.17), these Levitical priests from the Diaspora are guaranteed an abiding future (v. 22). Given that the cultic personnel are descended from the nations and are open to them, it is hardly surprising that the entire world is making its way to Jerusalem to venerate Yhwh. The new entity consisting of Israel and the nations that gathers in Jerusalem and adopts the Jewish festal calendar is called 'all flesh' (*ḵol-bāśār*). The term refers to the universal praise of God (Ps. 65.3; 145.21) as well as a universal humanity that existed before it had been divided into nations and ethnicities (cf. Genesis 6–9). In the New Jerusalem, where Israel and the nations gather for the new religious service, there is no longer any room for those who rebel against Yhwh (v. 24). In the Jewish tradition, v. 23 is repeated after the grim conclusion in order to end the book of Isaiah on a positive note:

> 'And from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to bow down before me, says the Yhwh.'

Chapter C

The History of the Interpretation of Isaiah and His Book

1. *Old Testament*

In addition to Isaiah 1–39, the figure of Isaiah ben Amoz can also be found in the Hezekiah-Isaiah narrative in 2 Kgs 18.13–20.19. These reports of the relation between the king and the prophet during and after Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem have been imported in adapted form into the prophetic book (see above concerning Isaiah 36–39). The changes do not so much concern the image of Isaiah as proclaimer of the divine will as his role as intercessor and miraculous healer. They also concern Hezekiah: The Isaianic tradition transforms him from a tribute paying vassal into a pious king who places his hope solely in prophetic support and divine assistance. This positive interpretation is continued in the third biblical witness in 2 Chronicles 32. Here, the king controls and strengthens Jerusalem's military defences. The effect of this portrayal, however, is that it reduces his trust in divine help (vv. 1-8). Even without prophetic support Hezekiah knows what he has to do and say. It is the king and not Isaiah who encourages the Jerusalemites in 2 Chron. 32.7-8. In contrast to the two older versions of the narrative, here Hezekiah and Isaiah pray *together* for help in the face of Assyrian threat (v. 20), an act that leads to immediate success. The prophet no longer plays any role in the healing of the king from his sickness; Hezekiah's prayer alone is sufficient for his miraculous recovery (v. 24). The envoys from Babylon do not come to Jerusalem just because they have heard of the illness (2 Kgs 20.12) and recovery of the king (Isa. 39.1) but also because they wish to inquire about the miraculous signs (2 Chron. 32.31). Chronicles omits the prophet's chastisement of the king with its concluding announcement of divine judgement. The Babylonian legation is a divine test of the pious king's heart. The statement that the remaining deeds of the king have been recorded in the Vision of Isaiah as well as in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel transforms the prophet into a chronicler of events (v. 32: cf. Isa. 1.1). This accords with what has already been said in 2 Chron. 26.22 concerning the events during the reign of Uzziah, namely that they too have been recorded by the prophet! Chronicles also turns other prophets and

seers into chroniclers (cf. Samuel, Nathan, Gad in 1 Chron. 29.29; Nathan, Ahija, Iddo in 2 Chron. 9.29).

In the praise of the fathers in the book of Jesus Sirach (chaps 44–50) Hezekiah and Isaiah are placed together, whereby the divine help is mediated through the prophet. The king always remained true to the ways of David, as he had been instructed by the prophet, 'the great and reliable seer' (Sir. 48.22). His vision spans the epochs and becomes a decisive characteristic of this particular prophet: 'By his dauntless spirit he saw the future, and comforted the mourners in Zion. He revealed what was to occur to the end of time, and the hidden things before they happened' (Sir. 48.24-25). His visionary power is emphasized whereas his oracular tradition as admonisher of the nation recedes into the background.[1]

2. *Vitae Prophetarum*

This Greek language biographical list was conceptualized according to a Hellenistic model that has its roots in Jewish circles from the 1st century CE. It was translated into many languages in the Early Church (e.g. Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopian, Arabic), which is testimony to the great interest in the holy figures of the 'Old Covenant' in this period. This list contains all 15 of the Old Testament writing prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve Minor Prophets), along with Daniel, Nathan, Ahija von Silo, Joad, Azariah, Elijah, Elisha, and Zechariah son of Joiada. The biographical interest that could already be seen in the book of Chronicles and Jesus Sirach and which can also be discerned in the superscriptions of the Septuagint Psalter that refer to David's life (see Ps. 151) now comes into full swing. Of interest are the names of the prophets, their genealogy, the date of their death, and the site of their burial. The fact that six of the twenty three prophets suffered a violent death (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Amos, Zechariah son of Joiada) is certainly emphasized (cf. Jub. 1.11; Heb. 11.32ff.; Lk. 11.47; Mt. 23.29), but the fact that the remaining prophets died peacefully is not overlooked.

The list begins with the martyrdom of Isaiah, who had been sawn in two under Manasseh and was then buried under the oak named Rogel. The tradition that Isaiah was sawn in two under this king is a legend that is based upon 2 Kgs 21.6, which claims that Manasseh had shed so much innocent blood that it filled Jerusalem from one end to the other. The site of his burial 'under the oak Rogel near to the pass over the water that Hezekiah destroyed by heaping it up'[2] refers to Isaiah's meeting with King Ahaz during the Syrian-Ephraimite War (Isa. 7.3; cf. 36.2) and Hezekiah's

1. So Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, p. 43.
2. Schwemer, *VitProph 1.1*, p. 562.

connection with the Pool of Siloam. According to the *Vitae Prophetarum*, Isaiah requested water while in the throes of death so that someone was sent to the Pool of Siloam ('the one who is sent'), who then sent water. Beforehand Isaiah, by the power of his prayer, had managed to make the water flow only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and not for the Assyrian besiegers! The *VitProph* continues: 'Therefore, until this day it flows suddenly so that the mystery is displayed. And since this happened through Isaiah, the people buried him near there with great care and splendour as a memorial, so they, through his prayer, even after his death would continue to be able to enjoy the water, for they had been given a prophecy concerning it.'[3] This is a reference to Isa. 12.3, which states that 'you will draw water with joy from the wells of salvation'. It may also refer to the Feast of Tabernacles, during which there seems to have been a ritual in which water was brought from the Pool of Siloam to the temple accompanied by flute playing and hymns (*mSukk. 5.1*; *bSukk. 48a*).

3. *Flavius Josephus*

The focus on biography continues in Flavius Josephus's interpretation of Isaiah. According to this Jewish author, who had transformed himself from a resistance fighter into a propagandist for Rome, biblical historical writing contrasts with Greek historiography in that it is not based upon uncertain sources but upon the writings of the prophets, whose credibility was ensured by divine inspiration (*Apion*, 1.7.37). Josephus confirms the concept found in the books of Kings and Chronicles, which had already invoked prophetic records. The significance of prophecy for the history of Israel is underscored by the fact that the terms 'prophets' or 'to prophecy' occur 169 times in his writings.[4] Josephus too interprets Isaiah in the context of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah (701 BCE). The pious king did not allow himself to be intimidated by the threats of the Assyrians. Instead, he trusted solely in his fear of God and the Seer Isaiah, whose prophecies clearly opened up the future to him (*Ant.* 9.13.3). Josephus solves the problem created by the fact that in 2 Kgs 18.14-16 Hezekiah pays tribute to Sennacherib whereas in Isaiah 36 he does not by claiming that although the king paid the large sum of money, the Assyrian breeched the covenant and attacked Jerusalem (*Ant.* 9.1.1.). In response to the Assyrian general's diatribe before the gates of the city of God Hezekiah sent some of his friends along with some priests to the seer Isaiah with the request that he plead with God and offer a sacrifice for the deliverance of all (*Ant.* 10.1.3). Mention of the presence of priests and the offering of sacrifice emphasizes the priestly

3. Schwemer, *VitProph 1.5*, pp. 565-66.
4. Feldman, *Josephus' Portrait of Isaiah*, p. 584.

ancestry of the historiographer. Just as in the biblical narrative, Isaiah tells the king that his petition for the city and the nation has been heard (*Ant*. 10.1.4). The prophetic seer also plays a decisive role in Hezekiah's recovery, for he announces to him that he will live another 15 years and produce children (*Ant*. 10.2.1). This is important for the announcement in 2 Kgs 20.18; par. Isa. 39.7 that his sons would be deported to Babylon (cf. *Ant.* 10.2.2). This also creates a bridge to Manasseh, Hezekiah's successor to the throne (2 Kgs 21.1ff.). Rabbinic interpretation will dedicate a fair amount of attention to the question of how such a pious king could produce such an evil son (see below).

For Josephus, the significance of Isaiah as well as the other prophets consists in their sure ability to see into the future: 'Now as to this seer Isaiah, who by his confession was filled with God's spirit and who loved truth to the highest degree, left behind him, in the assurance that he had not said anything that was even in the smallest degree false, all of his prophecies in written records, so that later generations would be able to judge them according to their success'[5] (*Ant*. 10.2.2.). This vision of the future was also of advantage to the Persian Cyrus, for it was by reading these prophecies that had been written 210 years beforehand that he realized his historical role in helping the Jewish people. Isaiah had foreseen his assistance in the reconstruction of the temple 140 years before it had even been destroyed, so that Cyrus was filled with admiration for God's providence and thus strove to do that which was written (*Ant.* 10.1.2). Yet even this is not enough, for 600 years before the event Isaiah had seen that a temple would be built for Yhwh in Egypt according to the model of the Jerusalem sanctuary. For this reason the exiled high priest Onias in Alexandria felt obliged, in light of Isa. 19.19, to ask the royal couple Ptolemy and Cleopatra if he could build a temple to the highest God in Leontopolis. For this the rebuilding of a dilapidated temple would be most suitable. According to Josephus, Ptolemy and Cleopatra were surprised that he wished to build a Jewish temple on the site of an impure foreign sanctuary, but they gave in to his request in light of the argument that the seer Isaiah had already foreseen it. Permission was only granted, however, on the grounds that no sin that may be committed by the activity would accrue to them (*Ant.* 13.3.1-2).

Flavius Josephus's interpretation of Isaiah thus concentrates on the Hezekiah-Isaiah narrative (2 Kings 18–20; par. Isaiah 36–39) as well as on those parts which speak of the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple (Isa. 44.28) and of a sanctuary in Egypt (Isa. 19.19). It is striking that the report of Isaiah's commission in Isaiah 6 is not picked up at all, just as little as Isaiah's prophetic critique. The reasons for this are probably as follows: On the one hand, the reception of the prophetic critique of social and cultic abuses in

5. Translation of Clementz, *Jüdische Altertümer*, p. 604.

Jerusalem (e.g. Isa. 1.10-17; 66.1-4) would run counter to Josephus's propagandistic agenda of presenting Jewish history to his Roman readers in a thoroughly positive light. On the other hand, he wanted to write a political and military history of his people and for that reason shied away from statements concerning the inner relation between Israel and its God.[6]

4. *Septuagint*

According to the legend found in the Letter of Aristeas, the Greek translation of the Old Testament was undertaken in Alexandria by 72 elders from Jerusalem upon the order of King Ptolemy II Philadelphos (285–246). The first section to be translated was the Torah. This translation is also of interest for the history of the interpretation of Isaiah. The translation of the book of Isaiah (LXX Isaiah) dates to the second half of the second century BCE and is thereby contemporaneous with the great Isaiah scroll found in Qumran (see below). The variants between the Greek translation and the Masoretic text usually cannot be explained as unintentional deviations; rather, they give expression to an actualizing tendency. Just as in the Pesharim from Qumran or the interpretation of the New Testament, the prophecy of Isaiah was also applied to the current social, political, and religious reality of the authors and addressees of the LXX. The translators of the book of Isaiah were probably Jewish scholars who had fled to Egypt in the face of Hellenizing politics found in Jerusalem, something that eventually led to the Maccabean revolt.

In this manner the LXX Isaiah portrays an actualized message of the Jerusalemite prophet whose words are still valid, even after half a millennium. Two examples illustrate this. In the Hebrew text of Isa. 8.16 Isaiah emphasizes that he wishes to seal up his instruction among his disciples, whereby here the word 'torah' refers to his prophetic teaching (cf. Isa. 1.10; 5.24; 30.9). The Greek translation, however, reads, 'Then those will be revealed who seal up the law in order not to learn'. The prophetic instruction has been transformed into the Mosaic law (Greek: '*nomos*') and the disciples of Isaiah have become those who refuse to learn from the Torah. This emphasis on the Mosaic law is found once again in LXX Isa. 8.20: 'He gave the law, however, as a help'. The translators who had fled from the traitors of the law in Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1.11) turn Isaiah into their advocate of Torah obedience and themselves into his disciples, ones who hope that God will establish his righteousness and put an end to the godless activity in Jerusalem.[7]

Josephus claims that Onias IV, a member of the high-priestly family, fled from Jerusalem in the company of priests and Levites in the year 160 BCE in

6. Feldman, *Josephus' Portrait of Isaiah*, p. 592.
7. Van der Kooij, *Isaiah in the Septuagint*, p. 528.

order to build a Yhwh-temple in Leontopolis (*Ant*. 13.3.1-3). Isaiah 19.19 (see above) served as a reference for such a cultic site, which was otherwise strictly forbidden outside of Jerusalem. Against the Hebrew text the Greek translators do not say that one can bind oneself there to Yhwh in an oath, which would mean that non-Jews could be included (cf. Isa. 45.23). Instead, it says that one must swear by the name of Yhwh (cf. Isa. 48.1), which keeps the circle limited to Jews.[8] Isaiah is thus interpreted in two directions. On the one hand he is the visionary who foresaw a multitude of later events, on the other he is the prophet who orients himself to the Mosaic law and who advocates obedience to it.

5. *Qumran*

Twenty one scrolls or fragments of scrolls have been found in the eleven caves from Qumran that contain parts of the book of Isaiah.[9] In addition to this we have a further Isaiah manuscript from Murabba'at (Mur 3), located slightly further to the south. This large number is limited in that it is only the great Isaiah scroll from cave 1 (1QIsa^{a}) that contains the entire text of the 66 chapter long book of Isaiah, preserved on a 7.34 m long and 26 cm high leather scroll with 56 columns. The second scroll (1QIsa^{b}) from the Herodian period has only been partially preserved and presents us with passages from 46 chapters. Eighteen Isaiah manuscripts were found in the fourth cave, of which three contain over a few hundred verses (4QIsa$^{a.b.c.}$), the rest containing only individual verses that altogether come from 36 chapters of the book of Isaiah (e.g. 4QIsa^{r} [4Q69b] contains Isa. 30.23). At least 4QIsa^{b} encompasses the entire text, for it preserves both its beginning (1.1-6) and its end (66.24). Their poor condition is a result of the fact that they were not stored in jugs and thus were more exposed to weathering. Since these discoveries in 1947 the age of the oldest witnesses to the Hebrew Bible (Codex Leningradensis from the 9th and Codex Aleppo from the 10th centuries) has been increased by roughly a thousand years. The Isaianic manuscripts from the Dead Sea have been palaeographically dated to between the last third of the second century BCE to the middle of the first century CE. Despite over a thousand spelling variants over against the Masoretic tradition it is certain that there was no alternative Isaiah text in Qumran. It is just as certain that the switch in copyist between chaps 1–33 and 34–66 in 1QIsa^{a} is not due to a change in the original document for the second part of the scroll.

The high esteem in which Isaiah was held can be seen in that of all the manuscripts of biblical books found in Qumran there are only two that

8. Van der Kooij, *Die erste Übersetzung*, p. 225.
9. Fabry, *Die Jesaja-Rolle in Qumran*, pp. 227-30; Ulrich, *Book of Isaiah*, pp. 384-88.

are more numerous than Isaiah, namely the Psalms and Deuteronomy, with 36 and 29 manuscripts respectively. This can be compared with Ezekiel and Jeremiah, of whom we only have five and six manuscripts respectively. Despite the caution that must be shown when evaluating what could be purely random data, it is nevertheless clear that of the three great prophets, Isaiah was particularly valued by the Qumran community.[10] The book is explicitly cited 23 times, whereas Ezekiel and Jeremiah are only cited 14 times each. The allusions paint an equally clear picture. There are probably 43 allusions to Jeremiah and 26 to Ezekiel in the Hodayot ('praises'), whereas for Isaiah there are 154.[11] This dominance accords with the New Testament, where Isaiah is also the third most commonly cited book after the Psalms and Deuteronomy.

In addition to the 21 Isaiah manuscripts in Qumran there are six pesharim on Isaiah (3QpIsa.[3Q4]; 4QpIsa^{a} [4Q161]; 4QpIsa^{b} [4Q162]; 4QpIsa^{c} [4Q163]; 4QpIsa^{d} [4Q164]; 4QpIsa^{e} [4Q165]). Pesher (plural: pesharim) means 'interpretation', a particular identity-strengthening interpretive praxis found in Qumran. The Pesharim are dated from the 1st century BCE to 50 CE. This shows that the exegesis of Isaiah blossomed fully until the end of the Qumran community. Interestingly, although pesharim have been found on some of the twelve Minor Propehts (Habakuk, 1QpHab; Hosea, 4Q166–167; Micah 4Q168; Nahum 4Q169; Zephaniah 4Q170), none have been found on the two other great prophets, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. On the other hand, they have been the source for the development of apocryphal traditions (e.g. Pseudo-Ezekiel, 4Q385; 4Q386; 4Q388; Jeremiah-Apokryphon 4Q385b; 4Q389a), which is not the case for Isaiah and the twelve Minor Prophets.

The community of Qumran was less interested in the person of Isaiah (in contrast to, e.g., Enoch, Moses, Daniel) than in his message, the eschatological fulfilment of which constituted the primary guideline for their faith and conduct. God had laid his wisdom into the heart of the Teacher of Righteousness, the priest, to authoritatively interpret the words of the prophet for the final generation (1QpHab 2.7-10). The fact that they were living in the End Times was undisputed. The exact moment of the consummation was hidden from the prophet himself, for the extent of the timeframe was considerable and because of the wondrous mysteries of God (1QpHab 7.7-8). As successors of Moses and the servants of God the prophets are those bearers of revelation who instruct the community to do what is good with all their hearts and all their soul and to keep themselves away from evil (1QS 1.1-5). Moses has significantly more authority than the prophets, for whereas the words of one such as Isaiah are totally subordinated to the

10. For a comprehensive review, see Metzenthin, *Jesaja-Auslegungen in Qumran*.
11. Brooke, *Isaiah in the Pesharim and Other Qumran Texts*, p. 611.

word of God ('When the word that is written in the words of Isaiah is fulfilled', CD 7.10-11),[12] Moses speaks on his own authority ('Moses has said' CD 5.8; cf. CD 8.14).

The command to prepare the way for the Lord in the wilderness plays an important role in the Community Rule. According to 1QS 8.13-16 members should separate themselves from the men of injustice, i.e. sinful Jerusalem, so that they can go into the wilderness and prepare there the way for Yhwh (cf. Isa. 40.3). This act of separation is not only the path back to the beginnings of Israel's relationship to God (cf. Hos. 2.17; Jer. 2.2), it is also the precondition for a cult that is pleasing to God and for the study of the Torah and the Prophets (1 QS 8.15-16). This motif was to be of great significance to the early Christian community, as can be seen by the fact that all four Gospels commence Jesus' public ministry with the call to prepare the way for the Lord (Mt. 3.3.; Mk 1.3; Lk. 3.4; Jn 1.23; see below).

The Qumran community did not only construct its identity by looking inwards, it also established boundaries with the outside world. Isaiah was a valuable witness for this process as well. A parallel was drawn between Satan's (or Belial's) persecution of the community in the form of the three temptations of sexual sin, wealth, and the contamination of the temple, and the word of the prophet in Isa. 24.17: 'Terror, pit, and snare upon you, O inhabitant of the land!' (CD 4.13). The community connects Isaiah's dispute with the priests of his time in Isa. 28.10ff. to their own dispute with the corrupt temple aristocracy in Jerusalem (note the keyword '*zaw*' in CD 4.19-20). Before the Teacher of Righteousness had taught them the way the members of the community were like the blind who can only gropingly go their way (CD 1.8-9; cf. Isa. 59.10). The separation between the sinful masses corresponds to the beatitude at the beginning of the Psalter, 'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked' (Ps. 1.1), a text interpreted in light of both Isa. 8.11 and Ezek. 37.23 (4Q174). The community at Qumran should separate itself from the path of the sinful nation just as Isaiah had done, for his prophetic word had been sent for their day, which is the end of days. The community understands itself to be the community of those who, like Moses, dig a well in the wilderness (cf. Num. 21.16-18). The well is the Torah and the diggers are the converts within Israel (cf. Isa. 59.20) who have left the land of Judah to go to Damascus, i.e. to go into exile. The 'guide' is the interpreter of the Torah, of whom Isa. 54.16 had said that Yhwh would bring forth an instrument to do his work (CD 6.3-8). When God has punished who those who despise him, that which Isaiah the son of Amoz had said in Isa. 7.17a will be fulfilled: 'Days are coming upon you and your people and your father's house that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah' (CD 7.9-12). For the community

12. Metzenthin, *Jesaja-Auslegung in Qumran*, p. 177.

this interpretation is both warning and promise at the same time. Isaiah's message of judgement that applied once to the whole nation is now limited to the enemies of the community. The adversaries are vilified with nicknames such as 'gossipers' (4Q162.II.6; cf. Isa. 28.14) or those who 'seek after smooth things' (e.g. 4Q163 Frg. 23.II.10; 4Q169 Frg.3 + 4.I.2; cf. Isa. 30.9-10), a reference to the Pharisees.[13]

The messianic promise that a shoot from the stump of Jesse shall grow out of the wasted thickets of the forest (Isa. 10.34–11.1) is similarly interpreted, along with explicit mention of the prophet (4Q285, Frg. 5 = 11Q14.1.1.). Isaiah was thus understood at Qumran to not only be a preacher of judgement (for those outside the community) but also a proclaimer of future salvation (for those within the community). 4Q176 (4QTanchumim = 'comforts') offers a series of comforting messages taken from the second part of the book of Isaiah (Isa. 40.1-5; 41.8-9; 43.1-2, 4-6; 49.7, 13-17; 51.22-23; 52.1-3; 54.4-10). By means of this series of quotations the community applies the comfort of God that was offered after the end of the Babylonian exile to itself and its own period in the wilderness. In answer to the complaint concerning the priests who had been killed in Jerusalem but who had not received a burial (cf. Ps. 79.1-3), Isa. 40.1-5a is quoted 'from Isaiah's book of Comforts'. The vision of the glory of God on the part of 'all flesh' (Isa. 40.5b) is ignored. Instead, a direct connection is made with 41.8-9: 'But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen … You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off'. In this manner, the community from the Dead Sea masks the universalistic perspective in Isa. 40.1ff., which is open to all the nations, and concentrates on its identity as the only true Israel. The positive expectation of salvation for Zion in Isa. 54.1-2 is also cited in 4Q265 Frg. 2.3-5 with reference to the prophet Isaiah.

The Melchizedek Midrash in 11Q13 2.4-25 also refers to central passages in Isaiah 40ff. Regarding the last days, there is a proclamation of the liberation of the prisoners in the year of divine favour (Isa. 61.1), an event at which Melchizedek alongside the one anointed with the spirit (11Q13 2.18) will play the main role.[14] Melchizedek, who will be in charge of the judgement of Belial, is understood to be a heavenly figure, whereas the Messiah is seen as earthly, as the messenger of joy.[15] Then the days of peace will have arrived of which Isaiah had said, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation and the reign of God out of Zion' (Isa. 52.7). According to this midrash the mountains stand for the prophets and Zion

13. Metzenthin, *Jesaja-Auslegung in Qumran*, pp. 264-65.
14. See Fabry, *Messias*, pp. 49-50.
15. Metzenthin, *Jesaja-Auslegung in Qumran*, p. 322.

for the community of the sons of righteousness who establish the covenant and who do not go the way of the nation (11Q13 2.17, 23-24; cf. Isa. 8.11). The word of God announced by the prophet Isaiah finds its true interpretation and fulfilment in the resistance of the Qumran community to the aristocratic priests of Jerusalem. The Teacher of Righteousness as interpreter of the Torah has a decisive hermeneutical task within this context. He is the one who, like a shepherd, tends and pastures the community through the revelation of the teaching of righteousness (cf. Isa. 40.11; 4Q165 Frg. 1–2.2). Jerusalem's ornamentation with sapphires and rubies (Isa. 54.11-12) is interpreted by the community to refer to themselves, the elect who will sparkle like precious stones among non-precious stones, an echo too of the twelve precious stones fastened to the breastplates of the priests in Exod. 28.21 (4Q164 Frag. 1.1–4).

6. *New Testament*

There are more than 400 quotes, allusions, and paraphrases of Isaiah in the New Testament.[16] They are relatively evenly distributed over the three main sections of the book (Isaiah 1–39: 150; 40–55: 170; 56–66: 90) and are taken from 56 of the 66 chapters. The only chapters not referred to are chaps 3–4; 15–18; 20; 31; 36; 39. Apart from the pastoral epistles and the second and third letters of James which hardly, if at all, refer to the Old Testament, all other texts in the New Testament refer to the book of Isaiah.[17] The historical Jesus (Q Document 4.20-21, cf. Isa. 61.1-2; Q 7.11, cf. Isa. 26.19; 29.18-19; 35.5-6; 61.1), the Synoptics, John, and Paul have all been influenced by the book of Isaiah in various ways. The latter author cites the Old Testament roughly 100 times (usually according to the LXX), whereby one third of the quotes are from the Pentateuch and one quarter from Isaiah. The Psalter follows as the third most cited book, although with far less frequency.[18] The Isaianic references substantiate important themes, such as the presentation of Jesus as the anointed one, the hardening of Israel as a parallel to the rejection of Jesus, and the commission to proclaim the gospel to the whole world. In no other biblical book does the message of joy itself have such a central position as in Isaiah 40ff., where the Hebrew word *bśr* (LXX *euangelizō*) appears in five places (40.9; 41.7; 52.7; 60.6; 61.1; cf. Nah. 2.1). The reference to the book of Isaiah thereby places the proclamation of Jesus under the motto of the salvific message of joy.

16. Moyise/Menken (ed.), *Isaiah in the New Testament*.
17. Evans, *From Gospel to Gospel*, p. 651; see, however, 1 Pet. 1.24-26 = Isa. 40.6-8.
18. So Evans, *From Gospel to Gospel*, pp. 682ff. (with references).

6.1. *Gospels and Acts of the Apostles*

For Mark as the author of the first Gospel, the text concerning the preparation of the way of the reign of God in Isa. 40.2-3 serves as an interpretive horizon for this new literary genre of the early Christian community (Mk 1.1-3).

Given the interpretation in Qumran (11Q13), which actualizes Isaiah 61 by claiming that the one anointed by the spirit communicates on earth the deeds carried out by Melchizedek in heaven, it is not surprising that Jesus of Nazareth is also seen in this light. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Lk. 4.18-19). Luke sharpens here the Old Testament statement, for instead of Isa. 61.1b (the healing of the broken hearted) the evangelist of the poor emphasises once again the release of the captives, which he takes *verbatim* from LXX Isa. 58.6.[19] In concrete acts of healing, in the breaching of social and cultic barriers, the salvific activity of God announced by Isaiah is actualized in the prophet from Galilee! This corresponds with both the temporal as well as the geographical location, for according to Mt. 4.12-17 the arrest of John the Baptist was followed by Jesus' return to Galilee, the region of Zebulon and Naphtali. This satisfies Isa. 8.23b. Just like the Teacher of Righteous at Qumran, the evangelists believe themselves capable of interpreting Scripture in relation to their own period of history, which means in relation to the Jesus event. The fact that MT Isa. 8.23b (different to the LXX) spoke of an 'earlier' and a 'later time' made an interpretation in relation to Jesus even more inviting. For the early Christian community he was the fulfilment of the Davidic-messianic promises. Thus Mt. 4.16 picks up Isa. 9.1: 'The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has risen'. In contrast to MT and LXX Isa. 9.1 (*nāgah*; *lampō*), Matthew does not speak here of the 'shining' of the light but from its 'rising' (*anatellō*). This emphasizes the political character of the Jewish Messiah in the person of Jesus, which contrasts with the Roman cult of the emperor. The star from the East that leads the three Magi to the crib and remains standing above newborn child (Mt. 2.2, 9) is a contrasting image to the one found upon imperial coins, where a star shines above the imperator. The fact that in LXX Isaiah the word 'rising' (*anatolē*; cf. Lk. 1.78) is a translation for the theologically loaded word *ṣāmaḥ*/*ṣemaḥ* (to sprout/sprout) (cf. Isa. 42.9; 43.19; 44.4; 45.8; 58.8; 61.11), in some places a codename for the future Davidic ruler (Jer. 23.5; 33.15; Zech. 3.8; 6.12; cf. 4Q161 Frag. 8–10.11ff. on Isa. 11.1-5), confirms that the use of the term in Luke does not, in the first instance, refer to the eastern point of the compass.

19. Hoppe, *Arm und Reich (NT)*, pp. 83-85.

The claim that according to the prophet Jesus would be call '*nazōraios*' (Mt. 2.23) is certainly a reference to his home town of Nazareth, yet it cannot function as proof from Scripture, for no such place is found within the whole Old Testament. As a result, it is unclear which prophet is being cited. It is highly improbably that the word nazirite rather than Nazarene is here intended, for on the one hand Jesus was not an ascetic (in contrast to his cousin John the Baptist; cf. Lk. 1.15; 7.33) and on the other hand the LXX translates the term as '*naziraios*' (Judg. 13.5, 7; 16.17). There is much that speaks in favour of understanding Mathew's term '*nazōraios*' as another reference to the Davidic shoot (Hebrew: *nēṣer*, cf. Isa. 11.1) who was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, but who grew up in Nazareth.[20]

Balaam's prophecy that a star would rise out of Jacob (Num. 24.17; cf. Gen. 49.10) also stands in the background of these messianic interpretations. This prophecy also gave the later messianic candidate Bar Kochba his name ('Son of the Star' and not 'Son of the Lie' [Kosiba]). The prophecy that nations and kings would make their way with gifts in their hands to the light that would rise over Jerusalem (Isa. 60.1-3, 6) is fulfilled by the astrologers from the East who bring the newly born baby gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mt. 2.11).[21] The fact that the three magicians had not already achieved their goal upon arrival in Jerusalem but instead had to travel yet another short stretch of road similarly conforms to prophetic announcement: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel' (Mt. 2.6; cf. Mic. 5.1, 3; 2 Sam. 5.2 par. 1 Chron. 11.2). In Lk. 2.4 recourse to Scripture could be omitted because Joseph is of the house of David (cf. Lk. 1.27) and therefore came from Bethlehem, to which he had to return anyway for the population census.

The fulfilment citation that has received the most intense Christian theological attention is found in Mt. 1.23, where Jesus' birth from Mary is understood to be the fulfilment of the Isaianic promise to Ahaz of Judah of a royal prince (Isa. 7.14): 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall give him the name Emmanuel. That means, "God with us"'. The Greek expression '*parthenos*' is taken from LXX Isaiah 7.14 and denotes more clearly than the Hebrew word '*almâ* (MT Isa. 7.14) a still untouched virgin.[22] Yet this citation is not the first attempt to make Mary a virgin mother. The divine lineage of the messianic successor to the throne goes back to a Jewish tradition that can already be found in LXX Isaiah in the second century BCE (cf. the conception through the Holy Spirit in Mt. 1.18, 20; Lk. 1.35). The evangelist Matthew, therefore, does not use the Isaianic reference

20. Ploch, *Jesaja-Worte*, pp. 146-48, 178.
21. Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, pp. 156-57.
22. Cf. Ploch, *Jesaja-Worte*, pp. 139ff.; also see Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, pp. 203-205.

in order to verify the virgin birth but in order to emphasize the continuity of the divine care for Israel in Jesus of Nazareth.[23] Although the terms for 'young woman' (*neanis*) and 'virgin' (*parthenos*) are not always easy to distinguish semantically, it is striking that '*neanis*' never occurs in the prophetic writings whereas '*parthenos*' can often be found (e.g. Amos 5.2; Isa. 7.14; 37.22; 47.1; 62.5; Jer. 2.32; 18.13; 26.11; 28.22; 38.4, 13, 21). It is also interesting to note that according to Mt. 1.23 neither the mother (MT Isa. 7.14) nor the father (LXX Isa. 7.14) give the child the name 'Emmanuel', rather it is a collective: 'they will name' (*kalesousin*). It is the community of the namers of Jesus (yeshua = salvation/deliverance) who see in him the 'God-with-us' at work.

The communal aspect also comes to the fore in the citation of prophecy in Mt. 8.17, by which the evangelist concludes the summary note on healing from psychological and physical illnesses with a reference to Isa. 53.4: 'This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases"'. In contrast to LXX Isa. 53.4, which speaks of the bearing of sins (*hamartiai*), the Matthean interpretation emphasizes that the miracle-working Jesus bears away the actual illnesses and infirmities of the community and thus becomes Emmanuel ('God with us') (Mt. 1.23).[24]

The longest reference to prophetic fulfilment can be found in Mt. 12.18-20. This citation is also placed in the context of Jesus' healing power. In this case, the emphasis is placed on the necessity of keeping his identity a secret, a practical impossibility in light of his healing of all the crowds in 12.15! Matthew achieves two things by referring to the first servant song in Isa. 42.1-4. On the one hand, he presents Jesus as the servant who has been equipped with divine power and authority; on the other hand, the command for the people to keep silent prevents Jesus from being misunderstood as a popular miracle worker. Matthew appears to be following the Hebrew text of Isa. 42.1ff., where the servant is not identified by name (in LXX Isa. 42.1 he is identified as Jacob/Israel). The paradox of a messiah whose name will be the hope of all the nations (LXX Isa. 42.4) yet who operates entirely within the confines of the small province of Judea helps Matthew interpret the person and work of Jesus. Matthew follows the LXX and not the MT (cf. the Targum) when he says that it is the name of Jesus that the nations hope for and not the torah. The salvific presence of God that takes on a form in Jesus that can be expressed and addressed (Mt. 1.23) will be extended to all the nations (cf. Mt. 28.19). Such a concept is not without precedent in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 2.2-4; 12; 40–55; 60–62; 66.18-23).

23. Kampling, *Jesajatraditionen im Neuen Testament*, p. 232.
24. Ploch, *Jesaja-Worte*, pp. 156-57.

An important part of Jesus' ministry was his proclamation by means of parables. These remained incomprehensible to the masses. Jesus interpreted them, however, for his disciples so that they would know the mysteries of heaven (Mt. 13.14-15). The divisive effect of this form of preaching also had its role model in the proclamation of Isaiah (Isa. 6.9-10), for Jesus' parables were specifically intended to evoke incomprehension: 'For this reason (*dia touto*) I speak to them in parables, so that (*oti*) seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear and understand' (Mt. 13.13). The prophecy (*prophēteia*) to those who neither see nor hear is fulfilled in the incomprehension of the masses through the preaching of Jesus. This prophecy is especially significant, for it is the only one that Jesus himself cites (cf. Mk 4.12; Lk. 8.10). It is possible that the historical Jesus had already interpreted his mission in light of the Isaianic word about the hardening of the masses and the following of his disciples once he realized that his message faced the threat of failure. This division is the subject of his debate with the Pharisees and scribes who accuse his disciples of transgressing the tradition of the fathers. According to Mt. 15.8-9, Jesus answers with a reference to LXX Isa. 29.13: 'You hypocrites! How appropriate it is what Isaiah prophesied about you: This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they honour me; what they teach as doctrines are human precepts.'

The Johannine discourse on bread from heaven similarly alludes to the interplay of acceptance and rejection when it applies the prophetic promise in Isa. 54.13 to those who are willing to hear: 'And they shall all be taught by God' (Jn 6.45). The reaction of the masses to the signs of Jesus is judged negatively by means of a citation of Isa. 53.1: 'This was to fulfil the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Lord, who has believed our message? And the arm of the Lord—to whom has his power been revealed?' (Jn 12.38; cf. Rom. 10.16). The inability to believe (*ouk ēdynanto pisteuein*) is interpreted as a direct consequence of the commission to harden hearts in Isa. 6.9-10 (Jn 12.39-40). There is a third reference to Isaiah in the immediately following context, this time to his vision of the throne: 'Isaiah said this because he saw his glory (*tēn doxan autou*) and spoke about him (*peri autou*). The prophetic vision no longer applies to the glory of God as the king of the world, it also applies to the glory of Jesus, who has appeared as the eschatological judge and saviour (Jn 12.44ff.). The first part of the Gospel of John (chaps 1–12), therefore, ends with a threefold reference to Isaiah as the proclaimer of a message of God which challenges its hearers to either believe in the one sent by the Father or to reject him, which is disbelief. It is only after this decision has been made that the reader can continue the journey towards Jerusalem (Jn 13.1), the journey of suffering and glorification.

The final fulfilment citation in the Gospel of Matthew is placed before Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, where he is hailed as the messiah (Mt. 21.5). Jesus had requisitioned a donkey and her foal while staying in Bethphage

on the Mount of Olives in order 'to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet: "Tell daughter Zion [cf. Isa. 62.11]: Look, your king is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey, on a foal, the colt of a pack animal [cf. Zech. 9.9]"'. In this collage of quotes, the introduction has been taken from Isaiah, for Zion/Jerusalem does not play such a central role in any other prophet. The key words 'daughter Jerusalem' and 'your salvation/your king is coming (to you)' refer to Zechariah, which announces Jesus' entry into his city as a humble king. The rejoicing does not come from the inhabitants of Jerusalem but from those who accompany Jesus and proclaim him as king (*basileus*) (cf. Zech. 9.9; in LXX Isa. 62.11 *sōtēr*, 'saviour'). Jerusalem, the city of the temple, responded to Jesus from the start with either reservation or rejection. This was already indicated in Mt. 2.1-3 when it was not just Herod but *all* of Jerusalem who were dismayed at the news of the birth of the king of the Jews. This interpretation is confirmed when at the end of the gospel the *entire* city finds itself in turmoil and asks who it is who is entering the city surrounded by such joy (Mt. 21.10). All in all, Jerusalem is a long way off from being the messenger of joy, the evangelist of the salvific power of Yhwh for the cities of Judah and the world of the nations (Isa. 62.10-12 refers explicitly to Isa. 40.9-11). Instead, Jerusalem will become the setting for the rejection and violent death of her king. Jesus himself seems to have grown in this conviction over time (cf. Mt. 16.21; 20.17-18).

The fact that there are not fulfilment citations in Matthew's version of the passion narrative may at first glance appear surprising. This coincides, however, with the other gospels, which also only explicitly *cite* the scriptures of Israel to a limited degree. A significant reason for this is that a slain messiah did not belong the conceptual world of Judaism, and so is also not found at Qumran. One of the few Old Testament citations concerning the suffering of Jesus is found in Lk. 22.37. Just before his arrest Jesus calls upon his disciples to prepare themselves for the impending decision that they will have to make by saying, 'For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, "And he was counted among the lawless [Isa. 53.12a]". But that which applies to me [*to peri emou*] also has an end [*telos*]'. Again, seen retrospective yet without giving a reference, the Resurrected One says to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, 'Was it not necessary that the messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself [*ta peri eautou*] in all the scriptures' (Lk. 24.26-27). He repeats this again to the Twelve, whereby he supplements the reference to Moses and the Prophets with a reference to the Psalms. Everything written in the three sections of the Scriptures of Israel concerning Jesus (*ta peri emou*: 'about me') had to be fulfilled and was fulfilled in him.[25]

25. The most developed interpretation of Isaiah 52 is found in 1 Pet. 2.22-25 (from the

The Acts of the Apostles deploys citations from Isaiah in two different ways. On the one hand, they serve to substantiate the transfer of the message of salvation from Israel to the nations by proving that it is in accordance with scripture. For example, Paul and Barnabas invoke Isa. 49.6 in order to present themselves and their proclamation as 'a light for the nations' and as 'salvation until the end of the earth' (Acts 13.47). Beforehand, the Ethiopian eunuch had already been baptized on the way home from Jerusalem after Philip had interpreted Isaiah 53 for him in relation to Jesus (Acts 8.26-40). This was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that the worship of Yhwh would extend to people from other nations, even those who had been castrated (Isa. 56.3-7). On the other hand, in Acts 13.34 Luke makes use of the divine promise of the holy and reliable mercies to David (LXX Isa. 55.3), along with Pss 2.7; 16.10, in order to demonstrate the certainty of Jesus' resurrection.

Luke concludes his historical report in Acts 28.26-27 with a citation of LXX Isa. 6.9-10, the commission to harden Israel's hearts. Some of the Jews had been convinced by the Christocentric interpretation of scripture, others, however, responded to Paul's interpretation with unbelief (Acts 28.24). In this manner the contrast between acceptance and rejection—a principle inherent to all proclamation—is stylized as the decisive characteristic of the relationship between Jews and Christians. The Isaianic message, which once reflected a historically particular inner-Jewish division between the hearers of prophetic preaching and those who reject it, has now become a proof text for Israel's unwillingness to hear *in toto* and *in aeternum*. Luke underscores the truth of this interpretation, this 'pesher', by explicitly referring to the source of the interpretation: 'The Holy Spirit was right in speaking to *your* ancestors through the prophet Isaiah' (Acts 28.25). In many manuscripts we find the alternative reading 'to *our* fathers', a positive indication of an awareness of a *common* history of faith. In contrast to this, the final word of the Lukan Paul to his Jewish audience cements in an almost fatal manner the concept of the Jews as hardened non-hearers of the gospel: 'Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen!' (Acts 28.28). This problem becomes particularly clear when one looks at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke: 'The fact that the Jewish people rejected a salvation that, from the beginning of its presentation in the Lukan infancy narrative, had been so highly encoded in Isaianic categories, is a mystery that can only be dealt with theologically'.[26]

end of the first century). Here, Jesus' suffering is interpreted neither soteriologically nor christologically but rather paranetically. The suffering servant is a role model for slaves to subordinate themselves even to their malicious masters!

26. Von Bendemann, *Geschichtskonzeption*, p. 69.

6.2. *Paul*

The significance of Isaiah for Paul's theology and interpretation of Scripture cannot be overestimated. Apart from the Psalms, the apostle to the gentiles invokes no other Old Testament text as much as the book of this prophet.[27] It is only in Romans, however, that he explicitly identifies the source of his citations as Isaiah (five times: Rom. 9.27, 29; 10.16, 20; 15.12). The extent of the impact of this prophet in particular upon Paul's thought can be seen in the fact that it is always Isaianic texts that are cited at the highpoint of his argumentation, and not the other prophets that he explicitly names (Hosea, 9.25; Moses, 10.9).[28] A comparison with his earlier letters indicates that Paul only gradually discovered the prophet for himself and his proclamation. Whereas the references to Isaiah in 1 Thess. 1.10 (Isa. 59.19-20), 4.16 (Isa. 26.19), and 5.8 (Isa. 59.17) are entirely dedicated to the theme of the parousia, Paul draws upon Isaianic prophecy in Gal. 1.15 (Isa. 49.15; 42.6) and 1.16 (Isa. 52.10) in order to explicate his role as apostle to the gentiles. In 2 Cor. 6.2 he presents himself as a prophetic proclaimer, as a co-worker of God in this time of grace and salvation (Isa. 49.8). In this manner, he reads 'the text of Isaiah as a prophetic depiction of his calling to be an apostle of Jesus Christ for the gentiles'.[29]

Paul's starting point is that God's salvation for Israel and the nations has become a reality in Jesus Christ. In him the words of the prophets are fulfilled, the mysteries of scripture are manifested. For Paul, 'the relation between faith in Christ and the exegesis of Isaiah is dialectical. On the one hand, it is only in light of the message of Christ that the meaning of the prophet's words become clear; on the other hand, it is only in light of the book of Isaiah that a number of aspects of this message become comprehensible'.[30]

At the beginning of his letter to the Romans Paul refers to Isa. 52.5 (Rom. 2.24) in order to prove that everyone, Jew and gentile, stands equally under the wrath of God (Rom. 1.18). Just as once the people of God had been sent into Babylonian captivity because of their transgressions, with the result that the name of God was blasphemed, so now Israel has once again brought the name of Yhwh into disrepute through its sins. Yet the gentiles are not better off, for both Jews and Greeks live under the dominion of sin (Rom. 3.9). Everyone is quick to shed blood, ruin is in their paths, they do not know the way of peace (cf. Isa. 59.7-8). No one can be justified on the basis of their own righteousness, for only God justifies (Rom. 8.33), which is a reference to the third servant song (cf. Isa. 50.8). Yhwh had once placed

27. Wilk, *Bedeutung*, p. 381, suggests 19 citations and 28 allusions.
28. Wilk, *Paulus*, pp. 101-102.
29. Wilk, *Paulus*, p. 111.
30. Wilk, *Paulus*, p. 108.

himself protectively before his servant and he will he do the same for those who are elected. Nothing can separate them from the love of Christ!

If this is the case, then why has the majority of Israel rejected Jesus? How can one reconcile God's faithfulness to Israel and their rejection of Jesus? This is the central issue of the letter to the Romans and so it is in Romans 9–11 that we find the densest number of references to Isaiah.[31] At the end of the ninth chapter Paul constructs his argument almost entirely out of references to Isaiah. Paul makes clear that salvation history has always been advanced through a remnant. We thus see that Isaiah proclaimed to Israel that even though it was as numerous as the sand of the sea, only a vestige would be saved (Rom. 9.27; Isa. 10.22-23). In order to strengthen this argument Paul cites Isa. 1.9, mentioning the prophet by name. Decision and division are bound inseparably together in the history of revelation. Just as during the time of Isaiah the bulk of the population stumbled at his call to trust in Yhwh, at the stumbling stone, the rock that will make them fall, the one that God had laid in Zion (Isa. 8.14; 28.16), so now have many stumbled at the message of righteousness out of faith in Christ (Rom. 9.30-33). Just as everyone, Jew and gentile, are subject to the divine wrath, so now do all have the same opportunity to be saved through faith in Christ (Rom. 10.11). Yet have they even heard of this, has it been proclaimed to them? Paul answers in Rom. 10.15 in the affirmative with a citation from Isa. 52.7: 'How welcome are the feet of those who bring good news'. He directly follows this by proving with a citation from Isa. 53.1 that the problem is not with the amount of proclamation but with the lack of reception of the message: 'Lord, who has believed our message?' (Rom. 10.16). Isaiah, speaking in the name of God, had already dared to say that acceptance and rejection did not respect the boundary between Jew and gentile: 'I let myself be sought out by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those, who did not inquire after me' (Isa. 65.1; Rom. 10.20). By turning towards the gentiles God is unceasingly soliciting his people Israel (Rom. 10.21; Isa. 65.2). 'In Christ God turns to the gentiles, who have not sought him; it is precisely by doing so, however, that God unceasingly stretches his hand out to the Israelites, who object to the gospel.'[32]

Just as in Romans 9–10, references to Isaiah form the centre of the Pauline argumentation in Romans 11. That which Israel is striving for has only been achieved by a selection (*eklogē*), the remainder have been hardened (*epōrōthēsan*) (Rom. 11.7). Evidence for this is provided, for example, by Isa. 29.10 and 6.9-10, where God has given his people the spirit of deafness, eyes which cannot see and ears which cannot hear, up until this very day. The latter reference picks up Isaiah's question in Isa. 6.11 concerning the

31. Watts, *Isaiah in the New Testament*, p. 224.
32. Wilk, *Paulus*, p. 106.

length of the hardening. Israel's stumbling does not serve their downfall but rather the salvation of the nations. Then again, this salvation is supposed to make the people of God jealous. If the nations have profited from Israel's guiltiness, how much more dazzling will the future be when the whole of Israel comes to faith (Rom. 11.11-12)? The opening up of the faith for the nations which could only occur through a partial hardening of Israel is the ultimate mystery (*to mystērion touto*) (Rom. 11.25). When the full number of the nations have experienced salvation, then Israel too will be saved. Here Paul refers to Isaiah once again (Isa. 59.20-21; 27.9): 'Out of Zion will come the deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins' (Rom. 11.26-27). In contrast to the MT and the LXX, here the deliverer does not come to Zion or for the sake of Zion, but he comes *out* of Zion! Whereas according to the MT God only comes to those within Jacob who have turned away from sin, according to Paul the deliver (= Christ) will come with the purpose of removing sin from Jacob (as in the LXX). The content of the covenant is not, as in the MT and the LXX, the continual communication of the prophetic word according to the model of Moses, it is the removal of the sins of the people of God and thus the levelling of the way of all to salvation. The divine ways of hardening and salvation for Israel and the nations is a reason to praise God's wisdom: 'for who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?' (Rom. 11.34; Isa. 40.13, 28).

The next time Paul refers to Isaiah with this intensity is the admonitions of chap. 15 (beforehand only in Rom. 14.11, referring to Isa. 45.23). Israel according to the circumcision, to whom Christ is a servant for the sake of the truthfulness of God, *and* the praise of the gentiles, who extol the mercy of God, belong together (Rom. 15.7-9). For the worldwide praise of God Paul cites Isa. 11.10 in which the shoot from the root of Jesse will come and be lifted up in order to rule over the nations; all the nations hope in him. Paul orients himself here towards the LXX, for in contrast to the MT, where the nations seek the shoot, the Greek text says that the Davidic shoot will rule over the nations and that they will hope in him. The apostle to the nations happily takes up the keyword 'to hope' (*elpizō*) in order to conclude with a twofold reference to the 'hope' (*elpis*) that comes from God and that leads to God (Rom. 15.13).

In the conclusion to the letter Paul emphasizes once again his calling for the nations, a ministry that he understands to be a priestly task for the gospel of God (Rom. 15.16). He says that it has always been important to him to work in the places where the gospel has not yet been proclaimed. Here he cites for the last time in the letter to the Romans the scriptures, this time Isa. 52.15: 'But as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand"' (Rom. 15.21).

6.3. *The Revelation of John*

The final book of the Christian canon contains the most Old Testament references; 50 of these are to the book of Isaiah. Those texts which are most intensely interpreted are the throne vision in Isa. 6.1-4, the announcement of judgement against Edom (Isa. 34.4, 9-11, 13-14), the image of a redeemed Jerusalem (Isa. 60.1-3, 5, 11, 14, 19), and the vision of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65.15-20a). Revelation emphasises the following points:[33]

1. The seer of Revelation takes his cue from Isaiah ben Amoz and his vision of Yhwh seated upon his throne as the boundless ruler over heaven and earth (Rev. 4.8; Isa. 6.2-3). There is no reference to the purification of the prophet or his commission to harden hearts; all that is picked up is the image of sovereignty. In this case, however, the image is applied to Christ rather than to the Pantocrator. The characteristic of God as the one who is the first and the last (Isa. 41.4; 44.6; 48.12) is applied to Christ as the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1.8, 17; 21.6; 22.13). This statement frames the book of Revelation and portrays Christ as the lord over all the world and all history. Without the vision of the final kingship of Yhwh in Isaiah, the application of this imagery to Christ would not have been possible.
2. Revelation's Christology has a Davidic-messianic foundation. Jesus Christ is the root of David (Rev. 5.5; 22.16; cf. Isa. 11.10); he has been given the keys of the royal house (Rev. 3.7; cf. Isa. 22.22). He judges in righteousness with the sword of his mouth (Rev. 19.11, 15; cf. Isa. 11.4). He is the Amen, the faithful and reliable witness (Rev. 3.14; cf. Isa. 65.15-16; 55.3).
3. This salvific end presupposes the eschatological act of judgement upon all kings who have opposed God, Christ, and his word. None of them will escape on the day of wrath (Rev. 2.15-16; cf. Isa. 2.10, 19), when heaven will be rolled up like a scroll and the fruit and fig trees will wither (Rev. 6.13-14; cf. Isa. 34.4). The hero who judges in righteousness and who wages war (Rev. 19.11-15) rules with an iron sceptre (Ps. 2.9) and treads the winepress of grim wrath (Isa. 63.3). A few of the oracles against the nations within the book of Isaiah that were originally addressed to Babylon (Isa. 13.21; 21.9; 47.7-9), Tyre (23.8, 17) and Edom (34.9-14) are now applied by the seer from Patmos to other hostile nations, in particular godless Rome (Rev. 14.8-11; 17.1–19.4). Just as in the book of Isaiah the fall of Babylon (Isaiah 47) is the signal for the royal rule of Yhwh over Israel and the nations, so now is the fall of the great whore the final step before the heavenly rejoicing (Rev. 19.4ff.).

33. Taken from Fekkes, *Isaiah in the book of Revelation*, pp. 280-82.

4. The portrayal of eschatological salvation similarly takes its cue from the image of the future Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah (Rev. 19.7; Isa. 61.10). The new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65.17), the presence of a God who dries all tears (Isa. 25.8) and thereby creates a world devoid of lament (Isa. 35.10), are all motifs taken from the book of Isaiah (Rev. 21.1-4). The image of the holy city of Jerusalem as the bride of God, adorned with precious jewels (Rev. 21.10-11) is an echo of Isa. 60.1-2. In addition to this we find the motifs of a light within the city that never dims (Rev. 21.23; Isa. 60.19-20) and doors which remain unlocked so that the nations may continuously bring in their sumptuous gifts (Isa. 60.3, 11). On the other hand, nothing impure will enter the city (Rev. 21.27; cf. Isa. 35.8; 52.1). In contrast to Isaiah (8.16), the seer should no longer seal up the prophecies of his book, for the time is near (Rev. 22.10) in which God will come with his recompense (Isa. 40.10). Similar to the end of the book of Isaiah (66.24), Revelation concludes with the statement that God's opponents will no longer have a place within the holy city. Instead, they are banished outside (Rev. 22.15).

7. *Rabbinic Tradition*

In the opinion of the Rabbis, Isaiah was of Jerusalemite royal lineage. His father Amoz, who had also been a prophet, is said to be the brother of king Amaziah (cf. 2 Kgs 14.1ff.; Amoz is a short form of the name 'Yhwh is strong'). His harsh sermons did not make Isaiah particularly popular among the Rabbis, for the rich speak harshly (Prov. 18.23), something to be expected from the upper classes with which he associated (*Pes. K.* 14.4).[34] The comparison of Jerusalem with Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 1.9-10; 3.9) found just as little approval as the statement that Isaiah saw Yhwh (Isa. 6.1), something that contradicts the divine announcement to Moses that no one can see God and live (Exod. 33.20). The fact that Isaiah characterized himself as a man of unclean lips, thereby putting himself on the same level as the sinful nation (Isa. 6.5), was also viewed critically. Isaiah was the only prophet who had unhindered access to the kings of Judah, which further emphasizes his aristocratic lineage. He can get away with telling the fatally ill king Hezekiah that the reason God has punished him with illness is because he never produced any sons, thereby flouting the first divine law: 'Be fruitful and multiply!' (Gen. 1.28). According to Rabbinic interpretation, the king excused his behaviour by claiming that he had foreseen what a wayward son he would have: 'I saw that I would have a wicked son, therefore I did not have any sons. He said to him: Take my daughter (as

34. Porton, *The Rabbis on the Prophet Isaiah*, p. 695.

a wife), perhaps the mixture of my characteristics and your characteristics will create a good son! Nevertheless, only a bad son (= Manasseh) was born. This is what is written: *The devices of the cunning are evil* (Isa. 32.7)' (*y. Sanh.* 28b.75–28c.9).[35]

The decisive event in the biography of Isaiah as far as the Rabbinic tradition is concerned is his martyrdom under Manasseh, portrayed in 2 Kgs 21.16 and 24.4 as a cruel persecutor of the righteous. As is known, the biblical texts themselves know nothing of a martyrdom of Isaiah. In the Talmud, however, this tradition, which would go on to have a powerful effect on later tradition, is well-developed. 'When Manasseh got up (and) chased Isaiah, he wanted to kill him, but he fled from him. He fled to a cedar tree and the cedar tree engulfed him with the exception of the tassels (Num. 15.38-41; Deut. 22.12) of his cloak. This was told to him (= Manasseh). He said to them: go and saw down the cedar tree! They sawed down the cedar tree and could see blood flowing' (*y. Sanh.* 28c, 44ff.).[36] This motif of the flight, of being engulfed by a tree,[37] and of being sawn, are unique in the entire Rabbinic tradition. Only in *b. Sanh.* 101a do we find a report about Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph being engulfed by a cedar tree; in this case the tree burst miraculously and thus set him free again. The reasons for Manasseh's mortal hatred of Isaiah are explained in two other places. In the Babylonian Talmud *Yebamot* 49b Manasseh accuses Isaiah of contravening the word of Moses in Exod. 33.20 by seeing God with his own eyes (Isa. 6.5). Isaiah had also brought God's salvific presence into disrepute by claiming that one should seek him as long as he is able to be found (Isa. 55.6), even though Moses had said that God would always answer when one calls to him (Deut. 4.7).The prophet avoids debating with Manasseh in order to not provoke him into becoming an intentional murderer. 'Then he spoke the name of God and was engulfed by a cedar tree. He thereupon caused the tree to be fetched and sawn, and as [the saw] reached his mouth, he died. This was because he had said: *and I dwell among a people of unclean lips* (*b. Yeb.* 49b;[38] cf. Isa. 6.5).

Another perspective can be found in *Pes. R.* 4.3.[39] On the day that Manasseh had the idol brought into the Jerusalem temple, the prophet confronted him with the accusation that he was acting arrogantly. He claims that Manasseh wants to build up the sanctuary although God cannot be contained in one house, for the heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool (Isa. 66.1). Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar will come and destroy

35. Based on the German translation by Wewers, *Talmud Yerushalmi*, IV:4, pp. 270-71.
36. Based on the German translation by Wewers, *Talmud Yerushalmi*, IV:4, p. 273.
37. See Gaster/Heller, *Baum*, pp. 32-52.
38. Goldschmidt, *Der Babylonische Talmud*, p. 481.
39. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati*, pp. 88-89.

the temple and deport him. Manasseh became furious in response and ordered that Isaiah be seized. When Isaiah fled, a carob tree opened up and engulfed him. There is no mention of the prayer tassels from his robe that betrayed his hiding place. Instead, Manasseh immediately orders carpenters to saw up the tree so that blood would flow. This makes use of 2 Kgs 21.16, where Manasseh fills Jerusalem from one end to the other (*peh lāpeh*, literally: 'from mouth to mouth') with blood. This Hebrew idiom creates a link with Moses, for God had spoken with him mouth to mouth (Num. 12.8: *peh 'el-peh*). In this manner the Rabbis bring Isaiah into close proximity with Moses.

The legend of the martyrdom of Isaiah is further developed in the 'Martyrdom of Isaiah', a Jewish text from the last third of the first century CE that was incorporated into the Christian tradition of the ascension of Isaiah.[40] In order to preserve something of Isaiah heroicness, there is no further reference either to Isaiah's flight or to a tree that could have hidden him. All attention is focussed upon the sawing (cf. Heb. 11.37).[41] As a visionary Isaiah had foreseen his end right from the beginning and had told it to Hezekiah in the presence of his son Manasseh (*Mart. Isa.* 1.7).[42]

The 'Ascension of Isaiah', a Christian text from the first decades of the second century CE (chaps 6–11) that continues the Jewish tradition of Isaiah's martyrdom (chaps 1–5), places particular emphasis on his visionary power. Isaiah had not only foreseen and preserved in writing the fates of Hezekiah, Manasseh, and himself, through his mystical ascension he had also obtained knowledge of the descent and ascent of the Beloved, i.e. the heavenly Christ. We thus read the following at the end of his vision: 'And I also saw the angel of the Holy Spirit sitting on the left. And this angel spoke to me: "Isaiah, son of Amoz, it is enough for you, for these are formidable things. You have seen what no other child of flesh has seen. You will return to your garment [= to your earthly corporeality—U.B.], until your days are filled. Afterwards, you will come here"' (*Asc. Isa*. 11.33-35).[43] The biblical cue for this idea was naturally Isa. 6.1, 5, where Isaiah reports that he has seen the divine king upon his high and lofty throne (cf. Jn 12.41: 'Isaiah said this, because he had seen Jesus' glory; he is the one he spoke about').

The 'Paralipomena Jeremiou' (Legacy of Jeremiah), a Jewish text with Christian supplements from the first third of the second century CE also makes reference to the Martyrdom of Isaiah, this time in the context of

40. For text and commentary see Hammershaim, *Martyrium Jesajas*.

41. Schaller, *Paralipomena Jeremiou*, p. 754 n. 21b, contains a very detailed list of early Jewish and Christian references to the sawing of Isaiah.

42. Based on the German translation of Hammershaimb, *Martyrium Jesajas*, p. 32.

43. Based on the German translation Detlef/Müller, *Himmelfahrt des Jesaja*, p. 561.

the martyrdom of Jeremiah. Just like Isaiah, this prophet had also seen the coming of Jesus as well as the gathering of the twelve apostles for the proclamation of the good news to all the nations. 'As Jeremiah said this about the Son, that he would come into the world, the people became angry and said, "This is a repetition of the words that Isaiah the son of Amoz had spoken, 'I saw God and the Son of God'. Come now, let us not kill him the way that we killed the other one! Rather, let us stone him"' (*Par. Jer.* 9.19-21).[44] Analogously to Isaiah, who was protected from his enemies by a tree, Jeremiah is protected by a stone which takes on his form, thereby deceiving his enemies into thinking that the figure they are stoning is the prophet himself. This gives the prophet the necessary time to communicate all his mysteries to Baruch and Abimelech. After this, Jeremiah completes his task, presents himself to his opponents, and is stoned (*Par. Jer*. 9.23-31).

8. *Patristic Literature*

Given the New Testament's strong interest in the Isaianic prophecies, it is not surprising that the Patristic literature continued to make abundant reference to them.[45] These prophecies played a key role for Clement of Rome (c. 50–100), Justin Martyr (c. 100–160), Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–200), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), Origen (c. 185–254) and Jerome (347–419), to name just a few. Some of the central motifs are the messianic prophecies (Isaiah 7; 9; 11; 61), texts concerning the suffering and death of the servant of God (Isa. 50.4ff.; 52.13ff.), the expansion of salvation to include the foreign nations (e.g. Isaiah 60; 62), and the hardening of Israel (Isa. 6.9-10). The motif of the hardening of Israel was particularly influential upon the Fathers, who intensified it by interpreting Isaiah 1 to refer to the whole nation. The remnant theology in Isa. 1.9 that excludes a divine rejection of Israel *in toto* and which was only picked up by Paul in the New Testament in Rom. 9.29 is effectively neutralized by an anti-Israel interpretation of Isa. 1.2-4 (e.g. Justin, *1 Apol.* 37–38; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.19.1). According to Jerome (*Comm. Isa. 1.1.3.*), the divine accusation at the beginning of the book of Isaiah witnesses to the inability of the Jews to see Christ in their own scriptures. In his literarily staged dialogue with the Jew Trypho, Justin applies Isaiah's indictment of the elite of 8th century BCE Jerusalem (Isa. 3.9-11; 5.18-20) to the Jews of his own day (*Dial*. 17.1; 133.4-5; 136.2). For him, the 'rebellious nation' is not just biblical Israel but the Jews, to whom Christ had stretched out his hands for healing but who had repaid him with

44. Schaller, *Paralipomena Jeremiou*, pp. 753-55.

45. See Jay, *Jesaja*, pp. 794-821; Childs, *Struggle to Understand Isaiah* and especially Wilken, *Isaiah* (with a selection of Patristic exegeses of the book of Isaiah).

disgrace and suffering (*1 Apol.* 38; cf. Isa. 50.6-8; 65.2). What is even more surprising is that Justin places the long collective prayer of complaint in Isa. 63.15–64.11 upon the lips of the Jews of his day, interpreting it as a cry to God to show mercy (*Dial*. 25.2-5).[46]

Isaiah's throne-vision (Isa. 6.1-4) was widely interpreted among the Fathers and continued to be influential by means of the iconographic representation of the *Majestas Domini* (see below). Whereas the New Testament limited itself to interpreting the motif of hardening (vv. 9-10; for an exception see Rev. 5.7; 15.8; cf. Jn 12.41), the Fathers focused on the motif of the glory and holiness of God. The *Trishagion* had already been interpreted by Clement of Rome in terms of the Trinity (*1 Clem.* 34.6) and he was followed by many others. Of the nine homilies by Origen that have been preserved in a Latin translation by Jerome, five refer to the vision of the prophet in Isaiah 6.[47] The two Seraphim are interpreted as Christ and the Holy Spirit:

> These Seraphim, however, who surround God and in the act of pure perception say 'holy, holy, holy!', preserve the mystery of the Trinity, for they themselves are holy. Of all things that exist, there is nothing that is more holy. And they do not simply say 'holy, holy, holy!' to one another. Rather, they proclaim with a loud shout a confession that serves the salvation of all. Who are these two Seraphim? My Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit (*Hom. Isa.* 1.2).[48]

This interpretation is resolutely opposed by Jerome. In a letter dating to around 380 CE that is addressed to Damasus, the Bishop of Rome (366–384), Jerome insists that the question 'who will go for *us*!' (Isa. 6.8)—similar to Gen. 1.26—can only refer to the divine Trinity. 'Who else can this "for us" refer to, if not to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for whom everyone goes who is obedient to their will? The appearance of a single person as the speaker is due to the unity of the Godhead, the "for us" demonstrates the differentiation of the persons' (*Hier. ep*. XVIII B.4).[49] Theophilus of Alexandria, in a tract written in Greek in around 400 and passed on in a Latin translation by Jerome (two documents of which, dating to the 11th and 12th centuries, were found in the library of the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino in 1901), also vehemently rejects the interpretation of Origen. His concern was to counteract the threat of positing the Son and the Spirit as created. 'For this reason we too wish to say to Origen, who brings everything into confusion with his fog of allegories ('*allegoriae nubilo universa*'): Away with your prophesying, away with it!'

46. Jay, *Jesaja*, p. 800.
47. German translation with detailed introduction by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*.
48. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 199.
49. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, pp. 327-29.

(*Theophilus tract. c. Or*. 1).[50] Towards the end of his tract against Origen's vision of Isaiah Theophilus formulates his repudiation once again in no uncertain terms: 'May God protect us from thinking such a thing about the Son and the Holy Spirit or from being tempted by such madness, that we should drivel Origen's foolish rubbish ('*deliramenta Origenis*') and claim that the two Seraphim are the Son and the Holy Spirit!' (*tract. c. Or*. 5).[51]

Further areas of interest in Patristic interpretation are the Isaianic prophecies of the birth of the Immanuel (Isa. 7.14; 9.5), the branch from the root of Jesse (Isa. 11.1, 10), and the anointing and commissioning of the Messiah (Isa. 61.1-3). The New Testament had established that the royal descendent would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7.14) by means of its first Isaianic citation in Mt. 1.23. This interpretation became the foundation for fierce anti-Jewish polemic. For example, Justin accuses the Jews of deviating from the LXX's translation '*parthenos*' (virgin) by using the word '*neanis*' (young lady) in the three more recent translations by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (*Dial.* 84.3). Irenaeus, too, polemicized against those who changed the original text (*Haer.* 3.21.5). A commonly used argument goes as follows: If it had not originally referred to an actual virgin, then it would not have been a sign (cf. *Comm. Isa.* 7.5). Jerome argues on the basis of the philology of the Hebrew terms *ʿalmâ* and *bᵉṯûlâ* and decisively rejects the Jewish interpretation of the woman as the royal wife of Ahaz and the child as their son Hezekiah (*Comm. Isa.* 3.7.14).[52] Origen also had no doubt that the interpretation should be christological: 'The promised sign is my Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sign that he should request for himself, whether in the depths or in the heights. In the depths, on the one hand, for he himself is the one who descends; in the heights, on the other hand, for he is the one who ascends above all heavens'[53] (*Hom. Isa.* 2.1). This Christian mode of reading is then directed against the people of God who had first been elected by God. Just like Ahaz, they have not asked for sign and so have proven their unbelief. 'Up until this day, however, the nation has not requested a sign, therefore it does not have him [i.e. Christ] with them and gives him trouble—the nation that does not accept my Lord Jesus Christ'[54] (*Hom. Isa.* 2.1).

Building on Isa. 7.14 (and occasionally 8.3-4), the birth of the divine king as well as his throne names (Isa. 9.5-6) are similarly interpreted by the Church Fathers in a thoroughly christological fashion. According to

50. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 333.

51. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 363.

52. Jay, *Jesaja*, p. 814. In *contra Celsum* 1.34, Origen provides a detailed citation of Deut. 22.23-26 in order to differentiate between the two terms, even though *ʿalmâ* does not even appear!

53. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 209.

54. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 211.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340), the naming of the child as 'messenger of the great council' indicates how Christ surpasses human nature and stands above all the angels. This is because his name is greater than the names of the angels (Heb. 1.4) and he implements the plan of his Father (*Comm. Isa.* 9.5). According to Tertullian, the fact that this royal child will bear his sovereignty upon his shoulders—in other words, he does not have a crown upon his head, a sceptre in the hand, or a special garment—can only refers to the cross of Christ (*Marc.* 3.19.1-3 [SC 399, 164-167]). In contrast to this, Eusebius, citing e.g. Eph. 1.19-21 and Ps. 72.7, interprets the great dominion and the endless peace as being the worldwide expansion of the church (*Comm. Isa.* 9.6).

After Isa. 7.14 and Isa. 9.5-6, Isa. 11.1-2, 10 is also interpreted in detail by the Church Fathers in relation to Christ as the messiah from the root of Jesse (e.g. *1 Apol.* 32). According to Jerome, the entire vision of Isaiah up until the fall of Babylon (in Isaiah 13), i.e. Isaiah 1–12, is a single prophetic proclamation of Jesus Christ. In contrast to the Jews, who relate the blossoming sprout from the root of Jesse to the Lord, i.e. to the Messiah, Jerome wants to interpret it in relation to Mary, whereby the Latin '*virga*' (branch/rod) points to the Latin '*virgo*' (virgin) (*Comm. Isa.* 11.1-3 [CChr.SL 73, 147-149]). This sixfold gift of the spirit in Isa. 11.2 (according to the MT), which had been expanded to seven in the LXX through its translation and adjoining of v. 3a (likewise the Vulgate), are also interpreted in relation to Christ. He received them at his baptism in the Jordan (cf. Mt. 3.16). In addition to this, the gift of the spirit is given to the whole world through the church, for the spirit is the comforter from the heights for the whole of humanity (*Haer.* 3.17.1-3 [SC 211, 328-338]). Origen connects the seven women who cling to *one* man so that he would take away their shame (Isa. 4.1) with the seven gifts of the spirit: 'Understand, therefore, how the wisdom of this world and the princes of this world ridicule wisdom; and therefore a man will be sought who shall be together with these seven spiritual women in order to take their shame from them. In reality, there is only one person who can take their shame from them. Who is this person? Jesus, who, according to the flesh, emerged from the root of Jesse' (*Hom. Isa.* 3.1).[55] In addition to this, Christ is characterized by the fact that, in contrast to Moses, Joshua, or individual prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Spirit did not only rest upon him momentarily, it remained with him perpetually (*Hom. Isa.* 3.2).

The motif of the gift of the Spirit leads from Isaiah 11 to Isaiah 62, something that is just as strongly emphasized in the scriptural interpretation of the Fathers and brought into connection with the baptism of Jesus. This connection suggested itself because, according to the interpretation of Jerome (*Comm. Isa.* on Isa. 61.1), the communication of the Spirit in the

55. From the German translation by Fürst/Hengstermann, *Origenes*, p. 221.

form of a dove (Jn 1.32) and Jesus' public appearance in his home synagogue in Nazareth occurred in immediate succession. By being placed into Christ the Spirit became accustomed to dwelling in human nature. This is why it is said in Mt. 10.20 that the persecuted disciples did not speak in their own power in front of their opponents but the Spirit of God spoke for them (*Haer.* 3.17.1-2 [SC 211, 328-335]).

The servant songs, in particular the fourth one, were intensively read by the Fathers in relation to the suffering and death of Jesus.[56] No other passage of the Old Testament was more frequently interpreted by the authors of the first Christian centuries than Isaiah 53. In continuity with the New Testament, however, the term 'servant' (*pais*)—in contrast to 'Christ', 'Lord' (*kyrios*) or 'Son of God' (*huios tou theou*)—was never raised to the status of a christological title.

The first song was also attracted the attention of the Fathers. This song was already important to Matthew who used it at the baptism of Jesus in order to declare him, the servant (Isa. 42.1), to be the beloved Son of the Father (Mt. 3.17). Matthew cites the entirety of Isa. 42.1-4 in order to interpret Jesus' activity a miracle healer (Mt. 12.18-21). Eusebius refers the visual image of the bruised reed that the servant will not break and of the dimly burning wick that he will not quench to the mildness of Jesus, who neither placed a yoke upon the poor and the oppressed nor flattered the mighty in high places, choosing instead to be benevolent and kind-hearted to everyone (Mt. 11.29; *Comm. Isa.* on Isa. 42.1-2). According to the claim made in Isa. 42.5b that God has given breath (*pnoē*) to each person upon the earth and spirit (*pneuma*) to those who walk upon it, the first term refers to the breath found in every human, the second, however, to the Spirit that is only given to those who control their desires (*Haer.* 5.12.1-2 [SC 153, 140-151]).

Luke made use of the second servant song in Acts 13.47 in order to ground the inception of the mission to the gentiles by Paul and Barnabas (Isa. 49.6: 'I have made you into a light for the nations'). Origen connects this passage with the Johannine statement about Jesus being the light of the world (Jn 1.4-5, 9; 8.12; 9.5; *Comm. Isa.* 1.158-159 [SC 120, 138]). The Alexandrian, along with a number of other Fathers, interprets the 'choice arrow' in LXX Isa. 49.2 (*belos eklekton*) as referring to Jesus, who wounds the one who yearns for the knowledge of God, just as is spoken by the bride in Song 2.5: 'I have been wounded by love' (*Comm. Cant.* 3.8.13-15 [SC 376, 575-577]).

The third song was incorporated into the passion narrative as a result of its motif of being shamefully spat upon (Mt. 26.67; Isa. 50.6). Paul refers in Rom. 8.33 to the promise in Isa. 50.8 that God would declare everyone

56. There is a plethora of literature on this subject. See especially Wolff, *Jesaja 53*; Janowski and Stuhlmacher (eds.), *Der leidende Gottesknecht*.

just who suffers oppression due to their confession of Jesus. Cyrill of Alexandria supports a collective interpretation when he applies the promise of the waking of ear and tongue (Isa. 50.4-5) to the choir of the apostles or to all those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ and have been taught by the Holy Spirit. Those who plumb the depths of scripture confess with all thankfulness that they have been given a tongue of teaching and they have an ear that is capable of understanding the law in a spiritual fashion (*Comm. Isa.* on Isa. 50.4-5 [PG 70, 1089-1092]). According to Origen, the passion narrative in Mt. 26.67-68, which speaks of Jesus' being spat upon and beaten, confirms that he is the one of whom the third servant song has spoken (cf. Isa. 50.6). His humiliation also comes to expression in Phil. 2.8, where we learn that he has not only been exalted by God because he has died for us but also because he was spat upon and beaten (*Comm. in Matt.*).

As is to be expected, the fourth servant song has been interpreted by many Fathers.[57] Compared to the prologue to the Gospel of John, which has been far more frequently commentated upon, the use of Isaiah 53 belongs more to the 'upper-middle category' of texts frequently quoted.[58] Clement of Rome, Justin, and Irenaeus stand out from the twenty Fathers who have commented upon this Isaianic text, whereby Justin clearly tops in the list in terms of frequency and detail of exposition.[59] According to Christoph Markschies, the interpretation of Isaiah 53 by the Fathers can be divided into an 'exemplary' and a 'christological' model.[60] An example of the first type is the 16th chapter of the letter of Clement (around 96 CE), where the fourth servant song is cited in full from Isa. 53.1, an innovation when compared to the New Testament. The Corinthian church is called upon by the Roman congregation to overcome its disputes and divisions in the light of Christ's humility, as made clear in Isaiah 53: 'See, dear men, who the example is that has been given to us! For the Lord behaves with such humility, what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace?' (1 Clem. 16.17).[61] Jesus Christ, however, is not the only example who is worthy of being followed. He opens an entire series of Old Testament saints and prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Abraham, Job, Moses, and David (1 Clem. 17–18).[62] The imitation of Christ includes martyrdom with total devotion. According to Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.1.23), this

57. See, *inter alia*, Wolf, *Jesaja 53*, pp. 108-151 and Haag, *Gottesknecht*, pp. 78-88.

58. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 198 (c. 50 references—excluding Athanasius, Cyril, John Chrysostom—as opposed to c. 1,450 references to the Johannine prologue).

59. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 199.

60. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 200.

61. From the German translation by Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 204.

62. Cf. Wolff, *Jesaja 53*, p. 109.

was the case for Sanctus, one of the 'martyrs of Lugdunensis' (177/178), who was tortured with red hot metal plates. 'The body was a witness to that which Sanctus had experienced; for he was *one* wound and *one* welt, he was shrivelled and had lost his human appearance. Christ suffered in him, bringing about that which is great and glorious; he made the adversary to nothing and demonstrated for the education of the rest that wherever the love of the father is at work there is nothing to fear, that nothing is painful where the glory of Christ reveals itself'.[63]

The growth in popularity of christological interpretation gradually eclipsed the exemplary interpretation of Isaiah 53, particularly because it threatened to 'compromise the exclusivity of Christ'.[64]

A primary representative of this influential point of view is Justin, as can be seen in his First Apology (c. 150/155) and in his dialogue with Trypho (c. 155/160). Just as the incarnation and passion belonged inseparably together (*1 Apol*. 50), so the first Parousia will be followed by a second glorious one. Justin's citation of Isaiah in his *Dialogue* (13.2-9) even extends beyond the boundaries of the fourth servant song (Isa. 52.10–54.6). No one would have been able to imagine a suffering and dying messiah who takes away sins if the prophet had not spoken about it. '"If Christ was not to suffer," I replied to him, "and the prophets had not foretold that He would be led to death on account of the sins of the people and be dishonoured and scourged and reckoned among the transgressors, and as a sheep be led to the slaughter, whose generation", the prophet says, "no man can declare", then you would have good cause to wonder [*Dial*. 89.3].'[65] The suffering and the shameful death of Jesus are understood by Justin to be a provocation that can only be properly dealt with on the basis of the Isaianic text. 'This type of interpretation of the fourth servant song is still completely determined by the exigencies of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. At this point a "Hellenization" of the kerygma—irrespective of whatever else one can say, positively or negatively, about the Hellenization of Christianity in Justin—has *not yet* taken place'.[66]

Origen also refers to Isaiah 53 in his fictive dialogue with his opponent Celsus. He first rejects the Jewish collective interpretation, which claims that the suffering individual is the people of God in exile. This cannot be the case for Isa. 53.8, which says that the servant suffered as a result of the sins of his people, would not make any sense. This figure must be distinguished from the nation as a whole (*Cels.* 1.55). Origen also rejects the argument that

63. From Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 208 (GCS Eusebius II/I 410, 13-19; translated into German by Schwartz).

64. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 209.

65. From Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 218.

66. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 219.

being led to the slaughter (v. 7) contradicts the sovereignty of the Son of God by pointing out that it was only in insignificant, fleshly matters that Jesus showed his helplessness (*Cels*. 2.59). The philosophical concept of God with its central axiom of divine apatheia plays an important role here. This position, however, opens the door to interpreting away Jesus' mortal agony as an insignificant aspect of the corporeality of the crucified one.[67] Eusebius takes this approach one step further in his Isaiah commentary. He interprets the suffering in Isaiah 53 entirely from the perspective of logos-theology, according to which only the subordinated divine logos took on flesh (cf. Phil. 2.7) and only this logos was subjected to suffering (*Comm. Isa*. 2.42).[68]

9. *Visual Arts and Music*

The following remarks are limited to a few select examples taken from the plastic arts and music.[69] The underlying question is whether it is possible to identify interpretive traditions that focus on particular aspects of the prophetic figure or the book that has been named after him.

9.1. *The Plastic Arts*

Up until the modern period, the interpretation of motifs from the book of Isaiah in the plastic arts has been so diverse (e.g. 'swords to ploughshares' in the statue sponsored by the former USSR in front of UNO in New York) that it is necessary to focus at first on the representation of the prophet Isaiah himself.[70]

In line with the general perception of the Biblical prophets, Isaiah is usually portrayed as an old man with a beard and long robes, as in the bas-relief on the portal of the abbey church in Souillac (1130–1140) [image 1] or on the Well of Moses in Chartreuse de Champmol (Dijon, 1395–1405) [image 2]. Daniel stands to the left of the prophet with speech banner and book, Moses to the right. A well-known exception is Michelangelo's representation of Isaiah on the ceiling fresco in the Sistine Chapel (Rome, 1508–1512). Although, like the others, he has a book in the hand, he is beardless and full of virility [image 3].

The connection between the prophet and the written word of God is constitutive. Thus, in the mosaic in the presbytery in San Vitale in Ravenna (6th century) Jeremiah is holding an open scroll, Isaiah a closed one. Particularly

67. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, pp. 232-33.

68. Markschies, *Jes 53 in der patristischen Literatur*, p. 236.

69. As far as I am aware there is no study of the reception of Isaiah in German literature. For his reception in English literature, see Sawyer, *Fifth Gospel*, pp. 158-70.

70. See Holländer, *Isaias*, pp. 354-59; Réau, *Iconographie*, pp. 365-69; Wetzel, *Bibel in der bildenden Kunst*, pp. 182-89.

significant are the prophet's speech banners containing those biblical verses that are most important for Christian theology. After the invention of printing the prophets are often depicted with books in their hands. This is the case in the oil painting on the Annunciation Alter at Aix (c. 1445). Isaiah is standing on the left, Jeremiah on the right. The latter has an open book and both are standing under a still-life portraying books [image 5]. The most prominent biblical citations that appear on the banners and the books are the three messianic proof texts concerning the birth of Jesus from the virgin Mary (Isa. 7.14: '*ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium*'; 9.6: '*filius datus est nobis*'; 11.1: '*egredietur virga de radice lesse et flos de radice eius ascendet*'). On the second visible side of the Isenheimer Alter by Matthias Grünewald—completed between 1505 and 1516 [image 6]—Mary receives her message from the archangel Gabriel in a Gothic church, rather than in a private house or her bed-chamber. In front of her lies the Holy Scripture with the messianic prophecy from Isa. 7.14. Above her to the side in the pendentive of the dome stands the prophet Isaiah who is holding his book open to this verse. He is standing on a root which extends further into the church dome. This root represents the root of Jesse (Isa. 11.1).

The pictorial genre of the ancestral tree, the tree of Jesse, was first developed at the beginning of the 11th century and was intensely developed between 1140 and 1240.[71] A good example can be found in the Ingeborg Psalter, which was completed around 1200 in northern France for the queen of Denmark [image 7]. Jesse, the father of David, is lying asleep on the floor, an image that echoes Jacob's dream. His family tree grows out of him in the form of a vine and it concludes in Jesus Christ as the Pantocrator in the heights. In one hand he is holding the book containing the divine words, with the other is pronouncing a blessing. Seven doves surround him, a symbol of the seven gifts of the spirit (Isa. 11.2-3a according to the LXX and Vg). These doves also inspire those who stand on the sides. Above Jesse is David with a string instrument, his son Solomon with a harp, and then, in third position, Mary. Isaiah stands to the left on the top with a speech banner. Opposite him is Sibyl of Kyme, similarly equipped with a speech banner, for the birth of Christ was also prophesied in the pagan world (cf. Virgil's fourth Eclogue: 'The virgin returns, returns old Saturn's reign, with a new breed of men sent down from heaven'). Daniel and Ezekiel stand below Isaiah. On the bottom to the right Aaron can be seen with his priestly robes and his blossoming prophetic staff.

In the tree of Jesse in the Scherenberg Psalter (c. 1260) we see once again the father of David resting on the ground [image 8]. The root that grows out of him bears the appropriate biblical citation from Isa. 11.1. In the centre above him sits Mary with her child lovingly laying his arm around his her

71. See especially Schiller, *Ikonographie*, pp. 26-33.

neck. The prophets are holding their speech banners in their hands. Isaiah is on the left ('*ecce virgo concipiet*'), Jeremiah on the right ('*femina circumdabit virum*' [Jer. 31.22: 'the woman will encompass the man']), supplemented above by David and Solomon, who were also considered to be prophets. At the end of the tendrils in the medallions at the top are four doves, with another five in the middle and two to the side of Mary and her child. Isaiah can also be seen in the mural depicting Jesus' lineage from the first half of the 17th century in Limburg cathedral, albeit without the doves [image 9]. He is situated to the left of a sleeping Jesse with a speech banner in the hand: '*egredientur virga de radice Iesse*'. The twelve monarchs from the people of God that constitute the lineage demonstrate the high descent of the child that is being borne on the arm of its royal mother. She herself is attired with crown and sceptre.

A very famous representation of the tree of Jesse can be seen in the glass window in the western façade of the cathedral of Chartres (c. 1150). The seven doves as a symbol of the gifts of the spirit are firmly associated with Isaiah, as can also be seen, for example, in the '*Portail peint*' (1230–1235) [image 10] on the south side of the cathedral of Lausanne. The prophet is on the left hand side with David to the right of him. This is the only sculpture in which Isaiah is holding the disk with the seven doves on it.

The birth prophecies created a close association between Isaiah and portrayals of Mary with her child, as can be seen in the oldest portrayal of Mary in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome (3rd century CE) [image 11]. It remains debated, however, whether this image is not in fact about Balaam and the ascending star in Num. 24.17.

A further important reception of Isaiah concerns the prophet's vision of the divine throne. This is undergirded, for example, by the use of speech banners with the appropriate biblical citations. In the mosaic in the apsis of the basilica San Clemente in Rome, for example (12th century) [image 12], Isaiah is holding a banner containing Isa. 6.1: '*vidi dominum sendentem sup. Solium*' ('I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne'). This citation thus explicates the climax of the mosaic, which is Jesus as the Pantocrator ('All-powerful'). This also implicitly references Isa. 66.1 (cf. *Majestas Domini*).

Raffael (Raffaelo Santi) lets his Isaiah, which he created for the Roman church Sant' Agostino in the year 1513 [image 13], hold a piece of Hebrew text containing Isa. 26.2-3a: 'Open the gates, so that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter. Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace'. It is possible that an anti-Jewish polemic is to be heard in this citation, for it implies that the Jews are not the nation that has kept faith.

Up until the modern period, whenever several prophets are portrayed together Isaiah is almost always present (cf. the prophets in the frieze in the Boston Public Library by the painter John Singer Sergant [1856–1925]

[image 14]), usually with Jeremiah as his partner (as in San Clemente in Rome or in San Vitale in Ravenna). This is also the case on the menorah (seven-armed lamp) by Benno Elkan, which he created in 1956 and which has stood opposite the Knesset in Jerusalem since 1966. The peace scene in Isa. 11.1-10 is portrayed in the upper left hand relief of the outer arm of the lamp. The corresponding part on the right arm of lamp portrays Jeremiah mourning over the downfall of Jerusalem.[72]

An important motif in the reception of Isaiah is the legend of his martyrdom under Manasseh by being sawn to death. The later the visual representation the more it departs from the textual tradition, according to which Isaiah sought miraculous refuge in a tree which was the sawn to pieces by his persecutors, killing the prophet inside. Over time, the tree recedes more and more into the background until it disappears completely. The martyrdom of Isaiah is portrayed in the '*Spiegel menschlicher gesuntheit*' ('Mirror of human health') (c. 1420–1430) [image 15]. Here, the prophet is no longer standing in the tree, he is hanging from it upside down, his hands folded in prayer while being sawn in two from the crotch onwards.

In an image from Flanders (15th century) [image 16] the tree has disappeared entirely. The scene takes place in a walled room. Once again, Isaiah is hanging upside down and is being sawn in two from the crotch, though this time his hands are not folded in prayer. In addition to this, the martyrdom is being watched by a figure on the left. This is a reference to Manasseh. On the right, in another death scene, King Mesha is sacrificing his son to the god Chemosh (cf. 2 Kings 3). The emphasis comes to fall more and more upon the sawing.[73] The prophet can even be represented with the saw alone, as in the illustrated Bible by Peter Weigel from the year 1695 (with banner) [image 17] or in an image by Johann Piscator in the *Theatrum Biblicum* from 1650 (with book).

The miraculous healing of Hezekiah by the prophet (2 Kgs 20.1-11; Isaiah 38) also found artistic expression, as can be seen in the illuminated manuscript from the Swabian workshop of Ludwig Henfflin from the year 1477 [image 18]. The king is lying sick in his bed, which is standing at an angle in the picture. Isaiah is not represented, but God the Father is, in the upper left hand corner. According to the biblical tradition, he is the one who gave the king a further 15 years to live and reign. This promise is also captured in the Isaiah plate (situated next to the David, Solomon, and Christ plates) on the imperial crown from the second half of the 10th century [image 19]. Isaiah is standing opposite the enthroned king on the right wearing a blue speech banner with the words: ECCE ADICIAM SUPER DIES TUOS XV ANNOS.

72. For a very informative analysis, see Brumlik/Kriener (eds.), *Menora*, pp. 23ff.
73. See Bernheimer, *Martyrdom*, pp. 19-34.

The throne vision in Isaiah 6 is a similarly popular motif in the plastic arts, whereby the majesty of the divine ruler of the world and the expiation of the prophet are particularly developed. Both scenes are portrayed in a full-page miniature in the Bamberger Isaiah commentary (c. 1000) [image 20]. Bundles of rays are emanating from the deity who is enthroned in a gloriole and is surrounded by six seraphim, each with three pairs of wings. As lightning bolts the rays break through the upper circle, which symbolizes the heavenly sphere. The lower circle indicates the earthly sphere, into which Gods legs and feet stretch. This illustrates his greatness, which, according to Isa. 66.1, cannot be contained within any earthly temple (cf. 6.3). The temple and its alter are placed beneath it. From here one of the angels is using pincers to take a piece of coal in order to purify Isaiah's lips. The purification of Isaiah's lips can also be represented separately, as in the ceiling fresco of the Minorite Church of Mariä Geburt in Jägerndorf in a cycle of visions of various prophets and saints (around 1766) [image 21].

A full-page miniature in the Paris Psalter (10th century) [image 22] looks at this vision from a different perspective. Here, Isaiah looks up to a divine hand stretching out towards him from heaven. On his left is the grey-blue figure of the personification of Night with a headscarf full of silver stars and lowered torch in her left hand. Portrayed to Isaiah's right is Dawn (*orthros*) in the form of a young boy with a raised torch. The tree that is so near to the Dawn and the flowers could represent the root of Jesse, for in Eastern art the tree in the context of birth scenes is a reference to the prophecy in Isa. 11.1. If this is the case, this picture may contain a messianic interpretation of the sentinel's statement in Isa. 21.12 about how long the night must last and when morning will finally come.

In a history painting by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrick von Balen (around 1609) we find a representation of Isaiah's vision of the eschatological peace [image 23], here in the context of the 12 year armistice in the 80 year war between the northern and southern provinces of the Netherlands. In the middle of the picture the prophet is standing with a stone tablet, upon which is written the prophecy. He is pointing to the prophecy with his thumb and to a pile of weapons in front of him with his index finger. The Latin text from Isaiah 4 refers to the transformation of swords and lances into ploughshares and vine knives ('*iudicabit gentes et arguet populos multos et conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lanceas suas in falces*'). This transformation is represented behind him to the left. In the foreground a genius is holding a helmet in his right hand. In his left hand is an olive branch as a symbol of peace. The scene is completed by three allegorical female figures. These are Abundatia (Abundance) with cornucopia and ears of wheat, Pietas (Piety) with a cross, and Felicitas (Happiness) with the wand of Mercury for trade and prosperity. The bleak atmosphere, the candleless chandelier, and the

weights on the vaulted ceiling give expression to the uncertainty concerning the success of the armistice.

9.2. *Music*

In contrast to the plastic arts, Isaiah as an individual has hardly received any attention in the history of music, as was the case, for example, with the figures of Elijah or Paul in the oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Even in those musical titles where Isaiah is named, the pieces are concerned with the message found in the book associated with him rather than with an artistic staging of his life. It is primarily Isaianic verses and motifs that have been treated in many church songs (e.g. 'Es ist ein Ros entsprungen' [Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming]; 'O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf' [O Saviour, Tear Open the Heavens])[74] and numerous motets (e.g. 'Fürwahr er trug unsre Krankheit'[Surely He Has Borne Our Sickness] [1636], by Melchior Franck [cf. Isa. 53.4-5], or 'Zion spricht: Der Herr hat mich verlassen' [Zion Says, The Lord Has Forsaken Me], composed for a five-voice choir by Thomas Selle [1599–1663; cf. Isa. 49.14-16]).

The most extensive interpretation of the book of Isaiah in music history is probably George Frideric Handel's oratorio, 'The Messiah' (1685–1759).[75] In the year 1741, the composer from Halle an der Saale had reached such a low point in his London home that he almost left the British Isles. Things changed for the better when the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland invited him to Dublin and when, at the same time, he received a contract to write the score for the libretto from Charles Jennens's oratorio. Handel composed the music for 'The Messiah' in 1741 in only three weeks, between August 22 and September 12. The musical movement from distress to liberation, mourning to comfort, tears to rejoicing, was deeply connected to his own personal situation. The premiere took place in 1742 in Dublin and was held for a charitable purposes; the performance of 1750 was held in the chapel of the Foundlings Hospital, which was also to profit from further revenue brought in by the oratorio. After the symphonic beginning, the tenor's call to comfort Jerusalem, taken from Isa. 40.1ff., has a programmatic character for the entire piece. At the centre of this first part, which is dedicated to the theme of the advent of the messiah, we also find references to the prophecy of the messiah's birth (Isa. 7.14), the proclamation of salvation for Zion (Isa. 52.7ff.), and the change in fortune for the blind, deaf, and lame (Isa. 35.5-6). The second part, which primarily focuses on the messiah's suffering, is permeated with verses from the third (Isa. 50.4ff.) and fourth servant songs (Isaiah 53) and is concluded by the famous hallelujah. The third part, which gives expression to the hope of the resurrection

74. See Auel/Gieseke, *Bibel im Kirchenlied*.

75. Cf. Sawyer, *Fifth Gospel*, pp. 171ff.

and the final victory over death and suffering, is animated by texts from the book of Job (e.g. Job 19.25: 'I know that my redeemer lives'), the Letter to the Romans, and the Apocalypse of John. In contrast to his contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Handel's compositions are dominated by texts taken from the Old rather than the New Testament (see also the following oratorios: 'Samson' [1743], 'Belshazzar' [1745], 'Susanna' [1749]). The referential character of the Old Testament prophecies is affirmed and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ is taken for granted. Handel thereby took a clear stand against the contemporary position of Deism, which held, for example, that the prophetic predictions could only be interpreted as time-conditioned oracles.

Handel's Venetian contemporary Antonio Caldara (1670–1736) published in 1729 his oratorio 'le profezie evangeliche d'Isaia' (Libretto by Apostolo Zeno, 1668/69–1750), in which Isaiah, Manasseh, Hephzibah (= 'my delight in her', Manasseh's mother in 2 Kgs 21.1, but also the name of Jerusalem in Isa. 62.4), Eliakim, Shebna, and a choir of Levitical priests appear in the great court of the palace in Jerusalem. The first part picks up Isaianic texts referring to sinful Jerusalem (Isa. 1.2-7, 12-20) and its siege by Sennacherib (from Isaiah 37–38); the second part references the suffering (Isa. 50.6; 53.1-6, 8, 12) of the messianic figure (7.14; 9.6) and the eschatological fulfilment (Isa. 25.8; Wisdom 3.1ff.).

The entire composition of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's 'Elijah' (1846) is concluded with texts from the book of Isaiah. The choir which performs the meeting between the prophet with God at Horeb, in which God reveals himself not with power but in a soft whisper (1 Kings 19), is followed by the Trisagion of the seraphim in Isaiah 6. It is not only Elijah's meeting with God which is put into an Isaianic light, his entire prophetic ministry finds its interpretation at this point. This can be seen in the choir's proclamation at the conclusion of the scene. Elijah is the elected servant in whom God delights (Isa. 42.1), upon whom the gifts of the spirit rest (Isa. 11.2). All those who thirst are invited to this God upon Zion (Isa. 55.1; cf. the beginning of the oratorio: 'Does the Lord no longer want to be God in Zion?'). The concluding choir further expands this with a citation from Isa. 58.8: 'Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will grow quickly'.

The 'German Requiem' by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), premiered in its entirety for the first time on February 18 1869 in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, also contains texts from Isaiah in prominent places. In contrast to the usual mourning cantata, this requiem seeks to give comfort to the bereaved and to raise awareness that death is an inevitable part of life (his friend and supporter Robert Schumann had died in 1856, his mother in 1865). In the second movement the choir opens by claiming that all flesh is like grass and the glory of humanity is like the flowers of the field (Isa. 40.6-8; 1 Pet.

1.24). This is followed by the warning to have patience until the coming of the Lord (Jas 5.7) and is framed by Isa. 40.8 (cf. 1 Pet. 1.25), namely that the word of God will stand forever. The second movement is concluded with the joy that the redeemed will come again, that they will ascend Zion with thanksgiving, and that pain and sighing will irrevocably belong to the past (Isa. 35.10). The fifth movement again offers material from Isaiah. It is entirely dedicated to the theme of comfort with citations from Jn 16.22 and Isa. 51.3-5. It concludes with Isa. 66.13: 'I want to comfort you as a mother comforts her children'.

The Swiss composer Willy Burkhard (1900–1955) created a musical piece entitled 'The Face of Isaiah' that is entirely dedicated to the prophet. This oratorio for soprano, tenor, bass, mixed choir, organ and orchestra was created between the summer of 1934 and 1935. It was premiered in 1936 by Paul Sacher with the Basel chamber orchestra and chamber choir. An acclaimed performance was held again in 1937 in the Zurich concert hall by Volkmar Andreae. Burkhard, who worked as a teacher of composition at the conservatorium in Zurich from 1942 until his death on July 18, 1955, describes his discovery of the prophet as follows:

'For years I had been searching, half unconsciously, for a text for a larger choral work. I first turned to more recent poetic works but could not find anything that met my requirements. Most poems did not seem to be comprehensive enough for a choral work. Some had specialized too much in a particular direction, others were so 'definitively' composed that I did not have the freedom necessary to set them to music.

Then came the great surprise: I read the prophet Isaiah and suddenly found the path to the fulfilment of my plans. The main ideas of Isaiah: the downfall and destruction of that which is unhealthy and untrue; hope for clarification of the present chaotic situation; the intimation of a new world order; peace, redemption, liberation, overcoming, those religious powers that give the spiritual life a powerful impulse at any time and regardless of disappointments and setbacks—these main ideas, do they not present us with a cross-section of our own times, our spiritual life? Perhaps not expressed in our own words, but what truly vivid language out of which the truths emerge with an almost tangible concreteness. My decision was soon made: The magnificent visions of Isaiah must form the basis for my planned choral work. And they did not let me go, indeed they took hold of me more and more, so that I always heard these millennia old words as an unmediated statement made in the present. Today, the finished piece gives me the feeling that I am standing in the midst of our own epoch and that I have given expression to it in my own way'.[76]

76. The text can be found at http://www.sinfonietta-archiv.ch/PPL/Saison94/S2 (last accessed July 2010)

The oratorio is divided into seven parts with 25 numbers in which texts from Isaiah have been freely arranged, i.e. without respecting the canonical sequence. In the first part, which has the function of a prologue, the superscription (1.1) and the call to listen (1.2a) have been combined with the vision of the power and glory of God (6.1-4). Its character as narrative introduction is underscored by the fact that this is the only part without a choral conclusion. Parts II–IV are united by the theme of judgement, parts V–VII by the theme of divine grace. The second part is characterized by woe-oracles that announce the inevitable judgement of Israel on the one hand and the end of Zion's enemies on the other. The choir opens with a reference to Isa. 29.1, 7: 'Woe Ariel! The multitude of the heathens who fight against Ariel shall be like a night vision in a dream'. This is followed by bass and tenor solos which give expression to the woe concerning the sinful nation from Isa. 1.4ff. and the announcement of judgement against the proud and luxury-loving women of Zion (Isa. 3.16ff.). The choir sing another woe oracle against those who drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood and sin with cart ropes (Isa. 5.18). A chorale concludes the dark second part with the words of Martin Luther: 'Oh that God would look down from heaven and have mercy'. The third part begins with a timid plea for mercy, supported by a soprano solo which promises God's strength to those who wait for him, such that they would ascend like eagles (cf. Isa. 40.31). The choir and soloists pick up the bird motif by drawing upon Isa. 31.5, which imagines Yhwh to be a bird of prey that protects and shelters Jerusalem. The divine promise of the forgiveness of sins follows immediately in the same Nr. 9: 'I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you' (Isa. 44.22). This makes way for the chorale: 'In your mercy, give us peace in our days, O Lord!' In the fourth part the return to the threat of global judgement brings us back to the harsh language of the second part. Here, verses 1, 5, 8, 16b, 19 from chap. 24 are arranged into a dramatic collage. At the end of this part, the chorales 'Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir, Herr Gott, erhör mein Rufen' ('Out of deep distress I cry to you, Lord God, hear my call') and, after an instrumental interlude, 'Es ist allhier ein Jammertal, Angst, Not und Trübsal überall' ('Everywhere is a vale of sorrow, fear, distress, and grief all around') (Johann Leon, died 1597) continue the gloomy atmosphere. This dark background is the context within which the promise of redemption through the birth of the child (7.14) shines forth. This son, upon whose shoulders rests the rule of God (9.5-6), has been born for the nation that walks in darkness (9.1). The inclusio that surrounds the dark centre of the fourth part can also been seen in that the fifth part draws to a close with Isa. 44.23 (rejoicing in heaven and earth because God has shown mercy), whereas the third part—also with a choir and in the same position—refers to Isa. 44.22. The triumphant praise of the chorale 'Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut'

(May Praise and Honour Be the Highest Good') (Johann Jacob Schütz, 1640–1690) worthily provides the breakthrough to the moment of salvation. The sixth part urges us to confess that God has swallowed up death, that he will wipe the tears from every face (Isa. 25.8), that his dead will live and his corpses be raised (Isa. 25.8). The seventh part begins with a female choir which proclaims peace and healing to Zion, for God is once again present as king (Isa. 52.7). The following soprano solo is a meditation upon the price of this salvation, upon the suffering of the one who grew up like a shoot from dry ground, who bore our illnesses and through whose atonement we have been healed (Isa. 53.2-5). In the following bass solo the servant introduces himself and his commission to heal the broken hearted and to proclaim the liberation of the prisoners (Isa. 61.1). Soloists and choir (with chorale) conclude the seventh part and thereby the entire work with the divine announcement that peace be spread out like a river (Isa. 66.12) along with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65.17-18a). The chorale 'Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr und Dank für seine Gnade' ('God alone in the highest be honour and thanks for his grace') (Nikolaus Decius, died 1529) as well as a short 'amen' constitute the conclusion of the oratorio.[77]

77. Further oratorios related to this prophet are, *inter alia*: *Isaiah* (1948) by Jacob Weinberg (1879–1956), *Isaïe le prophète* (1950) by Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986), as well as the compositions with texts from Isaiah and Ezekiel by Bohuslav Martinù (1890–1959), 'Die Prophezeihung des Jesaja' (1959), and Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), *Promesse de Dieu* (1971/72).

Image 1: *A bas-relief of Isaiah on the portal of Sainte-Marie in Souillac (1120–1135)*

Image 2: *Isaiah on the Well of Moses in Chartreuse de Champmol (Dijon, 1395–1405)*

Image 3: *Isaiah on the ceiling fresco of the Sistine Chapel (Rome, 1508–1512)*

Image 4: *Isaiah in the presbytery of San Vitale (Ravenna, 6th century)*

Image 5: *Isaiah and Jeremiah on the Annunciation Altar from the church Sainte-Marie-Madeleine (Aix-en-Provence, circa 1445)*

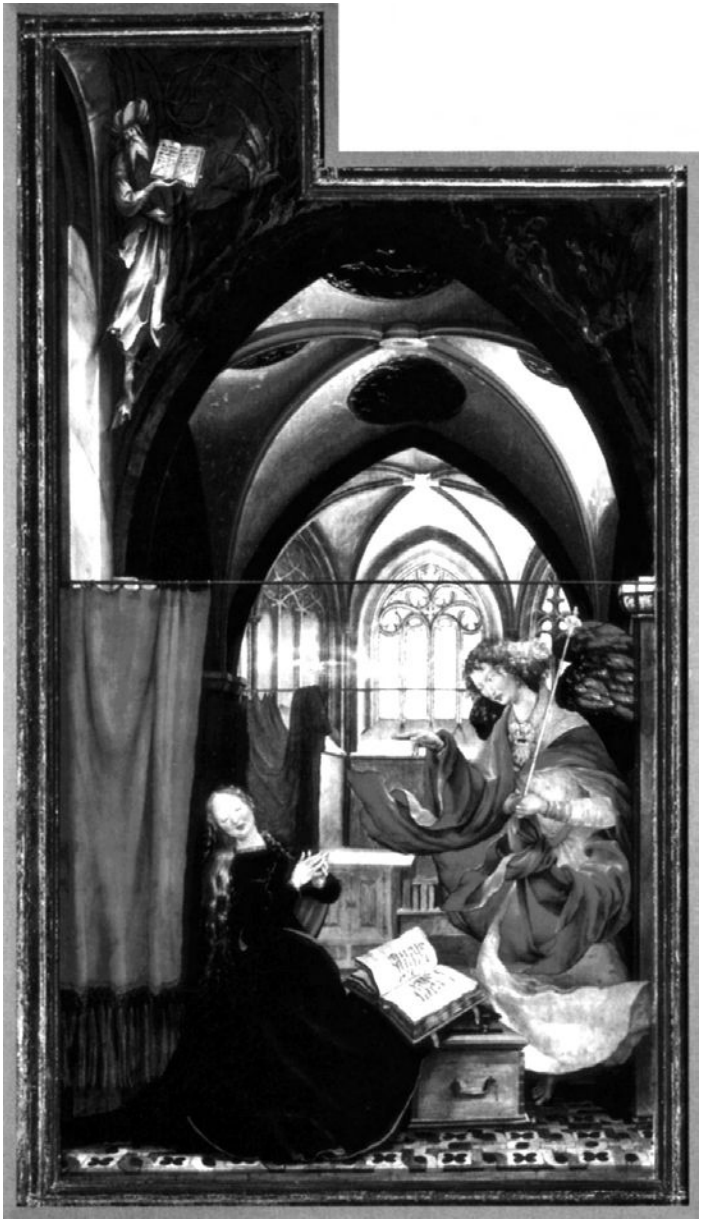

Image 6: *Annunciation scene with the prophet Isaiah on the Isenheimer Altar (Colmar, 16th century)*

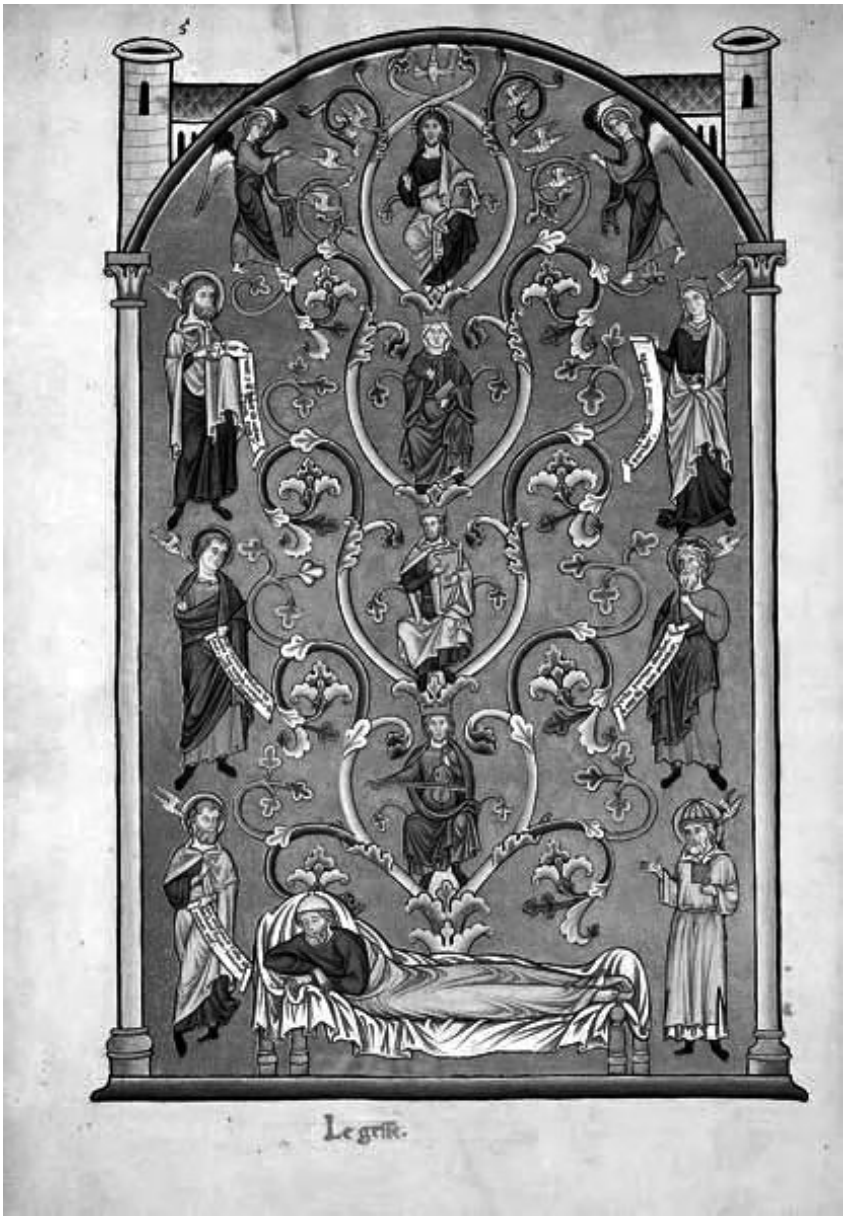

Image 7: *Portrayal of the root of Jesse in the Ingeborg Psalter (northern France, c. 1200)*

Image 8: *The root of Jesse in the Scherenberg Psalter (Strasbourg, c. 1260)*

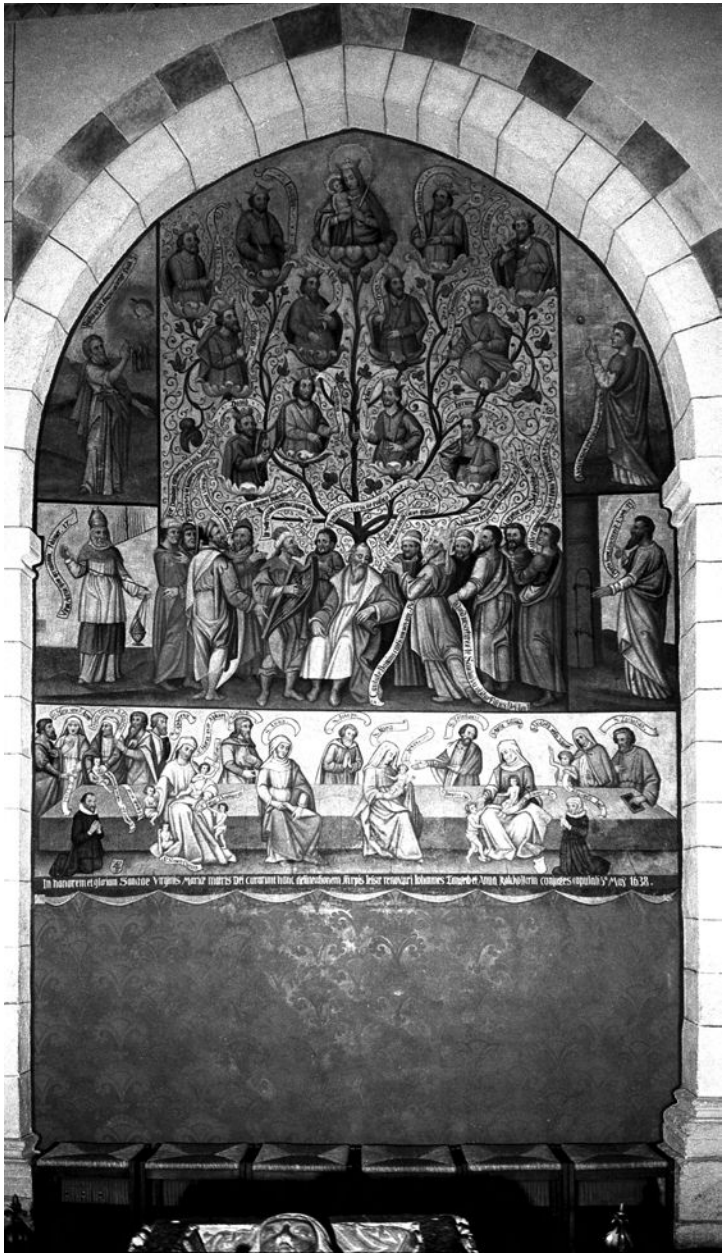

Image 9: *The root of Jesse with Isaiah in Limburg Cathedral (17th century)*

Image 10: *Isaiah with seven doves amongst the group of figures on the Portail Peint of Lausanne Cathedral (1230–1235)*

Image 11: *Isaiah and Mary with her child on a fresco from the Priscilla catacomb (Rome, 3rd century)*

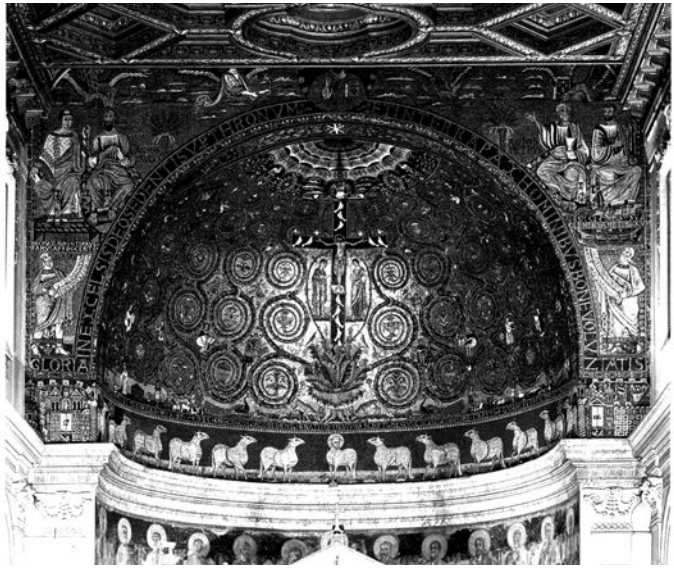

Image 12: *Mosaic in the apse of San Clemente (Rome, 12th century)*

Image 13: *Isaiah by Rafael in San Agostino (Rome, 1513)*

Image 14: *'The Prophets' (Isaiah second from left), frieze by John Singer Sergant (Boston, 1894–1895)*

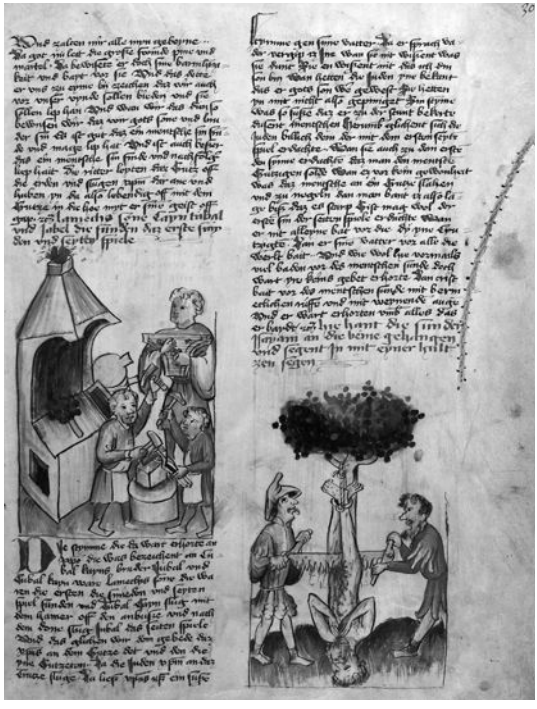

Image 15: *The martyrdom of Isaiah in the 'Spiegel menschlicher gesuntheit' (Middle Rhine, 1420–1430)*

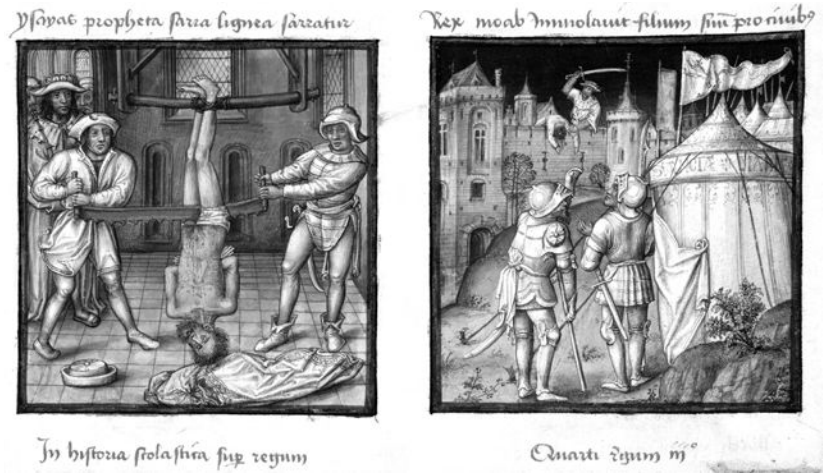

Image 16: *The martyrdom of Isaiah (Flanders, 15th century)*

Image 17: *Isaiah with saw and speech banner in a Bible illustration from Peter Weigels' 'Biblia ectypa' (1695)*

Image 18: *Hezekiah's lifespan is extended (presumably Stuttgart, 1477)*

Image 19: *The 'Hezekiah plate' in the imperial crown (presumably Lower Rhine, second half of the 10th century)*

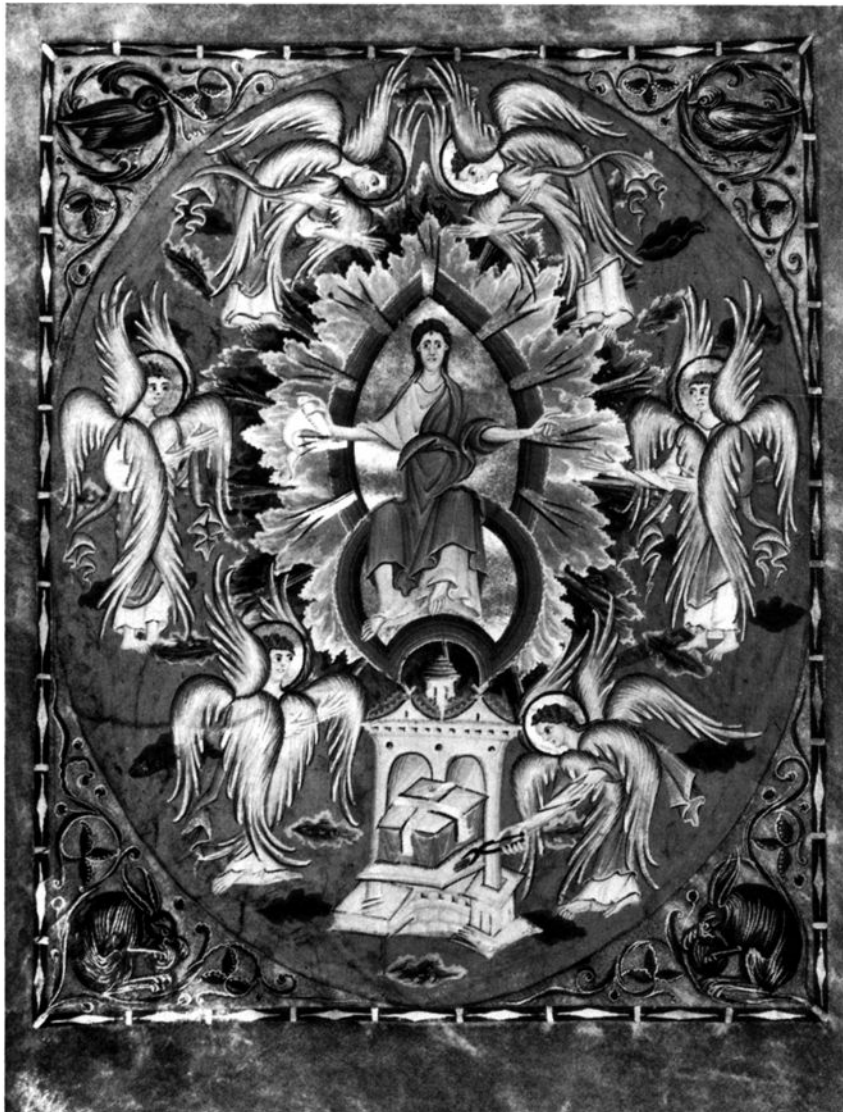

Image 20: *Isaiah's vision in the temple in the Bamberger Isaiah Commentary (Bamberg, c. 1000)*

Image 21: *The purification of Isaiah's lips in the Minorite church Mariä Geburt in Jägersdorf (c. 1766)*

Image 22: *Isaiah between Nyx and Orthos in the Paris Psalter (Paris, 10th century)*

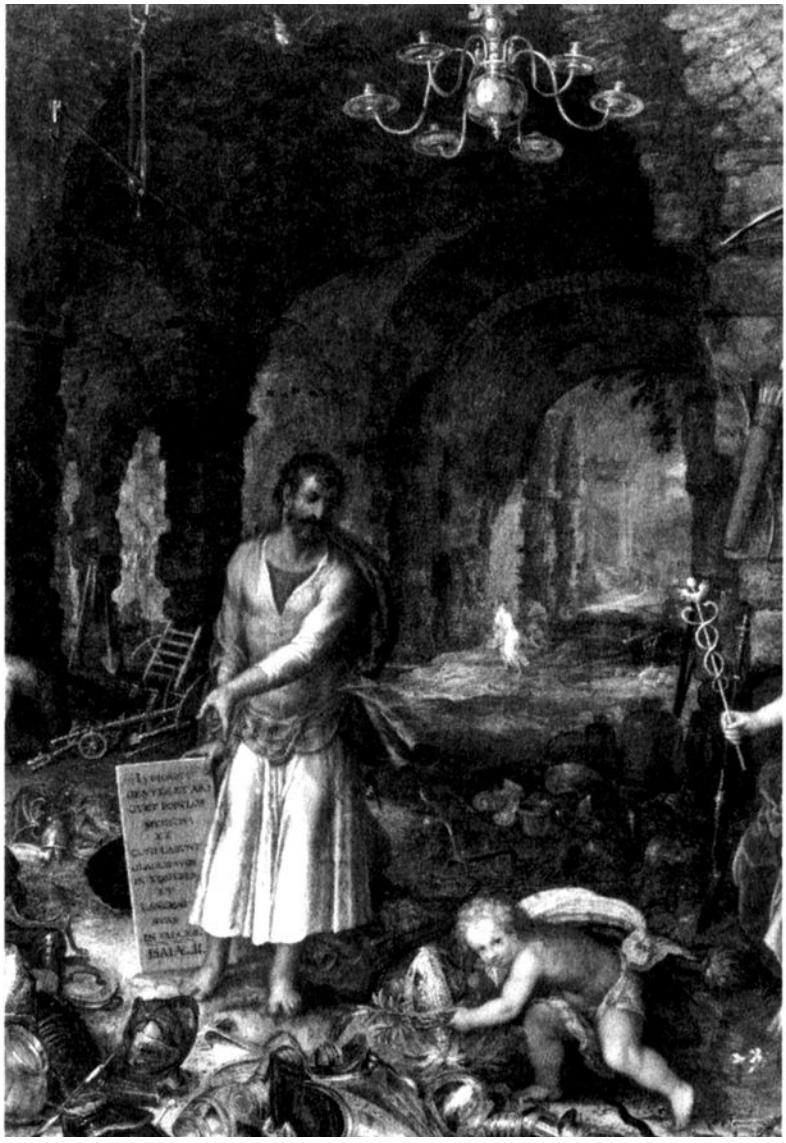

Image 23: *The Prediction of the Prophet Isaiah by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) together with Hendrick van Balen (c. 1609)*

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