DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

A False Messiah? A Holistic Literary and Theological Reading of Isaiah's use of the Hezekiah Narratives

McIlroy, Keith

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A False Messiah? A Holistic Literary and Theological Reading of Isaiah’s use of the Hezekiah Narratives

Keith Derek McIlroy, BA (Hons) - University of Wales, Aberystwyth, MDiv – Queen’s University, Belfast

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

to Queen’s University, Belfast, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Institute of Theology

September 2019
ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to investigate whether or not Hezekiah is portrayed as a failing or false Messiah figure in the book of Isaiah in order to set a contrast between him and the ‘true’ Messiah. Recognising the extensive literature that has already appeared there are still certain key aspects of the Hezekiah narratives, particularly in relation to the concept of the Messiah, that have not been fully explored and therefore warrant further development and refinement. This is particularly the case in relation to the early passages in Isaiah that have often been traditionally designated ‘messianic’ (Isaiah 7, 9, 11) and therefore they will be examined in relation to their messianic character and how they relate to the person of Hezekiah. One of the arguments of this study is that there is a connection between the oracles that speak of a messianic figure and the person of Hezekiah as presented in the book of Isaiah. To demonstrate this the thesis examines the ‘messianic prophecies’ in Isaiah 1-35 and draws out how these connect with or diverge from the image of Hezekiah in chapters 36-39.

The textual warrant for this can be found in the rhetorical parallel interpretative strategy of the hardening hermeneutic of Isaiah 6 that suggests a way forward in understanding Hezekiah’s relationship to the messianic oracles. This relationship is explored intertextually, noting as many of the continuities and discontinuities as possible. These connections present the reader with the portrayal of Hezekiah, both as a good candidate for the expected and prophesied messianic figure (Isaiah 36-38) and as a flawed individual who falls short of all that is entailed in the nature of the Messiah (Isaiah 39). The reason for such a dual portrayal of the character of Hezekiah appears to arise from a desire to leave open the possibility that the figure described in the earlier chapters has not yet appeared on Judah’s horizon and that he is still to be expected. Hezekiah is set up as a false or failing messianic figure with the rhetorical purpose of introducing the need for an even greater king who will be unswervingly faithful to the will of Yahweh (Isaiah 9:7; 11:2-5). Other chapters will focus on the continuity of theological motifs in Isaiah 12-35 and the Hezekiah narratives and whether or not another messianic figure is present in Isaiah 40-66.
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta biblica</td>
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<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
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<td>ASTI</td>
<td>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</td>
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<td>AUSS</td>
<td>Andrews University Seminary Studies</td>
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<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin for Biblical Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BETL</td>
<td>Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium</td>
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<td>BHS</td>
<td>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia, ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1983)</td>
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<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<td>BibS</td>
<td>Biblishe Studien</td>
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<td>Bijdr</td>
<td>Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie</td>
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<td>BJRL</td>
<td>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</td>
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<td>BJS</td>
<td>Brown Judaic Studies</td>
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<td>BKAT</td>
<td>Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament</td>
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<td>BN</td>
<td>Biblische Notizen</td>
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<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<td>BST</td>
<td>Bible Speaks Today</td>
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<tr>
<td>BWANT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beilhefte zur ZAW</td>
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<td>CBR</td>
<td>Currents in Biblical Research</td>
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<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cambridge Bible Commentary</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<td>CBQMS</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series</td>
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<td>ConBOT</td>
<td>Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament</td>
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<td>CR:BS</td>
<td>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</td>
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<td>CTJ</td>
<td>Calvin Theological Journal</td>
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<td>DSB</td>
<td>Daily Study Bible</td>
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<td>Ebib</td>
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<td>ESV</td>
<td>English Standard Version</td>
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<td>ETL</td>
<td>Ephemeres theologicae lovanienses</td>
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<td>EvTh</td>
<td>Evangelische Theologie</td>
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<td>ExpTim</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
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<td>FOTL</td>
<td>Forms of the Old Testament Literature</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<tr>
<td>GKC</td>
<td>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch, tr. A. E. Cowley</td>
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<td>HCOT</td>
<td>Historical Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
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<td>Horizons in Biblical Theology</td>
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<td>HKAT</td>
<td>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<td>SVTP</td>
<td>Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraph</td>
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<td>TB</td>
<td>Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert</td>
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<td>ThSt</td>
<td>Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>TrinJ</td>
<td>Trinity Journal</td>
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<td>TynBul</td>
<td>Tyndale Bulletin</td>
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<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
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<td>VTSup</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMANT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTJ</td>
<td>Westminster Theological Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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Chapter I. – Introduction - Purpose of the Study and Methodological Approach

1. - The Purpose and Need for the Present Study

The present study recognises that a great deal of research has already been produced on the Hezekiah narratives.\(^1\) However, there are still certain key aspects of the Hezekiah narratives, particularly in relation to the concept of the Messiah, that have not been fully explored and this warrants further development and refinement. There are several passages that have been seen in some way to be messianic in nature\(^2\) and yet the Hezekiah narratives (chapters 36-39) are almost universally neglected for consideration in this regard. The only relationship that has been drawn between the Messiah and the Hezekiah narratives relates to an ancient Jewish\(^3\) and modern scholarly claim that Hezekiah may in some fashion fulfil earlier messianic prophecies or at least be the referent of the oracles.\(^4\) The fact that this has been recognised and yet has not received any sustained exploration seems somewhat puzzling. One would

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3. One interpretation stretches back to at least the first century C.E.: Rabbi Hillel, Sanhedrin 99a.

expect that positing the idea that Hezekiah ‘fulfilled’ the earlier so-called messianic prophecies would require an in depth inquiry into the narratives that speak of the king in question. This inquiry seems to be conspicuous by its absence. One of the arguments of this study will be that there is indeed a connection between the oracles that speak of a messianic figure and the person of Hezekiah that is presented in the book of Isaiah. To demonstrate this thesis I will examine the earlier ‘messianic prophecies’ in Isa. 1-35 and draw out how these might connect with or diverge from the image of Hezekiah in chapters 36-39.

It is my contention that the connections and divergences that are found between these passages present the reader with the idea that there has been a deliberate and purposeful construction of the portrayal of Hezekiah, both as a good candidate for the expected and prophesied messianic figure (chps. 36-38) and as a flawed individual who falls short of all that is entailed in the nature of the Messiah (chp. 39). The reason for such a dual portrayal of the character of Hezekiah appears to arise from the author’s/redactor(s)’s desire to leave open the possibility that the figure described in the earlier chapters has not yet appeared on Judah’s horizon and that he is still to be expected. In this regard then, Hezekiah is set up as a false or failing messianic figure with the rhetorical purpose of introducing the need for an even greater king who will be unswervingly faithful to the will of Yahweh (Isa. 9:7; 11:2-5).

Part of the ongoing discussion will focus on whether or not such a figure is present in Isa. 40-66. A number of studies have understood the role of the king/Messiah as having been transferred to the people of Israel while others maintain that such a figure is also portrayed as an individual in the latter parts of Isaiah. Also

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5 I am using the word false here in the sense of ‘failing to meet expectations’. The Oxford English Dictionary gives two definitions of the word ‘false’ that are helpful for the sense that it will be employed in this thesis – 1) Made to imitate something in order to deceive, 2) Illusory; not actually so.


7 Schultz, ‘The King in the Book of Isaiah,’ 141-165.
the question of the servant’s role in relation to messianic expectation will be examined, especially as the servant relates to the house of David (Isa. 55:3). 

As well as discovering the relationship between Hezekiah and the development of messianic expectation, the study will also suggest a new way of understanding the function of the Hezekiah narratives within the book of Isaiah as a whole. Scholarly studies have often noted the transitional function of chapters 36-39, which act as a kind of bridge between the two main ‘halves’ of the book. Chapters 1-35 are often seen as concentrating on the Assyrian threat that looms large behind the oracles and narratives of these chapters, while chapters 40-56 (66) are seen to be more concerned with the Babylonian threat that is apparent in these latter chapters. Owing to the chronological issues of chapters 36-39 - chapters 38-39 appear to be chronologically before chapters 36-37 - it could be suggested that these chapters have received their reverse chronology in order to close out the Assyrian threat (chs. 36-37) and introduce the imminent threat of the Babylonians (39). The role that Hezekiah is often seen as playing in this transitional function of the chapters usually focuses on the idea of a unilateral idealization of his character. Although chapters 36-37, and in many respects 38 do show a form of idealization, this is not the case in chapter 39. It is assumed in the aforementioned studies that Isaiah’s pronouncement of judgment in chapter 39 is simply something that Hezekiah is the audience for but in no respect have his actions occasioned such an oracle. Hezekiah’s final words in 39:8 are seen as the pious response of an ever-faithful king, but here the exegesis

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11 This can be seen in, Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 336; Sweeney, Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition, 15-16; Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 156-158; Isaiah 1-39, 266.

12 Isaiah 36-37.

13 Isaiah 38.

14 This is suggested by, Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to the Prophetic Literature, 456.
presented for such an assertion is unconvincing and the passage rather presents Hezekiah’s response as one of self-concern and faithlessness.

This study will take the form of a holistic literary and theological reading of the text and this methodology will be detailed below. The study will make use of the literary tools of intertextuality and rhetorical criticism while also reading the text for its theological message. None of these literary and theological tools will be used wholesale, thus requiring the designation holistic literary and theological approach. John Barton gives an important caution about too great a dependence on one particular method:

The reason why biblical scholars have so often become disillusioned with each of the methods they have committed themselves to is that they have asked too much of them, have become obsessed with correct method and with the desire to produce novel interpretations of the text.\textsuperscript{15}

The strengths and weaknesses of each of these methodological tools will be highlighted below.

2. - Methodological Tools for the Study: A Holistic Literary Approach

There has been a significant paradigm shift in Old Testament studies since the latter half of the twentieth century. The move has been made from reading books like Isaiah against the background of its supposed various historical sources and toward reading the book as a fundamental literary and theological unity. This alternative reading of Isaiah is often associated with various literary approaches that are seeking to find a coherent message in the text as it now exists. Taking their lead from the literary indicators in the text, these scholars adhere to what might be described as a synchronic over against a diachronic reading of the text. On the most basic level the diachronic approach may be seen as working through (dia) the text and its historical setting, while the synchronous approach is more interested in working with (syn) the text. Not all scholars are convinced that these approaches are mutually exclusive.16

Most literary readings of the book of Isaiah have been either significantly diachronic in nature17 or purely synchronic.18 Although diachronic studies try to deal with historical issues related to the text - historical background, redactional setting - these studies can sometimes come across as somewhat subjective. This critique might be expected of the synchronic approach but it is also seen in diachronic studies. The authors of these studies suggest that their work is simply a refinement and

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development of early studies with which they are in substantial agreement and yet there does not seem to be anywhere near a consensus on the specific historical background or redactional setting for any one particular literary unit. This can be seen in the widely varying dates that are given for much of the material in the book of Isaiah.

The greatest drawback of the purely diachronic approach is that the meaning of certain texts is often lost in the discussions that spend a large amount of time trying to determine the redactional function of the text in question and not drawing out what the unit says as a cohesive whole. In the case of some diachronic studies they not only lose the wood for the trees but also the minute dissecting of individual branches as well. Also, the impression is given that certain diachronic questions impede the simplest reading of a given passage, or even book, owing to presuppositions of how particular aspects of prophetic literature must function, an example being the possible predictive nature of prophecy.

A synchronic approach is often more penetrating in reading the meta-narrative of the book of Isaiah, considering it as a unity without assigning to it a particular historical setting, or tentatively adding this as a short appendix. As Abernethy expresses it, ‘Synchronic approaches to Isaiah have uncovered strategic networks of literary associations throughout the book that contribute to the book’s coherence.’\textsuperscript{19} The text in this case is read somewhat more at face value and allows for a number of creative aspects that might be rejected from a diachronic reading. This is evident in how the Hezekiah narratives in Isa. 36-39 are read. Reading these chapters synchronically opens up the possibility of taking into account the literary parallels, allusions and interconnectedness of the material. In this regard the material stands as a fundamental unity and conveys its message as such.\textsuperscript{20} However, if the conclusion has been drawn, through a diachronic examination, that the material in chapter 39 is much later in origin to that in 36-38\textsuperscript{21} then the fundamental unity of these narratives is obscured by questions of provenance. It must be admitted that a compositional unity can still be found by taking into account the hand a later redactor.


\textsuperscript{20} Andrew T. Abernethy, \textit{The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom}, 8.

\textsuperscript{21} As posited by, Seitz, \textit{Zion’s Final Destiny}, 153.
My approach to the book of Isaiah will focus on the final form of Isaiah as a literary whole. It will be helpful to ask the question of possible intention when considering the nature of how certain texts function as a part of the whole. The study will avoid getting bogged down in the minuita of redactional questions that might distract from the meaning conveyed in the book as a fundamental unity. This does not mean that the study disregards that history plays a part in the development of the story told within the book. Again, Abernethy’s words are apropos, ‘Our approach to Isaiah, then, is to read it in its final form while being mindful that the book itself establishes a ‘meta-history’ through which future readers appropriate its message about God’s rescuing ways in the light of where they fit within Isaiah’s narrative.’

It will become apparent that my own approach to Isaiah has been influenced by the work of Edgar Conrad. The value of his intertextual work on the royal narratives, developing the earlier work of Ackroyd, is significant. His reading of the royal narratives opens up a number of possibilities for taking the work further than he did. Though I do not agree with all of his conclusions, his influence will be apparent in this work. This study will depart most clearly from his work in positing the idea that Hezekiah was in some sense portrayed as a false or failing messianic figure. The holistic approach will also consider the theological message that seems to be central to the book of Isaiah, especially as this relates to kingship, Messiah and the people. Below a number of approaches taken to the text of Isaiah will be examined and a suggestion will be made as to how these might be brought together into a more integrated methodology.

2.1. - Literary Approaches to the Book of Isaiah

Not all literary studies of the book of Isaiah are purely synchronic studies. Although some scholars wish to approach the text in its canonical or final form, reading the text as Christian scripture, they nonetheless accept that this final form is a redactional composition of differing sources, especially in regard to the traditional historical-critical division of the book into First, Second and Third Isaiah. It should be noted

22 Abernethy, The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom, 10.
23 Conrad, Reading Isaiah.
that these particular approaches have significant differences and certainly do not share a common methodology. Nevertheless, some scholars who espouse various literary approaches to Isaiah as a unified text try to avoid reconstructing what sources may have been used in the final form of the text. They would not necessarily hold to the concept of a single author behind the book of Isaiah but still prefer to read it as a whole. B. G. Webb is representative of this approach when he states:

The approach taken is literary as opposed to historical or sociological. That is, the way in which the various elements of the text interact with one another to produce meaning for the present reader is studied without reference to the putative background and development of the text. The text itself of course makes frequent reference to historical persons and events, and to sociological phenomena, but my concern here is solely with how these function within the text. No attempt is made to reconstruct them.

It becomes obvious that although these scholars understand the importance of the historical nature of the text, they try to avoid discussion of these features, believing that they will distract from a fuller literary reading. Of particular interest to this study is the concept of reading Isaiah as a whole and seeing how this might affect its parts. Below some of the approaches that have already been taken to Isaiah as a literary and theological ‘unity’ will be considered.


27 Others might suggest that this is simply a way of avoiding the difficult historical issues.
2.2. - Redaction Criticism, Relecture, and Unity

The work of J. Vermeylen in the 70s began to ask questions about the composition of the book of Isaiah. He still used historical-critical methods, but with a view to reading the book as a whole. He was not only interested in what could be discovered about the constituent parts of the book but also the perspective of the final redactors. Vermeylen suggested seven stages of redaction for the book, beginning in the time of the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz in the eighth century up to the late period of the third century. What proved interesting from a literary perspective was Vermeylen’s discussion of how later stages of redaction, such as the fifth stage relating to Trito-Isaiah, had a significant influence on the earliest stages of composition. Therefore, later redactors reoriented the book into a unified composition in order to accomplish their own purposes. Ackroyd similarly saw the later redactors of the book’s final form, writing from the position of the post-exilic period, taking the theological perspective and authority of the eighth century prophet and using it to speak to the people of their day. However, Whybray felt that many of Vermeylen’s redactional stages could not be supported beyond his subjective contentions. In his review of Vermeylen’s work, Whybray states that the criteria Vermeylen used to assign a particular part of Isaiah to one of his seven stages of redaction was based on unproven assumptions. Although Vermeylen is correct in seeing elements like style, vocabulary and theological motifs as indicating a unity within the various parts of Isaiah - something followed in this thesis – he gives no real objective criteria to assign these elements to different stages of redaction.

Further to the work of Vermeylen, R. E. Clements paid careful attention to the interrelationship of the major components of Isaiah. His 1980 commentary focused particularly on the Josianic redaction of First Isaiah but demonstrated ways in which the whole book of Isaiah might be read as a unity. In his work Isaiah and the

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29 For this position see, Sweeney, ‘The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research,’ 79.
Deliverance of Jerusalem\textsuperscript{33} Clements suggested that Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Jerusalem should be read in the light of its fall in 587 BCE. This then influenced his work on the unity of Isaiah,\textsuperscript{34} drawing out the themes of hope in the midst of judgment and the assurance of a return to a Zion that would be restored. Again, in a later article\textsuperscript{35} Clements examined a number of collected themes that seemed to appear throughout the book as a whole, such as the blindness, deafness and election of the people of Israel. Clements proposed that the theme of blindness and deafness was so prominent in ‘Second-Isaiah’ that it must have built upon the earlier blinding and deafening oracle in Isa. 6:9-10.\textsuperscript{36} This theme will be a major focus of the present thesis, although how Clements understood the flow of this theme is different from the approach taken here. In subsequent works Clements addresses other divergent features in the text with a keen interest in inner-biblical exegesis and how this can help the reader understand the growth of the book to its final form. Describing the ‘final form’ Clements speaks of ‘the work of a plurality of authors from a Jerusalem circle’.\textsuperscript{37} Clements’ work suggests that scholars should be able to see both the historical particularities of the texts as they developed into the final form, as well as being able to read the book as a unity that has been shaped and structured by the final redactors. It could be argued, however, that taking for granted that the final editor(s) have intentionally shaped the book to convey a message that will speak particularly to his/their generation, then it is difficult - beyond subjective opinion - to describe what comes from the earlier periods of the text’s development. That caveat to his work being noted, Clements has highlighted a number of themes and features of Isaiah that will be important to this thesis.

Like Clements, I see that a crisis point for the house of David is important to the unfolding nature of Isaiah’s vision. Judgment is a key theme in the early chapters

\textsuperscript{34} Clements, ‘The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,’ 117-129.
\textsuperscript{36} Clements, ‘The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,’ 117-129; Clements, ‘Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah’s Themes,’ 95-113. For a development of Clements’ ideas see, J. L. McLaughlin, ‘Their Hearts \textit{Were} Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6, 9-10 in the Book of Isaiah,’ \textit{Bib} 75 (1994) 1-25
of Isaiah, as well as in the rest of the book; something clearly seen in the judgment oracle of Isa. 6. This idea will be developed further from chapter II onward. Also, like Clements’ works, this thesis will examine the themes of blindness, deafness and the remnant as these arise throughout the text of Isaiah and show how they work together to tell a unified story, part of which is Hezekiah’s failing as a messianic figure. Nevertheless, all speculation on stages of redaction will be avoided with the intention of maintaining a holistic reading of the text as it now stands. Also, Clements’ interest in the use of inner-biblical exegesis will be an important aspect of a number of chapters in this thesis, looking both at different passages within Isa. 1-39 as well as those that have influenced the thought of Isa. 40-66.

Closer to my own approach to the understanding of relecture or rereading is the work of P. D. Wegner. In his study Wegner points out that at the time of writing relecture was still a new field of inquiry but a number of emphases had already come to the fore. He states, ‘The concept of relecture stresses the fact that additions to the text modify or at least influence the whole text and the messianic passages of the book of Isaiah appear to be especially influenced by the shaping of the text.’ He goes on to delineate two different types of rereading of a text that can take place. He speaks of modification and shaping. Modification involves a change or elaboration in the original theme or idea. Shaping preserves the original theme or idea but a change in context will bring about a rereading of the original idea in light of that new context. It is difficult to determine the origins of the modifications because these could occur as early as the original author, but shaping is something that is understood from the vantage point of the final form of the text. Wegner’s work is a careful, cautious, and judicious examination of the messianic oracles in Isa. 1-35 in light of these determining factors – modification and shaping – and he lays out the most likely redactional context for each oracle in question. The concern of this thesis is not with the redactional context of the text’s modification but with the shaping influence the whole has on the specific sub-units of the text. The rereading proposed here is a synchronic rereading in light of the themes and motifs that cause the reader to ‘re-


\[^{40}\] Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35*, 304.

\[^{41}\] Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35*, 304.
read’ the earlier messianic oracles in light of the revelation of Hezekiah’s failure (Isa. 39:8) and the subsequent development of the servant as the full outworking of the earlier hope. Although the reader may not expect Hezekiah to fail to live up to expectations in a first reading of Isa. 1-38, after Isa. 39ff. the reader is encouraged to re-read the earlier material in light of the whole, and will see that certain (eschatological) elements within the earlier oracles lie beyond Hezekiah and his context.

2.3. - Reader Response Criticism

A number of scholars have tended to read the book of Isaiah without majoring on historical questions and have at times suggested that they actually get in the way of a reader-oriented approach to the book. Not all of their works can be neatly designated ‘reader response,’ nevertheless, R. Melugin,42 J. D. W. Watts,43 P. Miscall44 and E. W. Conrad45 all approach the text of Isaiah in a mostly synchronic way.

Melugin’s work can also be said to cross various methodological boundaries but he is categorized under ‘reader response’ due to his own self-designation in a recent work.46 Melugin has certainly moved the discussion of Isaiah as a theological and literary unity toward a more synchronic direction. He states ‘one may question whether the results of a historian’s research is more a picture painted by the historian than a reproduction of the past as it really was.’47 This caution will be kept in mind as the thesis is developed.

His work shows an emphasis and concentration on synchronic readings of the book that analyze the figurative and poetic language of the book and the story that is being told rather than examining the historical particularities of Isaiah; a focus shared by this thesis when historical particularities are not fundamental to the interpretation of a given section. This does not mean that Melugin is not fully aware of the historical-critical methods that other scholars have employed but, like Childs, he is more cautious when it comes to making concrete historical statements about the books redactional growth.

Watts’ two-volume commentary on the book of Isaiah in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series was one of the first commentaries that applied synchronic literary theories to the book as a whole. Although Watts does not avoid historical matters entirely, proposing a Persian period setting for the book’s composition, he does move further away from the book’s redactional history than many previous scholars. Watts works from a somewhat chronological framework, seeing the structure of the book moving through successive periods of time as the message unfolds. He seems to be more concerned with the message of the book as a whole than with the specific settings of its constituent parts.

Watts’ approach is rather innovative in that he looks at the literary unity of Isaiah as a type of ‘drama’, which is divided into different ‘acts’. These acts unfold through the chronological framework, moving from the eighth century to the fifth century. He divides the book into two halves of six acts each, representing curse/judgment in the first six acts (chs. 1-39) and blessing and comfort in the second (chs. 40-66). The book is seen as a single vision that is structured in twelve scenes. I am not convinced by Watts’ overall superstructure for the book of Isaiah or that it unfolds chronologically across several centuries. This is something that has to be imposed on the text rather than drawn from it and it is surprising that in work that is predominantly synchronic in nature, he would make such a proposal. However, Watts’ proposal that Isaiah is a type of drama is suggestive and it will be proposed in chapter VI of the thesis that if Isaiah functions as a drama - chapters 1-39 unveil four acts with the anticipation of a final act to come in the subsequent chapters. Hezekiah and his role as a failing messianic figure features prominently in the opening acts.

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48 Watts, ‘Isaiah 1-33,’ & ‘Isaiah 33-66’ *WBC.*
P. Miscall also treats Isaiah as a single literary unity. However, much like Melugin, he is less confident in believing that a reconstruction of the books’ redactional history is possible. He writes of his appreciation for the works of both Watts and Conrad,\(^{49}\) and like Watts views Isaiah as a type of drama.\(^{50}\) Miscall’s work shares the conviction that the book was composed in the fifth century as a literary whole\(^{51}\) but his study appears to be more fully holistic and synchronic in methodology. In his own words, his work is not, ‘a reconstruction of the history of Israel. That history with its peoples, characters and events is discussed only when it is incorporated into the book of Isaiah and when reference to it is necessary for a full reading of Isaiah.’\(^{52}\) This statement could stand as a short summary of the approach of the present study but I presume that it means something different for Miscall than it means here. It is hard to see how historical elements play a significant part in his interpretation when it comes down to reading the text of Isaiah. Like Miscall this study will ‘devote attention to the imagery and other poetic features of Isaiah’ but does not share the conviction that the vision of Isaiah belongs to the ‘realm of imagination.’\(^{53}\) Owing to the fact that Miscall treats the entire book of Isaiah as a literary whole it will become evident that fruitful interaction with his reading will be employed throughout this study.

E. W. Conrad’s 1991 work ‘Reading Isaiah’\(^{54}\) is certainly one of the most self-consciously ‘reader’ oriented approaches to the book of Isaiah and possibly the most sophisticated. Conrad appears to intentionally avoid historical questions in favor of a reading of the text that focuses on the ‘implied reader’. Conrad shares the conviction of other scholars such as Melugin and Miscall that a concentration on the prior redactional history of Isaiah is often subjective and unhelpful in understanding the book as a whole. He prefers to view Isaiah as a piece of literature. His reading depends on an earlier work that he produced on the ‘al tira (‘do not fear’) sayings in


\(^{51}\) Miscall, *Isaiah: Readings*, 9-11. Miscall notes that he, Watts and Conrad share the same assumption about Isaiah being a unified work composed in the postexilic period, most likely in the fifth century (11).


\(^{53}\) Miscall, *Isaiah: Readings*, 12

the Hebrew Scriptures and their use in the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{55} The study forms the backbone of Conrad’s reading of Isaiah and provides an intricate use of intertextual parallels to seek the book’s unified meaning. Conrad also uses the work of Stanley Fish\textsuperscript{56} related to reader response that sees the reader as one who brings a matrix of interpretative strategies to bear on the text when he/she begins to read. This is in contrast to the assumption that the reader simply forms his/her judgment only after first reading the text.\textsuperscript{57} The interest here does not lie in authorial intention but rather in the ‘reader’ who is part of an interpretative community that reads texts against their own social background. Like many other works on the book of Isaiah, Conrad’s implied reader appears to come from the Jewish community of the Persian period.

One major criticism that might be leveled against Conrad’s study is that its methodological approach is heavily subjective. However, in a later study Conrad confronts this charge with the counter-argument that a historical approach is no less subjective, owing to the fact that the historian has chosen to approach the text as a historian, regardless of their own claim to objectivity.\textsuperscript{58} It will be clear from chapter III of the thesis that Conrad’s work has had a major influence on the intertextual interpretation of the royal narratives. The thesis will both build on and depart from his work in many ways. One prominent area of difference will be in relation to the identity of the Servant in Isaiah 40-55.

2.4. - Intertextuality

That intertextuality has been an important literary tool in biblical studies for some time now is beyond doubt.\textsuperscript{59} The approach to be taken in this study will be to examine

\textsuperscript{55} Conrad, \textit{Fear Not Warrior}.

\textsuperscript{56} Stanley Fish, \textit{Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities} (USA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

\textsuperscript{57} Conrad, \textit{Reading Isaiah}, 4-5.


the intertextual parallels that appear between different narrative and poetic units to try and discover the rhetorical function of these affinities. Craig Broyles’ simple and rather helpful definition of intertextuality resonates with my own. He states, ‘A passage’s intertextual context includes any quotations, allusions, or echoes it may contain to other biblical passages.’ After separating these references into those that are explicit and those that are implicit, Broyles insists that there must be some apparent ‘signal’ or ‘flag’ in the text that points the reader to another passage. This definition is consistent with a synchronic approach, seeing the reader as involved in determining the possible parallels that exist in different texts. However, as Broyles rightly notes, the similar motifs may well have arisen from an original oral tradition that stands behind the now fixed literary context. The oral traditions that may lie behind a given literary text are diachronic concerns that naturally flow from the initial synchronic inquiry. A reader can discover literary connections and allusions that arise from the study of the text but this does not mean that it is no longer concerned with the author(s) behind the text. It is a legitimate question to ask – what type of author could be behind these connections and can the possible intentions have brought forth such connections. The question of whether the implied author is consonant with the historical author(s) is not the immediate concern. In relation to the present study the concern is not with whether an historical Isaiah or redactor(s) intentionally portrayed Hezekiah as a failing or false messiah but whether such a supposition can be inferred from the text of the book of Isaiah. It may well be that such a supposition accords with the intention of these possible authors. Often diachronic considerations regarding authorship, provenance and dependence can obscure the rhetorical purpose of intertextual relationships. Schultz describes the problem:

Rather than understanding verbal parallels as a significant component of prophetic rhetoric which demands careful analysis, most commentators simply list them, then ignore them. Although some have raised their voice in protest against this

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hermeneutical slight, the exegetical potential of this phenomenon still remains largely untapped.63

I propose to examine the intertextual relationship between texts in Isaiah that relate to Hezekiah from a synchronic perspective following, in part, the approach of Edgar Conrad described above.

2.5. - Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism as a methodological approach to any form of literature is extremely hard to define owing to the fact that, as a discipline, it has been practised in vastly different ways. Within biblical studies and more specifically the Old Testament what has been called ‘Rhetorical criticism’ is quite different to what might be designated classical rhetoric. The origins of Old Testament Rhetorical criticism can be traced back to the work of James Muilenburg and in particular to a presentation he gave to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968.64 As the title of his essay would suggest Muilenburg was proposing a method of criticism that went beyond Form criticism and took account of stylistics, repetitions and consistencies in particular literary units or pericopes. As Muilenburg states:

Exclusive attention to the Gattung may actually obscure the thought and intention of the writer or speaker. The passage must be read and heard precisely as it is spoken. It is the creative synthesis of the particular formulation of the pericope with the content that makes it the distinctive composition that it is.65

One could suggest that Muilenburg’s was advocating a more holistic approach to the text of the Old Testament that mirrored the work of those involved in the field of stylistic or aesthetic criticism.66 Similarly Meir Weiss states, ‘Dichtung spricht zu uns nur mit ihrer ganzheitlichen Gestalt.’67 This type of Rhetorical criticism has been

64 J. Muilenburg, ‘Form Criticism and Beyond,’ JBL 88 (1969) 1-18.
65 Muilenburg, ‘Form Criticism and Beyond,’ 5.
66 Muilenburg, ‘Form Criticism and Beyond,’ 7.
67 ET, ‘poetry speaks to us only with its holistic form.’ Meir Weiss, ‘Die Methode der “Total-Interpretation”’, a paper delivered at the 7th Congress of the International Organisation for the Study of
practised in variant forms with regard to the book of Isaiah. There are elements of this type of approach that will be appropriated within this study such as examining; repetition, stylistic choices, the intentions of writer/speaker. Also, Gitay’s focus on the meta-historical is helpful when it is tied to the eschatological value of a given rhetorical pericope. What this means is that although the book of Isaiah and the Hezekiah narratives in particular are rooted in history, it is argued that the rhetorical intention of these units is to look beyond the history that is visible on the immediate horizon. The importance of the historical nature of the events surrounding Hezekiah is fundamental to the rhetorical argument made in the book as a whole, but his character transcends this to become a type, portrayed both positively and negatively. This is once again one of the transitional functions of Hezekiah in the book.

As valuable as these types of rhetorical studies are, there has been a concern that Muilenburg and others have misappropriated the term ‘Rhetorical criticism’. It could be argued that there is nothing to distinguish this type of reading from what has been designated ‘Literary criticism’. Classical and other contemporary forms of Rhetorical criticism are different from this traditional discipline used on the Old Testament text in that they are primarily concerned with the suasive aspects of spoken discourse and how this has been transmitted in textual form. Aristotle concisely defines rhetoric as ‘the art of discovering the best possible means of persuasion in the Old Testament, Uppsala, August, 1971. Quote taken from Martin Kessler, ‘A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Critical, in David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser (eds.) Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature, JSOTS 19 (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1982) 1-19 (5).


70 This can be seen in the work of various literary critics, which is hard to distinguish from this early version of Rhetorical criticism. Examples are found in, Adele Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (Sheffield: Almond, 1983); Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Frank Kermode and Robert Alter (eds.), The Literary Guide to the Bible (London: Collins and Sons, 1987); Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, Revised and Updated (New York: Basic Books, 2011).
regard to any subject whatever’.\(^71\) This concentration on the persuasive nature of rhetoric and how this is employed in various biblical texts has been taken up in the work of some scholars.\(^72\) My own use of Rhetorical criticism will bear the influence of the proposal made by Howard that the practice of Rhetorical criticism must be ‘based upon speech and persuasion.’\(^73\) This will be outlined below.

Without neglecting the important literary aspects of the rhetorical unit as highlighted above, two other elements need to be considered within a fuller rhetorical approach to the text. The first is a self-conscious focus upon speeches and other discourse in Isaiah, discerning the means of persuasion practised and using the literary tools of traditional Rhetorical criticism to illuminate their function in the larger unit of the book itself. This will most obviously be seen in chapter III when examining the persuasive rhetorical function of the hardening oracle in Isa. 6 and how this shapes the reading of the rest of the book. With regard to the Hezekiah narratives this will become most appropriate when I examine the speeches of the Rabshakeh on behalf of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in chapter 36 and Yahweh’s speech concerning the Assyrians in chapter 37. I will also consider the rhetorical value of Hezekiah’s prayer in chapter 38 and Isaiah’s judgment oracle in 39.

Outside the immediate narrative units concerning Hezekiah it will also be important to consider the function of Isa. 8:9-10 as these verses parallel the Rabshakeh’s speech in chapter 36 and how the name ‘Immanuel’ may be rhetorically linked to Hezekiah. The second element of this rhetorical approach to Isaiah will involve a focus upon any means of persuasion (verbal or non-verbal) that is employed in the text. One area for consideration will be the contrasting views of Hezekiah that appear to be given in chapters 36-38 and 39. Also the question must be asked as to the rhetorical function of the Babylonian envoys in chapter 39 and how they help to further the argument of the author/editor. One aspect of this rhetorical approach that will be most important is in relation to the intertextual links that are drawn between the royal narratives (Isa. 7, 9, 11 & 36-39).


\(^{73}\) Howard, Jr. ‘Rhetorical Criticism in Old Testament Studies,’ 87, 102-104.
3. - A Theological Reading

Theological readings of the Hebrew Bible are as old as the writings themselves. The concept of developing an Old Testament Theology has been seen as a legitimate enterprise in the scholarly world since the publication of at least two important works.74 This is not to assume that the idea of an Old Testament Theology is without problems or that all have accepted it.75 Nevertheless, a theological reading of the Old Testament and of the particular books within the larger canon does have some legitimacy. A theological approach to the text of the Old Testament is a complementary discipline to a more historical approach, but some have suggested that the two should remain distinct. As Bruce Waltke points out:

The Theology of the Old Testament and the history of Israel’s religion are not the same thing; they are as far apart as heaven from earth. Theology is about God, who can be known only through his own revelation of himself through Scripture. The history of Israel’s religion is about what Israel thought about God; it is about man, not about God.76

Others conclude that the basis of a theological approach to the text is ‘to present the essential theological structure of Israel’s beliefs.’77 I would contend that the theology of the Old Testament and more specifically the theology of the book of Isaiah are not just the structure of Israel’s beliefs but also the creative and persuasive aspects of that revelation that helps to create those beliefs; see the discussion of Rhetorical Criticism above.

One of the major difficulties in trying to propose a theological reading of the book of Isaiah relates to the fact that many scholars see at least three distinct


theologies at work in the book – those of Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah. One way of circumventing this problem is to take the canonical approach. Brevard Childs’ use of the canon-critical methodology focuses on the analysis of biblical texts in their final ‘canonical’ form. Childs is not so much concerned with the historical background to the book of Isaiah or even its redactional development but with the book’s theological context, which is derived from chapters 40-66. Using these chapters as his guide, Childs views the message of the entire book against them. Childs is well versed in the historical-critical method and its application to the biblical text, sharing many of the conclusions of his fellow scholars, but chooses to avoid historical particularities in favor of a ‘theological’ reading of the text as it was received into the Jewish and Christian Canons. Reading Isaiah in light of the theology that is apparent in chapters 40-66 means that Childs, as Sweeney points out, has a ‘future-oriented eschatological understanding of the entire book.’ Even though Childs treats Isaiah as a single work, he does hold the underlying presupposition that the traditional division of the book into First, Second, and Third Isaiah is reasonably valid. This becomes the standard by which he reads earlier sections of the book as if they were reconstructed in the light of the theological principles of the latter sections. In his early work Childs states:

[T]he canonical editors of this tradition employed material in such a way as to eliminate almost entirely those concrete features and to subordinate the original message to a new role within the canon.

Here Childs appears to reject the thought of redaction critics, such as Clements and Williamson, who seem to believe that the thought of the earliest material in Isaiah, that which comes from the eighth century, can still be discerned. In fact Childs is cautious in trying to find ‘a succession of redactional layers, each with its own

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80 Sweeney, ‘The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research,’ 79.

81 Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture,* 326.
agenda, which are never heard in concert as a whole.\textsuperscript{82} Childs is certainly not advocating a purely subjective synchronic reading of the text but does seem to feel that redactional and diachronic work on the text must be employed to help explain the meaning of the book as a whole.\textsuperscript{83} In this regard the work of the redactional critics mentioned above would certainly fit within this framework, owing to their balance of diachronic and synchronic methods. Childs’ use of intertextuality and concern for the primacy of theology over redaction is something that is shared in this thesis. Childs is not afraid to read different texts in concert with one another because he is more interested in the holistic message that comes across in the theology and literature of the book than with determining sources. Childs’ work on canon and biblical theology has opened up the possibility of reading the text holistically with the intention of discovering if the whole has been shaped to present a consistent message. This thesis will set forth to discover if the function of Hezekiah in the text of Isaiah contributes to this overall message.

The coherence of certain theological themes aids in the re-evaluation of the popular understanding of the historical settings for the somewhat divergent parts of the book. There are many theological motifs that appear to be prominent in the book of Isaiah – the Remnant (Clements),\textsuperscript{84} the Holy One of Israel (Roberts),\textsuperscript{85} Covenant (Clements),\textsuperscript{86} Jerusalem/Zion (Dumbrell)\textsuperscript{87} – any one of these could be the basis of a profitable examination. These themes will be touched on but the theological reading of this study will concentrate on the themes of King, Messiah, and Servant. These themes will be examined to see how they develop from the early to the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah and how Hezekiah becomes a central and pivotal figure in the understanding of this development.

The question will be asked as to the theological function of Hezekiah as he stands at the centre of the book as a whole and how a greater understanding of his

\textsuperscript{82} Childs, \textit{Isaiah}, 4.
\textsuperscript{83} Childs, \textit{Isaiah}, 4.
place in the book opens up new vistas to appreciate the motifs of King, Messiah and Servant. Also, the question will be asked, in what ways does Hezekiah ‘embody’ important aspects of these messianic oracles and in what ways does he seem to fall short of them? When these questions are answered, it will be further asked, what does this tell the reader about Hezekiah’s function in the book as a whole, and consequently, what does this tell us about the function of the narratives describing him? I propose that Hezekiah is the theological bridge across which the concept of the Messiah is carried from Isa. 1-39 into Isa. 40-66. It has been suggested that the book of Isaiah presents a contrast between the present Jerusalem and the future Jerusalem (Isa. 1:21-23, 24-31; 2:1-5; 3:16-26; 4:2-6; 60:1-22). As the book develops it appears that the rebellious and faithless earthly Jerusalem will fade away while the New Jerusalem will be consummated. This transition takes place through the pivotal chapter 39 that predicts the destruction of the physical city at the hands of the Babylonians. A similar movement is apparent from the Davidic monarch in the first part of the book to the servant in the second part of the book. The word king is not used of the servant but he is anointed for his task, his work, like that of the Davidic king in the first part of the book, has a universal scope (Isa. 42:1-4) and he is the one who helps to bring about the universal Davidic Covenant (Isa. 55:3). Again, Isa. 39 becomes important in this transition as the idea of kingship and messianism is filtered through the person of Hezekiah. It will be the intention of this study to demonstrate that Hezekiah is described in such a way that he can be understood to have partially fulfilled the earlier messianic prophecies of a coming king in chapters 1-35 while also being portrayed as having failed to fully manifest and embody the ideals of those oracles, thus requiring another figure to be introduced. It is my contention that the servant figure in the second part of the book fits these ideals.

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89 For more on this see, Schultz, ‘The King in the Book of Isaiah,’ 141-165.
90 Compared to Isa. 9: 5-6; 11:1-9.
92 For support for this contention see, Schultz, ‘The King in the Book of Isaiah,’ 154-159.
4. - The Messiah in the Old Testament: Surveying the Literature

4.1. - Introduction

To propose that Hezekiah is portrayed as a false messianic figure in the book Isaiah one must be aware of the difficulties that surround the idea of the Messiah in Old Testament studies. In this section some of the literature that relates to this important question will be surveyed and a conclusion drawn regarding how Messiah and messianism will be used in the rest of this study.

The concepts of the Messiah and the messianic hope in the Old Testament have produced a vast amount of literature from differing points of view. The idea of a messianic hope has been a cherished and central theme particularly in Christian theology and is also an important theme for Jewish thought and literature with a whole array of referents proposed. Scholarly readings of the OT in the modern era find little that is messianic in the sense found in the NT. Gordon McConville defines the problem in this way, ‘If the Old Testament is the problem of Christian theology, as has been said, the Messiah is at the heart of that problem.’ Messianic interpretations of the OT, which seem to predominate from the NT to the eighteenth century, have become a problem for Christian theology because the majority of OT scholars are sceptical of finding much, if any, messianic hope in the pages of the Hebrew bible. Clements describes the climate up to the time of his writing by noting, ‘It may then come as something of a surprise that virtually all the major books on OT theology say very little at all about such a messianic hope and, even when they do, do so in a very guarded and circumscribed way. Others are less guarded and circumscribed when presenting their thoughts in regard to the Messiah as a terminus technicus that designates an ideal future king, stating that this ‘does not occur in the Old Testament.’ Below, first some definitions that have been suggested for the terms messiah and messianism will be examined and then a number of proponents representing differing approaches will be considered.

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93 From this point on in this section Old Testament will be represented by the short form OT and New Testament by NT.
96 R. E. Murphy, ‘Notes on Old Testament Messianism and Apologetics,’ CBQ 19 (1957) 5-15 (5).
4.2. - Defining the Terms

Semantic Notes

The English word ‘Messiah’ is derived from the Latin word *Messias*, which was a direct derivation from the Greek word Μεσσιάς. The Greek was itself a transliteration of the Aramaic form נָשִׁיאָ, which is directly related to the Hebrew נָשִׁיא. The Hebrew is a passive qatil-type noun which means ‘anointed/ anointed one.’ The verbal form from which the noun was derived was נָשִׁי ‘to smear / to anoint.’ Although the concept of anointing is less common in the modern world it was certainly a common practice in the ancient Near East, with some scholars suggesting that the Israelites borrowed the concept of anointing their kings from Hittite and Canaanite practices or more basically anointing for purification.⁹⁷ Mark J. Boda notes that the verbal root, the adjectival form, and the nominal forms of the Hebrew terms occur some 130 times in the OT.⁹⁸

4.3. - Working Definitions

It is certainly no simple task to define the terms ‘Messiah’ or ‘messianism’. However, a number of definitions have been suggested. John J. Collins believes that Messiah is ‘a future figure who will play an authoritative role in the end time, usually the eschatological king.’⁹⁹ Similarly Walter H. Rose defines Messiah as ‘a future royal figure sent by God who will bring salvation to God’s people and the world and establish a kingdom characterized by features like peace and justice.’¹⁰⁰ Both Collins and Rose employ language that suggests that the figure must be eschatological in some way, a contention not supported by James Charlesworth. Charlesworth sees the term referring ‘to a present, political and religious leader who is appointed by God,

applied predominantly to a king, but also to a priest and occasionally a prophet.’

However, over thirty years earlier, in his seminal study of the Messiah concept, Sigmund Mowinckel declared, ‘An eschatology without a Messiah is conceivable, but not a Messiah apart from a future hope.’ This demand for an eschatological figure in regard to the Messiah was a driving force behind Mowinckel’s minimising of the messianic dimensions of the OT. Both Mowinckel and Fitzmeyer, whose later study was influenced by the earlier writer, were critical of those like E. W. Hengstenberg who read the NT concept of the Messiah back into the OT texts. This led Mowinckel to note, ‘The Messiah as a concrete eschatological figure, the king of the final age, the founder of the glorious kingdom, is far less prominent in the Old Testament than in the New.’

What is needed is a definition of the terms ‘Messiah’ and ‘messianism’ that allows the text of the OT to speak for itself and brings together themes that seem to be progressing as the OT develops. Daniel Schibler’s designation of these terms is helpful:

Messianism and messianic prophecy are not the same. The Book of Isaiah illustrates this well. Early prophetic messianism as found in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 is an expression of hope or expectancy with regard to a Jerusalemite king on the part of a particular group of his people (often called the ‘remnant’), headed mostly by a prophet. Whenever the king and the remnant practised justice and righteousness as David did (2 Sa. 8:15) and as required by the prophet, messianism arose. It developed until that hope was foiled by the failure of the given king and the remnant to observe justice and

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righteousness; generally the hope was transferred to the next descendant of the throne.\textsuperscript{104}

Schibler’s definition demonstrates that messianism was a concept that was integral to the life and hope of the people of Judah from the time of David to the time of the contemporary prophet. Even if the hope was not explicitly related to an eschatological future figure it was a hope that the king would fulfil the messianic calling to practice justice and righteousness and thereby deliver his people from their present troubles. Important in this definition is the fact that the hope was ongoing and therefore leaves room for a future figure to fulfil the expectations more fully. However, in Isaiah, the greatest enemy that the people needed to be delivered from was not Assyria or Babylon, but sin and idolatry. This perspective will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In Michael Rydelnik’s recent work he helpfully categorizes some of the differing approaches to the idea of Messiah in the OT. These headings will be used with slight modification below. They are: ‘Historical Fulfilment’, ‘Dual Fulfilment’, ‘Typical (Developmental) Fulfilment’, ‘Progressive (Epigenetic) Fulfilment’, ‘Relecture Fulfilment’, and ‘Direct Fulfilment’.\textsuperscript{105}

\section*{4.4. - Historical Fulfilment}

Sigmund Mowinckel’s work,\textsuperscript{106} which is still considered one of the most substantial works on the Messiah in the OT, is one of the hardest to categorize. From the outset of his work Mowinckel boldly states, ‘‘Messiah’, ‘the anointed one’, as a title or technical term for the king of the final age, does not even occur in the Old Testament.’\textsuperscript{107} Mowinckel could be said to share certain sympathies with the developmental fulfilment view, seeing the ancient Israelites borrowing much of the ancient Near Eastern concept of ‘divine kingship’ practices. This development from the ANE royal ideology became the seedbed for the Israelite concept of the ideal king

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Mowinckel, \textit{He That Cometh}.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Mowinckel, \textit{He That Cometh}, 4.
\end{itemize}
who would later become the future eschatological Messiah. Fitzmyer, whose work is highly influenced by the approach of Mowinckel, is, nevertheless, critical of Mowinckel’s broad use of certain terms such as ‘Messiah’, ‘messianic’ and ‘messianism’. He sees his use of them as having ‘a rubber band comprehension’ and states that ‘he fails to respect the history of ideas and the proper delineation of how the notion of a promised coming one, even an Anointed one, gradually developed into that of a Messiah as an expected anointed “king of the final age”’. 

Fitzmyer’s work is probably the most comprehensive study of the Messiah in the OT to have been written in recent years. He covers the concept in most of the OT passages that have been designated messianic and traces them through early Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Messiah. Unlike some of the earlier scholars related to the historical fulfilment view Fitzmyer has ‘no difficulty in imitating “early Church” usage’ of the OT.

Fitzmyer is always careful to follow the ‘history of ideas’ and not impose later notions of the Messiah on earlier texts. But it is this determined belief that one can approach the text dispassionately and with cool objectivity that seems to be the problem in Fitzmyer’s and a number of other works in this category. Fitzmyer knows from the outset what he needs to avoid when he come to the text, ‘an awaited or future anointed agent of God,’ but then he seems determined not to see him anywhere even when this seems to fit the context most naturally.

I would argue that the text cannot be simply read as a history of ideas because Isaiah is very much a piece of theological literature. On that level, to suggest that the fulfilment of a given oracle belongs exclusively to the original historical context is to remove the theological and rhetorical function of prophecy. A number of scholars have found the arguments regarding respect for the original OT context compelling

108 Mowinckel, He That Cometh, 56-96.
109 Fitzmyer gives a cautious assessment of what this looks like. See, Fitzmyer, The One Who is to Come, viii.
110 Fitzmyer, The One Who is to Come, viii-ix. In this section Fitzmyer explains how he can use the term Messiah as it was later employed in the early church.
111 Fitzmyer, The One Who is to Come, 4.
112 This is particularly true of his treatment of passages in Isaiah, most pertinent to this present study.
113 See Walke’s comment above, Waltke & Yu, An Old Testament Theology, 21.
but have wanted to maintain that these could have a deeper secondary meaning. This will be seen in the literature surveyed below.

4.5. - Dual Fulfilment

A dual or fuller meaning (*sensus plenior*) to prophecy respects the OT’s original meaning and context while at the same time seeks a broader and fuller fulfilment that would suggest a messianic interpretation.\(^{114}\)

One study following this approach is ‘The Lord’s Anointed,’\(^{115}\) though it demonstrates different approaches across the many contributors. Kaiser notes that this approach forfeits ‘most of the predictive value of the anticipation of the Messiah in their OT context.’\(^{116}\) This view also tries to determine not only authorial intent, something that synchronic readers often reject as impossible, but also the fuller divine intent of the OT passages. This idea is certainly possible but quite difficult to demonstrate. However, the dual fulfilment approach to messianic texts at its most basic level has relevance to this thesis in that it will be proposed here that the early messianic oracles of Isaiah function in a dual manner. On one level the oracles relate to the person of Hezekiah who embodies aspects of the hope held out in them. However, on another level the language and promises of the oracles go beyond what can be said of Hezekiah and anticipates a referent from elsewhere. The proposal of this thesis is that the ‘fuller’ embodiment of these oracles is found in the figure of the servant in Isa. 40-66 and this will be argued in chapter VII. However, unlike the dual fulfilment approach as outlined I believe these two aspects work together, owing to the interpretative principle of confusion given in Isa. 6 which will be more fully developed in chapter III of the thesis.

4.6. - Typical or Developmental Fulfilment

Quite a number of scholars have taken what might be called a typical or developmental view of messianic fulfilment from the OT. In this approach it would be held that when the OT speaks of a particular figure, for example a king, it is referring

\(^{114}\) This definition is noted in Clements, ‘Messianic Prophecy or Messianic History?’ 88.


to a person present at the time, in the original context. However, the figure acts as a type of the future king, a son of David, who will ultimately be embodied in the antitype; the Messiah.

Franz Delitzsch was one of the first scholars to propose a developmental idea of messianic prophecy that again tried to pay respect to the OT text’s immediate context. Although Delitzsch wanted to maintain a single meaning of each prophecy ‘without resorting to a typological or spiritual meaning’, Delitzsch’s developmental view shows many similarities to the typological approach. Delitzsch saw the concept of God’s work of salvation relating to the specific delivery of Israel in the original context of the OT text while at the same time coming to its ultimate fulfilment as God worked through Christ to bring about a greater salvation. However, unlike many of the other scholars in this category Delitzsch still saw certain OT passages as explicit predictions of the coming messianic redeemer.

Antti Laato’s more recent publication shows affinities with the developmental fulfilment view as well as the next view to be touched on, the progressive view. Laato’s historical-redactional approach to the OT text traces the idea of the Messiah as it found its origins in Israelite royal ideology of the tenth century BCE with the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7). Each stage in Israel’s history and each stage of the development of Israel’s royal ideology brings closer the concept of the Messiah that finds several final referents in Judaism and Christianity. In this sense Laato’s work is more progressive than typical but his view is not quite the same as the one outlined below. The developmental or typical view of the Messiah in the OT may find its greatest hindrance in the dependence on comparative religion and sometimes a lack of concentration on the unique features of the OT’s literary context. Many OT passages seem to suggest that Israel’s religion was not to be like the ‘pagan’ nations, so the idea of wholesale borrowing seems unlikely. Especially in relation to divine kingship it appears that such a concept in the immediate OT context seems to run against the

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rhetorical taunts against such a designation in prophetic books such as Isaiah. That being said, Laato is right in seeing the importance of the Davidic Covenant to the giving of the messianic oracles in Isaiah. Chapter III will argue that the Davidic Covenant is an important and necessary background to the different oracles as the house of David plays an integral part in each of the prophecies. It is the threat to the Davidic household that precipitates the necessity of a messianic deliverer from his line – a more faithful man than Ahaz (Hezekiah) and a more righteous man than Hezekiah (the Servant).

4.7. - Progressive (Epigenetic) Fulfilment

This is the idea that the prophecies of the OT were given in seed form and these developed progressively until their culmination in the Messiah.\(^{122}\) This position also holds that there is only a single meaning to these prophecies while it grows progressively through various historical figures to its climax in the Messiah.

The first scholar to hold such a view was Willis J. Beecher.\(^{123}\) Beecher suggested a difference in the ideas of promise and prediction. He preferred to conceive of the prophetic word coming as an aspect of a promise that had already been given to Abraham, a promise that was eternal in nature. Each so-called messianic prediction was rather an aspect of this eternal promise that would have several fulfilments along a line that led to the final embodiment of the promise made by God; the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Instead of looking at prophecies as isolated predictions of what was to come, Beecher sought to show that they all related to a single plan of God that was best defined as a divine promise. Beecher stated, ‘Every fulfilled promise is a fulfilled prediction; but it is exceedingly important to look at it as a promise and not a mere prediction.’\(^{124}\)

Walter Kaiser Jr. substantially took up and developed the ideas of Beecher in a number of his works.\(^{125}\) Kaiser’s approach is seen as progressive, related to the idea that the bible demonstrates an unfolding of a promise-plan made by God. Kaiser states, ‘one way of conceiving the Bible’s own unity (indeed, a case that grows out of

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\(^{122}\) As outlined in Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 30.

\(^{123}\) W. J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963 [reprint of 1905]).

\(^{124}\) Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, 376.

\(^{125}\) See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Towards an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. 31
the OT text itself rather than one that is imposed over it as a grid) is to watch how the promise-plan of God unfolds diachronically throughout the biblical text of the OT.\footnote{Kaiser, The Messiah in the Old Testament, 26-27. Emphasis in the original.} Kaiser also speaks of the epigenetical nature\footnote{Epigenetical is a biological term that comes from the German epigenetisch. It refers to the process of heritable modifications in gene function which occur without a change in the sequence of DNA. In this case, it would be modifications in messianic ideas without a change to the original intention.} of prophetic truth as it relates to a fixed core of ideas with this promise-plan of God that remained constant. Kaiser goes on ‘the content of the given word of blessing, promise, or judgment grew in accordance with seed thoughts that were contained within its earliest statements, much as a seed is uniquely related to the plant that it will become if it has life at all.’\footnote{Kaiser, The Messiah in the Old Testament, 27.} It could also be said that both Beecher and Kaiser have created a hypothesis that acts as an easy solution to the difficulties inherent in the study of the Messiah in the OT, something that Beecher may have already been aware of at the time of his writing.\footnote{Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise, 376-377.} Nevertheless, the very concept of an epigenetical progression inherent in the messianic oracles is something that seems to be favoured by the text of Isaiah itself. The seed is in the oracles but the flowering of the promises only appears as the book unfolds, something that will be evident in chapter VII of the thesis.

4.8. - Relecture Fulfilment

In 1989 R. E. Clements proposed another approach to the concept of the Messiah in the Old Testament.\footnote{Clements, ‘The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament.’} This approach shares many of the elements of the earlier dual fulfilment approach and focuses particularly on the later readings of certain OT texts. Like the dual fulfilment view the original prophecies in the OT related to a figure present in the prophet’s own day. However, unlike the dual fulfilment view, later interpretations of these prophecies were not seen as the greater fulfilment that had been anticipated but rather ways of reading these prophecies which filled them with newer meaning.

Clements does not see the later interpretations of Judaism and the NT as standing in isolation from what preceded them but rather as simply the ‘end of a long process of what we have come to describe as ‘inner-biblical exegesis’.’\footnote{Clements, ‘The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament,’ 16.}
some scholars may assume that the authors of the NT were given a divine insight into the truer meaning of OT prophecies, Clements would see the NT’s interpretation of these texts as ‘the continued work of rethinking, re-applying and revitalizing the promises, threats and assurances which the Old Testament contains.’\textsuperscript{132} It is evident from Clements’ approach to prophecy that he sees a continual process of ‘reflection’ and ‘elaboration’ from one stage of canonical development to another.\textsuperscript{133} This is also true of his approach to the concept of unity in the book of Isaiah.\textsuperscript{134}

P. D. Wegner, a student of Clements, applied this concept of relecture or re-reading to the messianic expectations in the book of Isaiah.\textsuperscript{135} Wegner states, ‘It appears that Isaiah’s original oracles have been shaped and reread to portray messianic expectation...’\textsuperscript{136} Wegner’s work is a thoroughgoing attempt to apply Clement’s concept on a much larger scale, yet still confined to the opening thirty-five chapters of Isaiah. The approach is similar to that of the developmental view in that it is concerned with the growth of an idea across biblical history. Whereas the main concern of the developmental view was to trace the theological concepts of earlier prophecies the relecture approach more specifically traces the literary growth of the concept of messianic expectations as these grew out of continual rereading.

That a re-reading of the text of Isaiah has taken place is evident from within the book itself, as earlier passages are taken up and reapplied in different contexts. This is particularly the case with the royal narratives. However, rereading or re-use of material does not have to indicate a reinterpretation that discounts the original context. It will be argued in the following chapters that the rereading or re-use of earlier material in Isaiah functions as a rhetorical device that clarifies the identity of the messianic figure.

\textsuperscript{132} Clements, ‘The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament,’ 16.
\textsuperscript{135} Wegner, \textit{An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35}.
\textsuperscript{136} Wegner, \textit{An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35}, vi.
4.9. - Direct Fulfilment

This approach was the almost unanimous view of pre-critical writings on the OT and most commentaries from this period discuss how the traditional messianic texts of the OT relate to Jesus. One could make an argument that this was also the approach of the NT writers but, as has been noted above, there are a number of scholars who would dispute this point.¹³⁷

Two modern authors who hold to the direct fulfilment approach to the concept of the messianic hope are John Sailhamer¹³⁸ and Michael Rydelnik.¹³⁹ Although these men would categorize themselves in the direct fulfilment approach to messianic expectation, they would also distance themselves from earlier writers in this category such as Hengstenberg writing of his work as, ‘decidedly antirationalist in tone and content.’¹⁴⁰ Their approach could be given the alternative designation ‘the compositional/ canonical approach.’¹⁴¹ Sailhamer holds two fundamental convictions.

1) The reader should ask how the inspired Biblical authors of the OT understood the messianic prophecies their writing held instead of trying to look beyond the text to the underlying historical situation. 2) The Hebrew Bible (Tanak) has a very intentional shape and structure that are not accidental but gives the whole a theological message that is strongly messianic.¹⁴²

It may appear from Sailhamer’s conclusions that he finds little that is messianic beyond the canonical text, particularly the original historical context. However, Sailhamer is quick to point out:

I do not mean by that that the earlier forms of the Bible are not also messianic. What I do mean is that in the later stages of the formation of the Hebrew Bible its authors were

¹³⁹ Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope.
¹⁴⁰ Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope, 15.
¹⁴¹ Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope, 33.
primarily concerned with making more explicit the messianic hope that was already explicit in the earliest texts. This is what I call “text and commentary.”

I agree that the earliest forms of the bible are messianic in nature in that they propose a deliverer who is called to deal with a particular threat to the Davidic line and to the people under Jerusalem’s king. This can be more clearly seen in light of the fuller canonical context as Sailhamer suggests. However, as the text of Isaiah is read holistically it serves a similar function as a microcosm to the canonical context. This will be further developed as the various parts of Isaiah and their interrelationship is explored in subsequent chapters.

Ryndelnik’s work is heavily influenced by that of Sailhamer. Rydelnik has produced a work that examines a number of the key OT messianic texts and carefully exegetes these passages from his own approach to the text. He helpfully summarises his approach in this way:

As a result of carefully examining the compositional strategies of the biblical authors themselves and reading scripture according to its final form and in conjunction with its innerbiblical interpretations, there is a growing tendency to see the Old Testament as an eschatological, messianic text. In my judgment, this method takes a far more literary approach to a text, looking for the meaning of the author’s words….This method of literary interpretation is the approach I am attempting to adopt in this book.

Although Rydelnik comes to a number of traditional conclusions with regard to the messianic texts he examines, he appears to add his own unique insights into other texts. The greatest issue that might arise in regard to both Sailhamer and Rydelnik’s works is the fact that it could be suggested that the traditional canon of the Hebrew bible may not be the earliest canonical shaping of the books as a whole. Sailhamer’s theory depends on the Hebrew canonical ordering of the books of the OT as he sees the development of the messianic concept stretching from Genesis - 2 Chronicles. Nevertheless, reading scripture according to its final form and in conjunction with inner-biblical interpretations, as Rydelnik suggests, is a central concern of this thesis and therefore these aspects of his and Sailhamer’s work are most relevant.

144 Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope, 3; 7; 24-25. He also highlights another influence in W. Horbury, Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ (London: SCM, 1998).
145 Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope, 3.
Conclusion

This brief survey has demonstrated that there is not a single unified approach to the concept of the Messiah, even if there are different aspects that cross over between the various views. There is great value to be found in each of the approaches surveyed above and in line with a holistic reading of the text of Isaiah, this study will make use of the best of each of these perspectives on the difficult question of messianic expectation to formulate a definition that can be derived from and applied to the text of the book of Isaiah. The relecture approach, which is sensitive to the fact that a given prophecy is not exhausted by the original context, is one of the most helpful and through the use of the literary tool of intertextuality as applied to the text of Isaiah, it will be seen that there is a degree of relecture or rereading within the various parts and genres of Isaiah, as earlier oracles form the basis for later texts that reapply or develop the concept of messianic deliverer in an unexpected direction (cf. chapter VII on Isa. 40-66).
5. - The Function of Isaiah 36-39 in the Book of Isaiah: Surveying the Literature

Having briefly considered a number of the literary approaches to the book of Isaiah and the question of the ‘Messiah’ in Old Testament study, it will prove constructive to examine some of the scholarly literature that has examined the function of the Hezekiah narratives in the book of Isaiah. This will help to lay out how different scholars have approached the question of the contribution these narratives make to the flow of the book of Isaiah as a whole and whether or not these chapters enable a transition from different perspectives in the earlier and later parts of Isaiah. My own approach to the structure and function of the Hezekiah narratives will be more fully developed in chapter V.

The Hezekiah narratives function as an indicator of the literary coherence of the book as a whole. Isa. 36-39 have been seen as acting as a kind of ‘bridge’ or as a transitional unit between the two main parts of the book of Isaiah; chapters 1-35 and 40-66. The proposals in regard to the function of these chapters ranged from a transition from judgment to salvation, to the idea that they acted as a bridge between the threat of Assyria as the world superpower (Isa. 1-35) to Babylon taking over this role (40-66). Below I will look at some of the most important studies related to the function of Isa. 36-39 in the book of Isaiah and how they have been


variously interpreted as a narrative unit. These chapters will be explored in more detail as the study progresses.

5.1. Peter Ackroyd

In his ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ Ackroyd set the standard for all subsequent studies and his work on the Hezekiah narratives is still referred in many commentaries and monographs related to these chapters. As the title of Ackroyd’s article suggests, he looks at these narratives in 2 Kings and Isaiah against the background of the Babylonian Exile commenting, ‘the understanding of the section in terms of the Exile is something which needs to be discussed.’ An important aspect of these chapters that others had tended to overlook is the odd chronological sequence of the chapters. Ackroyd notes, ‘the events presupposed by the preceding chapters 2 Kgs. 18-19, Isa. 36-37, are more likely to have followed the sending of these ambassadors than to have preceded it.’ Ackroyd believes that this odd chronological arrangement ‘…has some deliberate purpose.’ These narratives, in their present form in the book of Isaiah, seem to provide a context for the prophecies of chapter 40 and following. The visit of the Babylonian envoys in chapter 39 serves as an anticipation of the Babylonian Exile meaning that ‘the experience of the exile when it comes may be understood to have been foretold in prophetic judgment; and not merely that, its reality and legality are established by royal action and prophetic interpretation.’ In its final form, Ackroyd sees the repetitiousness and emphasis of the language used throughout these chapters as evidence of literary skill on the part of the compiler.

151 Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 332.
152 Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 332.
In a subsequent study Ackroyd explores more fully the possible links between Isa. 36-39 and the rest of the book. He picks up on Melugin’s comment that these chapters were ‘never meant to stand alone’ and that the ‘closest thing to a setting for chaps. 40ff. is the prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah in chapter 39 concerning the exile to Babylon.’ Ackroyd and Melugin highlight the fact that the narratives, as they appear in Isaiah, seem to function as an appropriate transition to 40ff.

One of the main questions that will be addressed in this study is related to the reason(s) why chapters 36-37, though chronologically subsequent to the following two chapters, is placed before chapters 38-39 in the book of Isaiah. Ackroyd notes that ‘the order of the material as now presented is lacking in true chronology, and we may ask whether the order is not dictated by interests other than chronological or historical.’ Ackroyd’s basic premise is that Isa. 1-35 contains the necessary context for 36-37, while 40-55 expound what is presupposed in 38-39. This simple outline, which by no means exhausts the detailed links these chapters have with the rest of the book of Isaiah, clearly points to the fact that Isa. 36-39 was composed as an intentional transition between the two major halves of the book. Where Ackroyd’s study stops short is in relation to how Hezekiah functions as a pivotal character in the transition from the first half of the book and not simply the other aspects of the narratives, particularly the change in agency from the Assyrian to the Babylonian threat. Later chapters of this study will further develop these unexplored ideas.

5.2. - Christopher Seitz

Another important figure in developing the concept of the transitional function of the Hezekiah narratives is Christopher Seitz whose work will be further considered in chapter V. Seitz produced one of the most substantial studies on Isa. 36-39 in his ‘Zion’s Final Destiny’ (1991) and touched on these chapters again in his subsequent ‘Interpretation commentary’ (1993). Seitz makes use of a number of critical tools; historical, text-critical, source-critical, form-critical, redaction-critical and literary approaches. Taking into consideration the mass of literature on the subject, Seitz

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157 It is conceded that not every scholar would agree that Isaiah can be easily divided in two between 1-39 and 40-66 but this is a convenient designation that is represented in many commentaries and the works mentioned at the beginning of this section.
adopts K. A. D. Smelik’s literary analysis to argue for a unified narrative now essentially represented by Isa. 36-37.\(^{158}\) He recognises that the tradition process behind 36-37 was a gradual one, yet he sees ‘no reason to date the narrative in its present form much later than the death of Sennacherib (681), with which it comes to a stunning close.’\(^{159}\)

He also, and most importantly, focuses on the figure of Hezekiah rather than Josiah as the primary influence on the nature of the narratives.\(^{160}\) This means that Seitz focuses the literary structure of Isaiah 1-39 around the contrasting reigns of two Judean kings - Ahaz (chs. 7-8) and Hezekiah (chs. 36-39).\(^{161}\) Seitz examines the variant reigns of the two kings as they are presented in the book of Isaiah.\(^{162}\) This is one of the most compelling aspects of Seitz’s work and one that establishes the literary interconnectedness of Isa. 36-39 with Isa. 1-12. These ideas will be explored further in both chapters III and V of this thesis. I will suggest that such interconnectedness is a means of drawing the reader’s attention to the prospect that Hezekiah is being portrayed as a possible candidate for the messianic figure offered in the earlier chapters owing to the contrast with his faithless father.

Seitz recognises that there is a certain idealization of Hezekiah as these narratives progress. Unlike those scholars who see more of an idealization taking place in the Kings account,\(^{163}\) Seitz agrees with Ackroyd that the movement toward idealization seems more at home in the Isaiah account. This would be particularly evident in the removal of ‘Account A’ (2 Kgs. 18:14-16) from the Isaiah narrative and the divergences found in Isa. 38 and 2 Kgs. 20.\(^{164}\) However, Seitz states that ‘it must be acknowledged, against theories of unilateral Hezekiah idealization, that chapter 39

\(^{158}\) Smelik’s analysis of these chapters can be found in, K. A. D. Smelik, ‘Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy: The Purpose of Isaiah xxxvi and xxxvii,’ OTS 24 (1986) 70-93.

\(^{159}\) Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 117.


\(^{162}\) Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 195.


\(^{164}\) Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 155.
stands apart from such a move, if it is not in clear tension with it. This is held in
distinction to those who see a unilateral Hezekiah idealization even at the expense of historical reconstruction.

One solution that could be offered for the divergence from idealization at chapter 39 could relate to its composition. The purpose of the chapter would have less to do with idealization or non-idealization and rather would demonstrate a redactional interest in providing a setting for chapters 40ff. Seitz goes on in his work to point out at a number of places how chapter 39 seems to indicate that future Babylonian assault can be expected as a result of Hezekiah’s action, even if the language of judgment is not personally directed at him. This being said, he agrees with Ackroyd’s interpretation of Isa. 39:8 who sees the words of Hezekiah as less motivated by self interest than as indicating Hezekiah’s pious acceptance of the judgment. This contention will be considered in more detail in chapter VI of the thesis. His detailed examination of the character and function of Hezekiah and his focus on the significance of Zion in these chapters has been a necessary step forward. In chapter V I will show how Seitz’s work on the Hezekiah narratives in this regard has informed my own reading and where I believe that his work could be taken in a different direction, particularly in regard to the portrayal of Hezekiah in Isa. 39. Seitz’s emphasis on Hezekiah and Zion is taken up, though from a thoroughly synchronic approach, by the work of Conrad.

5.3. - Edgar Conrad

Along with Ackroyd and Seitz, Conrad has done more to advance the significance and purpose of Isa. 36-39 in relation to the book as a whole. Although there are important synchronic elements in the approaches of Ackroyd and Seitz, Conrad’s study is a purely synchronic literary reading of the book of Isaiah and the royal narratives in particular. Conrad first outlined his approach to these narratives in a JSOT article.

165 Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 155.
167 Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 156.
168 Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 156-158.
entitled ‘The Royal Narratives and the Structure of the Book of Isaiah’ (1988) and he later expanded on this work in his ‘Reading Isaiah’ (1991). Conrad notes that the absence of Isaiah as a character in most of the book makes his appearances more conspicuous, especially in a book that is predominantly poetry. This would suggest that the location of these narratives in the book may be strategic and significant to the book’s structure.\(^{170}\) The most important advance with regard to Isa. 36-39 that Conrad has put forward is in relation to his intertextual work. This will be explored further in the next section when looking at intertextuality and Conrad’s use of it in exploring the connections in the royal narratives.\(^{171}\)

One aspect of Conrad’s study that helpfully guides the discussion of the function of the Hezekiah narratives forward is the concept of the movement that is inherent in the text of Isaiah. He proposes the idea that chapters 36-39 built on the earlier narrative about Ahaz and amplified certain motifs, while at the same time filling out some of the predictions with regard to the historical situation the latter chapters address. He points out how the coming of Sennacherib had been predicted long before he appears in chapters 36-37.\(^{172}\) This is also true of Hezekiah in the earlier chapters of Isaiah. Conrad sees in the Immanuel sign (7:14), and the ‘ideal future king’ (9:2-7) predictions that find fulfilment within the Book of Isaiah, in the person of Hezekiah.\(^{173}\) He does concede, however, that the promise of the ideal future king cannot be exhausted in the person of Hezekiah owing to the fact that the ideal king’s throne will be established ‘from this time forth and evermore’, something that is evidently not the case with Hezekiah.\(^{174}\)

Conrad goes on to see the fulfilment of this prediction in a redeemed and idealized community of God’s people who are also an important part of both royal narratives.


\(^{171}\) My own analysis of the text of Isaiah using the literary tool of intertextuality can be found in chapter IV of the thesis.

\(^{172}\) These include: First the prediction of the Assyrian king coming up against the fortified cities of Judah and taking them (7:14-25; 8:6-8) fulfilled in 36:1. Second, The Rabshakeh’s speech that claimed Yahweh’s command to attack Judah (36:10) was earlier seen in the description of the ‘godless nation’ that would come to destroy and plunder and the description of the Assyrian king as the ‘rod of my anger’ (10:5-6). Third, The word’s of the Rabshakeh in regard to the impotent gods of other nations (36:18-20; 37:10-13) is anticipated in 10:8-11, 13-14. Fourth, Yahweh’s words of judgment against the Assyrian king (37:22-29) are foreshowed in the context of the Ahaz narrative (10:15-19). Fifth, Yahweh’s words in 10:15-19 anticipate the downfall of the king (37:36-38). See, Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 43.


\(^{174}\) Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 45.
and the eschatological predictions toward the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah. In this way Isa. 36-39 is not only looking back to and fulfilling the earlier words of Isaiah in the book but the reader is left with an anticipation of a similar progression at the conclusion of the chapters. As Assyria had been spoken of in the context of the Ahaz narrative, so the reader would expect to hear more about the Babylonians mentioned in the context of the Hezekiah narrative. This would seem to be the context of the chapters immediately following chapter 39. From here Hezekiah became a more faithful model of king than his father, and the reader would expect to find a future king in the latter chapters who was without the evident faults of Hezekiah highlighted in chapter 39. Conrad makes a similar point:

Just as the Hezekiah narrative mirrors the same sequence of motifs as the Ahaz narrative, so the narrative still to be determined will mirror a similar sequence of motifs. But just as the Hezekiah narrative presented Hezekiah as a different sort of king than Ahaz, so the missing narrative will portray the community as a different sort of king than Hezekiah.\(^{175}\)

Where Conrad sees the narrative as ‘missing’ and the fulfillment of the ‘different sort of king’ in the community, I propose the narrative is to be found in chapters 40ff. and the different king as pictured in the servant (40-55). It is conceded that the picture of the servant will include the community, but I refer specifically to those instances where the servant is described in the singular rather than the plural.\(^{176}\) Conrad’s work has opened up a whole new avenue of interpretative possibilities that it would seem have unfortunately been left unaddressed in subsequent literature. These include the progressive nature of the narrative and poetic texts, the development of characterisation and the changing identification of the faithful king from earlier to latter chapters. These ideas will be considered throughout the thesis.

**Conclusion**

It has been shown from Ackroyd’s work that the earlier concept of Isa. 36-39 functioning as a simple appendix to chapters 1-35 can no longer be sustained. Seitz highlights a certain idealization of the character of Hezekiah, but avoids the extremes of some other studies that propose a unilateral idealization. Conrad’s reading of these

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\(^{175}\) Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 51.

\(^{176}\) Chapter VII of this thesis will explore the nature of the servant in more detail.
chapters opens up new interpretative possibilities with regard to their purpose and function while highlighting the interconnectedness of these chapters with what precedes them. From here the thesis will interact with and develop these ideas to propose a fresh approach to the structure and function of the Hezekiah narratives within the book of Isaiah and the role of Hezekiah in relation to the earlier messianic oracles. This will be achieved through a holistic literary and theological reading as highlighted above.
Chapter II. - Messianic Expectation in the Book of Isaiah – The Early ‘Messianic’ Oracles

This chapter will examine those oracles in Isaiah that have often been treated as being in some way ‘messianic’ in nature. One could profitably look at a variety of passages in Isa. 1-39 that suggest some form of messianic relationship, but here I will narrow my study to three particular passages that have characteristically been the subject of ongoing debate for their contribution to messianic. These three passages are Isa. 7:1-17; 8:23b-9:6 (ET 9:1-7) and 11:1-16. Other texts will be mentioned, but these will not receive the same focus as the passages mentioned above.

The aim of examining these passages is not simply to describe whether or not the given passage is messianic; others have competently carried out such work already. Rather it is to see how they help to reveal the role of Hezekiah in these oracles and if he has any relationship to them. A number of scholars have suggested such a relationship exists. Some have proposed that Hezekiah was the original focus of an oracle in its historical context but that this has been changed with the development of the book over several generations. Clements, for example, argues that

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the ‘Immanuel’ oracle of Isa. 7:14 did not originally relate to Hezekiah when it was first delivered but came to be associated with him through the processes of relecture and redaction.3 Here, I wish to propose a different approach of looking at Hezekiah’s relationship to these oracles, one that looks at the literary connections that can be established. This approach takes into account the immediately preceding chapters of the first major ‘messianic’ oracle in Isa. 7:1-17.

The fuller message of this first natural unit 1-12 can be missed when not read as a whole, not discerning the interpretative principles that are found within this unit, which inevitably will affect ones reading of the book of Isaiah as a whole.4 I would contend that in the commissioning of the prophet in chapter 6 is found a key interpretive principle that will aid in reading the rest of the book along two parallel lines. The first line of interpretation embodies confusion (blindness, deafness, lack of understanding [6:9-10]) and the second suggests light and understanding for a faithful remnant of God’s people (6:13, 9:1 [ET 9:2]). The idea that Hezekiah partially fulfils the hopes related in the earlier messianic prophecies lies along one of these two interpretative lines. I will expand on this below when briefly looking at chapter 6.

This study will also propose an alternative means of understanding the terminology of messianism and the Messiah in Isaiah. It will be less concerned with the temporal location of such terminology than with its theological and rhetorical import. Few scholars assume that the oracles as they were originally given would have any relation to the meaning of the term ‘messianic’ as it arose in later Jewish and Christian writings. One major example of this type of approach is found in Heskett’s work on messianism in Isaiah, which insists upon a definition that ‘requires an eschatological event that fulfils the promises of 2 Sam. 7 especially after the


monarchy has ceased to exist.” Therefore, before 587 BCE any oracle that found its origin in an earlier time could not be said to be ‘messianic’ in any real sense of the term. I agree with Heskett that there needs to be a necessary ‘climate for the inception of messianic hope for a Davidic king to bring salvation and restore the promises to David in a supernatural way.” However, in the text of Isa. 7, in it’s final form, there is reason to believe that the crisis faced by Ahaz was a serious threat to the continuation of the Davidic line and therefore a literary setting is created to suggest the need for a ‘messianic’ hope. If the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7 is essential to the understanding of the development of the messianic hope (as Heskett and others have suggested), how does this affect the understanding of the literary setting of the early chapters of the book of Isaiah?

The Davidic Covenant and Isaiah 1-5

As was seen above in Heskett’s definition of the messianic hope, the promises of the Davidic covenant found in 2 Sam. 7:1-17 are extremely significant as they set out the contexts for the initial development of the messianic concept. It will be helpful therefore to briefly sketch what exactly is promised in this covenant.

In 2 Sam. 7:1-3 King David proposes to build a house for Yahweh to dwell in. Yahweh informs David that he will not build a house for him but promises to build a house for David (vv. 4-17). Involved in this larger promise are two categories of promises given to David; those that will be realised in his lifetime (vv. 8-11a) and those that will be realised after David’s death (vv. 11b-16). In the second of these two categories Yahweh gives the promises of a seed (בראשית), kingdom (מלכות) and throne (כסא) (11b-13). All three of these terms recur in the messianic oracles of Isa. 7, 9 and 11. However, in 2 Sam. 7:14-15 faithfulness is expected of the king and any iniquity of the king will bring on him Yahweh’s discipline with ‘the rod of men’ and ‘the stripes of the sons of men’ (7:14). Although this discipline is conditioned upon the disobedience of the king, Yahweh assures David that his steadfast love will never depart from him (and his household) as it did from Saul and confirms that his house

5 Heskett, *Messianism Within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah*, 3.
and kingdom will be established forever (7:15-16; see also Isa. 9:6[7]). It would appear that the conditions for such discipline upon the king and the people had arisen by the time of King Ahaz when Yahweh had to use the rod (חרב) of men (Assyria) to discipline his people (Isa. 10:5). What had precipitated such conditions to arise seemed to be a long slide of disobedience in the Davidic household up to the time the book of Isaiah starts to unfold. Isa. 1-5 lays out the condition of the people of Israel, assuming a pre-history of disobedience that had led to the people’s present rebellion.

**Isaiah 1-5**

To understand the climate in which the messianic oracle in chapter 7 is given a brief survey of the surrounding literary and theological context must be given. It is my contention that within the preceding chapters the need for the oracle is outlined and a hermeneutical principle that will be key to understanding later portions of the book is given.

Chapter 1 describes both the wickedness and unfaithfulness of the people of Judah. Chapters 2-4 form the second unit beginning with a description of Israel’s future glory (2:1-4), followed by a warning of coming judgment (2:5-4:1) and finishes with a return to the restoration of the people. A third unit in Isa. 1-5 can be discerned in 5:1-30, which can be divided in two between a song of Israel’s rebellion (5:1-7) and six woes against the wicked (5:8-30). This final section retains a conceptual link with chapter 6 which follows the proclamation of woes with one from the prophet’s own mouth (6:5).

Some scholars have seen within the larger unit of Isa. 1-5 some evidence of the covenant lawsuit formula. Although others have argued against the lawsuit concept, certain aspects of the material seem to fit within that literary genre. The

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Hebrew noun בֵּית (byr) is often understood to refer to the idea of a lawsuit or court in session. Therefore the speeches in which the term is employed tend to indicate the presence of lawsuit language. One such instance can be found in Isa. 3:13-15. Isa. 3:13 states:

The LORD rises to argue his case (בֵּית); he stands to judge the peoples. (NRSV)

Here Yahweh takes on the role of the prosecutor challenging the people with an indictment against their treatment of the poor. It has also been recognised that Isa. 1:2-3 seems to take on the form of a lawsuit proclamation even though the term בֵּית does not appear in these verses. The fact that Yahweh calls upon the heavens and earth to listen to his word of indictment against his people gives substance to this claim, as this practice of calling on the elements of the natural order to stand as witnesses can be found in the law codes and treaties of the ancient Near East and in various texts from Deuteronomy to Joshua. Taking Isa. 1-5 as a larger conceptual unit, the pronouncing of woes against the peoples in chapter 5 continues the lawsuit language to the end of that unit. If Isa. 1-5 is the outworking of a courtroom drama then the reader would be justified in expecting the following chapter, chapter 6, to continue this line of thought and even introduce the judge’s final verdict on the people. As Peterson notes, ‘[o]ne very interesting feature of Isaiah’s lawsuits is that the deity can enact multiple roles, functioning as prosecutor, judge, and executioner!’

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10 For this argument see, James W. Limburg, ‘The Root בֵּית and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches,’ *JBL* 88/3 (1969) 291-304. It could be suggested that this paragraph has taken account of only the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7 without any reference to the Sinai covenant. However, the covenant at Sinai is presupposed as the prior background to the prosecution of the people in Isa. 1-5 and the regulations for the kingship are set out in that covenant (Deut. 17:14-20). The focus of attention in this chapter has to do with the house of David and messianic expectation, thus the concentration on the Davidic covenant here.


12 *ANET*, 203-205.

Part 1. - Isaiah 6 and its Parallel Interpretive Function

It is not my intention here to conduct a full exegetical study of this passage but rather to see how it connects with what has already been discussed above and what it tells us about the way that the following chapters of the book can be read.

Isa. 6 follows on from the themes and motifs found in the first five chapters of the book.\(^ {14}\) I suggested that Isa. 1-5 shows elements of the covenant/prophetic lawsuit style and this gives the impression that a courtroom drama is unfolding. Yahweh has been acting as prosecutor, announcing the indictment against the people and the woes that are the result of their rebellion. This may seem to be the verdict given, but it still awaits the word of the judge that will determine the fate of the defendant.\(^ {15}\) By this stage in Israel’s history the judge for such social and moral offences would have been the king seated in the city Gate, the courtroom of the day. However, Isa. 6 begins with the statement that what the prophet saw (יהוה) took place in the year of King Uzziah’s death (6:1a). This statement determines that no earthly king was fit to try such a case. Therefore, 6:1b introduces the judge, ייהוה, seated on his throne to judge, not in the gate but in the temple where he had promised to set his name. It is significant that no king is mentioned after Isa. 1:1 until this point in the book, though Yahweh had said that he will enter into judgment with the elders and the princes of his people (3:14). The first mention of a king after the introductory inscription highlights his mortality.\(^ {16}\) With the words of Isa. 1-5 still vivid in the reader’s mind one gains the distinct impression that the Davidic throne is languishing in a pretty


\(^ {15}\) Isa. 5 finishes with the parable of the vineyard and proposes a level of judgment that will come upon the people but the outworking of the sentence is still to be determined.

sorry state and the only king conveying justice and righteousness is the great divine king himself.\textsuperscript{17} The opening verse of chapter 6 also introduces an important theme of seeing (יהוה), something the prophet is allowed to experience that seems to be denied to the seraphim that flank\textsuperscript{18} Yahweh (6:2) and will be denied to the people through the prophet’s preaching (6:9b). The prophet is given but the merest of glimpses of the divine king seeing him ‘high and lofty’ while ‘the hem/train of his robe filled the temple’ (6:1). Verses 3-8 unpack a change of solidarity. The prophet at first sees himself as complicit in the people’s uncleanness and unfit to speak in their defence (5), calling upon himself the woe levelled against the people in 5:8-23 (19-21) and feeling unworthy for his eyes to see (יהוה) Yahweh of hosts. The change comes in verses 6-7 when one of the seraphim touches his lips with an altar coal, his guilt is taken away and his sin blotted out. It is interesting to note that the hiphil (והנה) and qal (והנה) forms of the verb to touch in Isa. 6:7 is the same as the noun form used in 2 Sam 7:14 (והנה) to describe the type of discipline that Yahweh would use upon the Davidic king who practised iniquity. No longer is the prophet unclean and separated from the thrice holy (יהוה) divine king but the removal of his sin has caused him to become like the one he beholds. God incorporates Isaiah into his holy perspective through a divine act. Isaiah responds ינחלוהו ‘Here am I; send me!’

Now ‘seeing’ things from the divine perspective the prophet is ready to bear the message that Yahweh gives to him to deliver to the people in verses 9-10. Just as the prophet has been made like the holy God that he worships, so he is commissioned to pronounce a judgment that will make the people like the things that they worship. These verses have been described by Beale as ‘a retributive taunt against idolatry,’ an epithet that I believe is quite appropriate.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} This is borne out in Isa. 1-5 from the multiple references to the failing leadership being replaced either by children or the language of Yahweh as king (see, Isa. 1:26; 2:4, 10b, 19b; 3:2-4, 12a, 14). Add to this the references to idolatry, which was often increased or decreased by whomever was ruling, and the lack of righteousness and justice, the marks of the king, and the contention is proven.

\textsuperscript{18} I am inclined to agree with Seitz that ‘the seraphim are probably not “above him” (NRSV) but flank him, guarding access to the throne.’ Christopher R. Seitz, Isaiah 1-39 (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 54.

\textsuperscript{19} Beale, ‘Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry.’ He has expanded on the work conducted in this article in his monograph: G. K. Beale, We Become What we Worship: A Biblical
In the opening verses of chapter 6 the prophet has been described as one who ‘saw the Lord’ (6:1) and whose ‘eyes have seen the king’ (6:5b). He also heard the voice of the seraphim (6:3), the voice of him (NRSV – ‘those’) who called (6:4) and the voice of the Lord (6:8a). This ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ is contrasted with what will be the case for those who hear the prophet’s message. The repetition of words can be seen in verses 9-10:

Is. 6:9

וַיִּרְאָה הַנּוֹבֵל לִפְנֵי הַיָּהָה שֶׁנִּנְסָרָה אֶתְלָוֹתֵינוּ וַיַּהֲדִינוּ אֶתְלָוֹתֵינוּ לֹא יֵרְאָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

Is. 6:10

וַיִּהֲדַם וְנִעְנָה וְשָׁמַע פָּרָדוּת בְּשֵׁם בְּשֵׁם וַיָּמֵשׁ וָרָם לָא:

Robinson points out not only the repetition here of words but also the repetition of sounds (with the 2mp endings and characteristic hiphil preformative) and the verb forms (two jussive and two imperatives in 9b and three imperatives in 10b).\(^{20}\) There is also the repetition involved in the three negative phrases in both verses 9 and 10 - ‘but do not comprehend’ (אלְלוֹתֵינוּ), ‘but do not understand’ (וַיִּרְאָה הַנּוֹבֵל), ‘so that they may not…comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed’ (יְרֵינֵנִים וְרָפָא לָא?). In verse 10 further repetition is seen when ‘hearts/minds’ are to be made ‘fat/dull’ (רומֵנִים), ‘ears’ ‘heavy/stopped’ (דֹּפֵנִים), and ‘eyes’ ‘blind/shut’ (רֹמְשִים). In the MT Yahweh makes Isaiah the causative agent of this blindness, deafness and the

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hardening/fattening of hearts and minds. In verse 9 there are three qal imperatives related to Isaiah’s going and speaking. Isaiah’s words will be ‘heard’ by the people but they will not ‘comprehend’, they will ‘see’ but not ‘understand’. It is also most likely that this is not related to a single message that the prophet is commissioned to give but an ongoing condition for the people, suggested by the use of the infinitive absolutes. The fact that it is the prophet who affects these conditions through his preaching is given further weight in verse 10 with the use of the three hiphil imperatives noted above. The hiphil carries causative force; therefore, it is the proclamation of the prophet that brings about the confusion in the people’s understanding of what Yahweh is doing. This is fundamentally important for how to interpret the following chapters of the book of Isaiah. This ‘confusing’ hermeneutic would not only affect the generation hearing the message but subsequent generations portrayed in the book. One whose eyes are blinded to the spiritual realities of Yahweh’s words might only expect to see an ‘earthly’ fulfilment of oracles related to an ideal king/messiah (as in Isa. 7, 9 and 11).

Finding an immediate referent for these oracles, in, say Hezekiah, another Davidic descendant or the prophet’s son, is a valid understanding drawn from the text. However, the hermeneutic of Isa. 6 infers that these referents are rhetorical devices that are designed to confuse. This means the reader can creatively hold together the immediate and eschatological referents that are so often seen to be in tension. This is a way of explaining why Hezekiah can be both ‘perceived’ as a figure who fulfils some of these expectations and yet fails to embody certain aspects of them. What I am proposing here is that both the failure and fulfilment of a given prophecy are inherent to that prophecy owing to the interpretative background of Isa. 6. What is constituted a failure but that which fails to meet certain expectations? Some readers

22 This is also borne out in the text by Isaiah’s question about how long this would continue.
23 Seitz’s states: ‘This captures a general truth about the prophet’s preaching as this unfolds in chapters 7-8 and in the passages that follow,’ Isaiah 1-39, 56.
24 The failure here is different than that proposed by Carroll, When Prophecy Failed. His work depends on the earlier work of L. Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, Stanley Schachter, When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).
may have certain expectations that, in the end, fail to be met but that does not mean that the oracle itself has failed to meet its own given intention.

In light of this it might be asked, what would make Yahweh ‘blind’, ‘deafen’ and remove ‘understanding’ from his people? This is where the concept of the retributive taunt against idolatry comes into play. In Isa. 1-5 it was seen that part of the people’s rebellion against their divine king related to their practice of idolatry. It seems that this comes into central focus here in chapter 6 and particularly in verses 9 and 10. I have already suggested that in verses 6-7 the prophet had been made like the deity in the removal of his uncleanness and had, therefore, been given the status of holiness. It appears that the prophet is not being given an arbitrary task of blinding and deafening but that this is the conforming of the people to the likeness of their idols. Beale calls Isa. 6:9-13 a ‘literary tirade against idolatry’ and not just a pronouncement of judgement against covenant disloyalty but ‘a punishment tied, specifically to the nation’s sin of idolatry.’ Two primary lines of evidence are given. First the verbal resonance between Isa. 6:9b-10a and Ps. 115:4-6a (Ps. 135:15-17a) is noted. This can be laid out below:

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25 See the following references for imagery of idolatry: Isaiah 1:29; 2:6-9, 18, 20.
27 This is the order used in Beale’s updated work We Become What we Worship, 45. The order laid out in the original article is Isaiah 6:9b-10a compared with Psalm 135:15-17 (Psalm 115:5b-6a).
<table>
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<th>Isaiah 6:9b-10a</th>
<th>Psalm 115:4-6a (135:15-17a)</th>
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<td>‘Their land has also been filled with idols; They worship the work of their hands; ‘Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship’ (Is 2:8; 20b)</td>
<td>Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man’s hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but they cannot hear. 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not know.’ “Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears…and repent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Ps. 115:4-8 (and 135:15-18) is clearly presented as a taunt against the making and worshiping of idols, concluding with the ominous statement ‘Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them’ (115:8). Set against the context of the idolatry exposed in Isa. 1-5, chapter 6 demonstrates a very similar thought world to that presented in the Psalms, indicating that the people are being made like their blind, deaf and dumb idols. The verbal resonance here may be nothing more than formal but along with the other evidence Beale presents, it is unlikely that this is the case. Secondly, Isa. 6:9-10 is set in the context of verses 8-13 and this wider context may also suggest the language of idolatry and Israel’s association with it. Verse 13 mentions a tenth that will remain and will again be subject to burning ‘like a terebinth (תֶּרֶנֶת) or an oak (נַחַל).’ In the preceding chapters, particularly Isa. 1:29-31 the burning of terebinths and oaks is part of a description of God’s destruction of idols. Whether or not these primary lines of argumentation are convincing, there is one other factor that must be taken into account that adds weight to the assertion that Isa. 6 is styled as a retributive taunt against idolatry. The fact that in all other cases where the language of not ‘seeing, hearing or understanding’ is used they are, without exception, used of those who worship idols: Isa. 42:16-20; 43:8-12; 44:8-20; 47:5-11. It is highly improbable that in the final form of the book of Isaiah this language would have been picked up and used in this way in Isa. 40ff. if idolatry had not been central to the intention of chapter 6.

If it is concluded that Isa. 1-5 unfolds the background of the people’s rebellion against Yahweh in the form of a lawsuit proclamation, and that chapter 6 gives us the verdict that what Isaiah will say to the people will be heard but not understood then there is reason to believe that what follows in the book will take this hermeneutical principle into consideration. The literary structure of these chapters invites a reading that will take into account all that has been set out up to this point and read forward to the oracles that will imbibe this rhetorical hermeneutic. At what stage this structure took shape is less of a concern than what it can tell us about a different literary and theological reading. I will, therefore, examine the ‘messianic’ oracles in light of these principles.

30 This point is demonstrated in, Glazov, The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy, 127. See also, Beale, ‘Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry,’ 271-273.
Part 2. - Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 7:1-17

Isa. 7 is set against the larger unit of 7:1-8:18, which describes the destruction of Judah. Within chapter 7 there is the interplay of a number of different literary types and genres. For instance, there is an encounter story/narrative between the prophet and the king. There is also the use of etiology with the giving of the ‘Immanuel’ sign (7:14) and the counterbalance of oracles of judgment and salvation depending on the specified referent of the spoken word. Below I will provide my own exegesis of the material in Isa. 7:1-17 taking note of the surrounding context, how others have dealt with this material, and what it tells the reader about the person of Hezekiah in reference to the ‘Immanuel’ sign.

Exegesis of Isaiah 7:1-17

Verses 1-2 appear to provide an introductory narrative summary listing three of the kings mentioned in Isa. 1:1, Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz, while Hezekiah is conspicuous by his absence. Of course it could be that the author simply wants to set the narrative that follows against an historical context but it also immediately makes the reader wonder where Hezekiah is at this stage. Family lineage seems important in these opening verses with attention drawn to the lack of any family name given to Rezin king of Aram/Syria, while Pekah king of Israel is designated (לֶבֶן רֶמְלָיָה) ‘the son of Remaliah’. However, the reader’s focus becomes fixed on Ahaz king of Judah who is not simply the (וֶלַוָּה יְהוֹ) ‘son of Jotham’ but is given the further epithet ‘son of Uzziah’ (וֶלַוָּה יְהוֹ). This connects the material in this chapter with the material in chapter 6, which was said to have occurred in the year that king Uzziah died (6:1). It also creates the effect of drawing attention to the central importance of the character of Ahaz in this chapter and highlights the significance of his household. The ‘house of David’ and the promises to David and his kingship seem to play a key role within chapter 7, introduced here in the opening verses.

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31 Pekah king of Israel is referred to as ‘the son of Remaliah’ three more times in the narrative of chapter 7 in verses 4, 5 and 9.
The obvious setting and background of chapter 7 (and 8) introduced in these verses is the Syro-Ephraimite War.\textsuperscript{34} It would seem that the most logical interpretation of these events would see Rezin king of Syria persuading Pekah king of Israel to join an alliance with him to attack Jerusalem, with the intention of forcing Ahaz to come onboard with their anti-Assyrian coalition.\textsuperscript{35} The focus of these verses, however, is the problem of the continuation of ‘the house of David’ (דָּוָד הַבְּנֵי) that the coalition has come against. In verse 2 it is ‘the house of David’ that receives the report of the coming attack and not Ahaz specifically. Ahaz acts both as an individual and the symbol or personification of the Davidic dynasty; what he does or does not do will effect what happens to the whole dynasty and the people of Judah.\textsuperscript{36} The reaction of Ahaz and the people to this doom laden news exposes allusions back to the material in chapter 6. First, there is the reference to (לְבָנָא) ‘his heart’\textsuperscript{37} and (לְבָנָא) ‘the hearts of his people’. In 6:10 the prophet is called to make insensitive (לְבָנָא) ‘the hearts of the (this) people’. When it comes to the words of Yahweh the people’s hearts are insensitive (fat) while when the word of military threat is brought to the king and the people their hearts are very sensitive to this news, demonstrated by their shaking like trees before the wind.\textsuperscript{38} The reader is expected to understand that what is taking place here in chapter 7 is fundamentally linked to that which preceded it and, therefore, needs to take note of this.\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{35} Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 229. Seitz notes that ‘Perhaps the broader context is anti-Assyrian intrigue’ but that the text does not choose to focus on this aspect. \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 67.


\textsuperscript{37} There is some discrepancy over the translation of the pronominal suffix of (וּלְבָנָא). Wildberger argues that the pronominal suffix should be translated ‘his’ and ‘must refer specifically to Ahaz, since one cannot rightly speak about the heart of a house’. \textit{Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary}, 294. Irvine on the other hand translates the whole phrase, ‘its resolve and the resolve of its people’ seeing substance in the NJPSV translation, ‘their hearts and the hearts of their people trembled’. Stuart A. Irvine, \textit{Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis}, Issue 123 of Dissertation series, Society of Biblical Literature (Scholars Press, 1990) 138 n.16. In light of the juxtaposition of Ahaz and the house of David in verses 12-13 it would seem that Wildberger has the most natural reading.

\textsuperscript{38} There is also a connection between the shaking of the people’s heart (7:2) and the shaking of the threshold. See, Miscall, \textit{Isaiah}, 36; David Bostock, \textit{A Portrayal of Trust: The Theme of Faith in the Hezekiah Narratives}, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006) 182.

\textsuperscript{39} Miscall also sees a link with the ‘tree imagery’ of the subsequent chapters. Miscall, \textit{Isaiah}, 36.
After the scene is set in the first two verses of chapter 7 Yahweh once again addresses the prophet and tells him to meet with Ahaz ‘at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field’ (7:3).

The idea is clear that both positive and negative connotations existing in the prophet’s message in this chapter are given a living embodiment in the person of Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub ישוע ב發布). It is Yahweh who tells Isaiah to take his strangely named son along with him to meet with Ahaz, therefore giving the impression that he is to be in some way part of the message. Clements feels that the boy is ‘clearly intended to provide a major constituent part of the prophet’s message to the king’ even if, as Seitz says ‘the son appears without any explanation of his origin’. Whatever his origin, the reader is immediately drawn to the fact that the word order seems unusual; the reverse order would be expected,發布 ישוע, for names that have the imperfect following the noun are rare. However, this may indicate that the emphasis is being placed on the remnant (ישוע), which becomes a Leitwort in Isaiah. Added to the peculiar word order is the question of how to translate בְּיוֹנָה in this context; should it be ‘return’ or ‘repent’. If ‘return’ is chosen, does this indicate a ‘religious’ return in the sense of conversion or does it refer to a ‘secular’ return in the sense of returning from battle? Does the meaning of the

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42 Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 76.
43 As indicated in, Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary, 296.
44 Irvine, Isaiah, Ahaz, 143-144; Sang Hoon Park, בְּיוֹנָה, in NIDOTTE, 16.
45 An example of this conclusion is found in, Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary, 296.
prophet’s son’s name even matter at all?\textsuperscript{46} In view of the naming of other children in Isa. 7 and 8 (‘Immanuel’ [7:14] and ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ [8:3]) and the fact that the prophet claims that his children are signs and portents (8:18), it is unlikely that the meaning of this child’s name is insignificant. What then does בֵּית אָוֹן mean? Some have seen this name as a warning or a threat that ‘only a remnant shall return’\textsuperscript{47} while others see the name as a positive sign to Ahaz and the house of David that the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition would fail to destroy Judah as they had planned.\textsuperscript{48} It would appear that the name contains both hope and judgment.\textsuperscript{49} The judgment element lies in the need for a remnant to ‘return’ to Yahweh or to ‘repent’, something that was seen as central to the message of Isa. 6:9-10. However, there is even a glimmer of hope that a remnant or a ‘holy seed’ would remain in Jerusalem (6:13). As Seitz puts it, ‘there is to be a final remnant beyond the vision of total deafness and destruction’.\textsuperscript{50} This is a concept that will become important in the interpretation of these chapters. One final element of the interpretation of Shear-jashub’s name bears mentioning. Wildberger notes:

Of course, the book of Isaiah offers an interpretation in another passage: 10:20-22...that passage has “on that day,” which means: in the eschatological time of salvation, “that which remains in Israel will turn back to the Holy One of Israel”; this means that Israel will rely upon the Holy One “in faithfulness (or ‘in truthfulness’).” But v. 22 adds to this that it is in reality a very small remnant to which such salvation will come.\textsuperscript{51}

Wildberger has highlighted something significant, the possibility of an eschatological focus underlying the message that the prophet is to give to the king and his household, something inherent in his son’s name. Read holistically, this opens up the possibility that 10:20-22 and 11:11-16 are given another interpretative focus that may well have

\textsuperscript{46} A question asked by Gitay, \textit{Isaiah and His Audience}, 131.
\textsuperscript{47} S. H. Blank, ‘Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah,’ \textit{HUCA} 27 (1956) 86.
\textsuperscript{48} Clements, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 83; Irvine, \textit{Isaiah, Ahaz}, 146. While Irvine sees the ‘remnant’ as a reference to the faithful of Judah who will survive the siege and even ‘return’ to Yahweh, Clements believes that the ‘remnant’ refers to ‘the Arameans and Israelites’ who would be ‘defeated and reduced to a remnant’.
\textsuperscript{50} Seitz, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 76.
\textsuperscript{51} Wildberger, \textit{Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary}, 296.
been embryonic in the name of the prophet’s son. In other words, it is likely that Ahaz, the Davidic household, and the people listening to the original oracle would be looking at things on a purely contemporary plane.

However, it seems that reading on through the following chapters the reader is being called to go back and look at them from a different angle, a richer eschatological angle. To use an analogy from a different contemporary text format—the cinema—this is seen more clearly. On first viewing the 1999 film ‘The Sixth Sense’ one looks at the story in a particular way that is soon shattered by a revelation at the end of the film that the main protagonist is actually dead. It would be very hard for anyone to pick this up on the initial viewing of the film, but it seems obvious when one goes back to watch it a second time. It would seem unwise to ignore this later revelation on a second viewing because this was the intention of the director from the beginning. Could Isa. 7 (and the book) be functioning in this way? Again, this will become important in relation to the way Hezekiah may be presented in these narratives and oracles.

Verses 4-9 constitute what has been called a ‘war oracle’, a convention that is also evident in Isa. 37:6-7. What seems to be consistent throughout the war oracles in the Hebrew Bible and ANE literature is the fact that it is the deity who promises to fight for his appointed king rather than the king himself. Verse 4 begins with four imperatives which are in the singular and would seem to indicate that they are

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52 This is not to deny the legitimacy of Wildberger’s claims or to dismiss his hermeneutical approach off hand but to suggest that if the text cannot mean what it plainly appears to mean (even to him) because of an already predetermined reconstructive theory it might be appropriate to at least question the validity of the approach in question, especially when such a reconstruction cannot be supported by substantial evidence beyond the theoretical.


54 It may be questioned whether such a ‘reveal’ is a realistic aspect of Hebrew literature but there is an element of this at the end of the book of Ruth where the revelation of Ruth being part of the ancestry of King David gives a different perspective to a second reading of that book.

55 Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 36-37.

56 I here only note the use of this convention in the royal narratives as I will be examining these in more detail in the following chapter. One the war oracle see, Edgar W. Conrad, Fear Not Warrior: A Study of the ‘al tira’ Pericopes in the Hebrew Scriptures, Brown Judaic Studies 75 (Chico, California: Scholars, 1985); Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 37.

57 Conrad draws on Weippert’s work where he argues that in das Kronigsrackel (the king’s oracle) in Assyrian texts ‘fear not’ occurs in situations of war and it is the deity rather than the king and his army who will fight. See, Manfred Weippert, ‘Assyrische Propheten der Zeit Assarhaddons und Assurbanipals,’ in F. M. Fales (ed.), Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis, Orientis Antiqui Collectio 17 (Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente, 1981) 78-79 and 96-98.
addressed to Ahaz specifically. This is in contrast to the plural verbs used in verse 9 and could suggest that the audience for the admonitions has expanded by that verse.\textsuperscript{58} Clements believes that ‘the emphatic repetition of the admonitions not to be afraid shows clearly that the substance of Isaiah’s message to the king was one of assurance’, while noting that this assurance ‘needed to be believed and acted upon’.\textsuperscript{59} Wildberger states that the use of ‘do no fear for yourself’ introduces an oracle of salvation or war oracle.\textsuperscript{60} But what is the meaning of the admonition, ‘Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint’ (NRSV)? It has already been seen that Ahaz is ‘at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field’ (v. 3). This was a particularly strategic location and one which would become very important in the midst of an enemy siege, so it is likely that Ahaz was there to make preparations for just such an eventuality. It would seem then that the prophet might have been telling Ahaz to stop his preparations for the siege in light of the fact that the plan of his enemies ‘shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass’ (v. 7).

There is also a suggestion in the exhortation of verse 4 that Ahaz should avoid making a hasty alliance with Assyria. Von Rad demonstrated that there is a possible intertextual link between the words of Isa. 7:4 and 30:15-16. For von Rad ‘being quiet’ and ‘trust’ in Yahweh are seen as alternatives to military activity marked by fleeing on swift horses.\textsuperscript{61} What gives substance to von Rad’s assertion is the fact that not trusting in military assistance from a foreign power is the context in which Isa. 30:15-16 is set (cf. Egypt [30:2-5]). The implication may be that the king should relax while still acting responsibly, certainly ‘it would exclude having recourse to defensive alliance with Assyria itself’.\textsuperscript{62}

As has been mentioned above, the standard נָא־לֹא ‘fear not’ command of the war oracle was given to encourage the king to trust in God and embrace the


\textsuperscript{59} Clements, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 84.

\textsuperscript{60} Wildberger, \textit{Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary}, 297-298.


promise of his help. For Wildberger this ‘does not mean that he ought to “do nothing at all”’ but it certainly means that it is Yahweh who will take the initiative.\(^{63}\) It is interesting to note that the exhortation not to fear is followed by доллар ‘do not let your heart despair.’\(^{64}\) It is possible that the king loses his fear of the coalition when he hears the prophet proclaim his enemies as ‘two smouldering stumps of firebrands’\(^{65}\) (NRSV) or as Oswalt translates it ‘two tail ends of smoking firebrands.’\(^{66}\) The language about the kings seems to be contemptuous\(^{67}\) and the fact that Pekah’s name is omitted in verse 4 shows that, even if his father was a man to be reckoned with, he is nothing but Remaliah’s son. Nevertheless, the confidence that Ahaz might have taken from these words and those that follow was not a confidence in what Yahweh would do for him but what Assyria could bring as Judah’s suzerain. In that since his heart is no longer soft but has become hard (fat) something that the prophet had already been told would happen (6:10). Ahaz’s lack of spiritual sensitivity to the words of the prophet has implications for his dynasty and the nation as a whole. The aforementioned use of the plural verbs in verse 9 demonstrates that it is not just Ahaz (v. 4) who will be affected if he does not hold firm in faith, his decision will have consequences for his dynasty. Add to this the references to the house of David in verses 2 and 13 and it would seem that the king might not be the only one to suffer from spiritual deafness and blindness.

The general milieu of verses 5-6 seem to imply that these kings had already approached Ahaz previously to gain his support for their rebel force against Assyria. It would seem that Ahaz refused their offer, which roused their ‘fierce anger’ (v. 4) and set in motion the plan to replace Judah’s king with one who would be sympathetic


\(^{65}\) A possible reference to Isaiah 6:13.

\(^{66}\) Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 192. Oswald’s translation seems to bring out a parallel that might be intentional in the text. When, in verse 8, the prophet speaks of the ‘head’ of each of these two nations the earlier references to them as ‘tails’ seems to imply that their own estimation of themselves is quite different from the reality perceived by Yahweh. There may also be an intentional reuse of this language in Isa. 9:13-14 (ET 9:14-15) when once again there is the use of ‘head’ and ‘tail’ language. In that context it is said that Yahweh will cut off both the head and tail of Israel, and although Rezin is mentioned in this context at verse 10 (ET 11) the elder and honoured man is designated the head and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail.

to their thinking. The coalition’s usurper is simply called the ‘son of Tabeel’. There is no evidence that he was of Davidic descent. Militating against seeing the son of Tabeel as of Davidic origin is his identification with Pekah, who is also referred to under the title ‘son of’. Wildberger identifies Pekah as a usurper to the throne of Israel, having been ‘a royal servant before he used force to elevate himself to the throne, but he was not legitimately in line to be king.’ If the title ‘son of’ is meant to link these two antagonists then it is likely that the son of Tabeel had no rightful claim to the throne. With the weight of evidence standing against this usurper being Davidic then this is an occasion to see a serious threat to the Davidic dynasty. Remnant language (Isa. 6:13; 7:3) has already implied that there is a significant danger to the Davidic throne and here is outlined the first serious attempt to bring down that great dynasty. In verse 7 Yahweh assures Ahaz and the house of David that the plans of the coalition will ultimately fail, with verse 8b expressing the ultimate end of Israel (‘Ephraim’) as a nation. Even though Ahaz receives assurance that the plans of the coalition will not stand there is still a conditionality placed upon his own standing in the words of verse 9b. Ahaz and his household are told, ‘If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all’ (NRSV).

68 In the LXX the name is τοβενηλ (meaning ‘God is good’) while in the MT it is נבאהל (meaning ‘Good for nothing’). The former may be satirical in the context of the passage while the latter may be a precursor to Yahweh’s words in verse 7, ‘It shall not stand and it shall not come to pass.’
69 Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 84.
70 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary, 300.
71 The fact that these oracles or signs (6:13; 7:3) speak of a threat to the Davidic dynasty is obvious from the nature of exile itself. In most recorded instances of exile the king and members of his household will be some of the first to be taken away from the land. This is also seen in the later threat exile to the house of David in Isa. 39:7.
73 Although, as mentioned above, the plural verbs in this verse indicate that it is more than Ahaz being addressed there is good reason to suppose that he is still central to the focus of this admonition. The word נבאנ in the hiphil form is found fifty-one times in the Old Testament and in 48 out of those 51 cases the subject refers to a person responsible for the action. The house of David is most certainly being warned of an impending fall if faith is not exercised but it would appear that Ahaz is the representative agent of that household and his decision will have an affect on his dynasty and the whole nation. See, Bostock, A Portrayal of Trust, 195-196.
not ‘stand firm’ in faith. Without trust the house of David will end up like Rezin and Pekah. The language used in verse 9b also provides echoes of the Davidic covenant with the implication that Ahaz’s response will effect the continuation of that covenant, the promise that ‘your house and your throne will endure (יִשָּׁבֶ֣ה ‘stand firm’) forever before me, your throne will be established forever’ (2 Sam. 7:16). Here is a serious threat upon the Davidic household, a word from Yahweh to say that if the present Monarch sitting on the throne does not demonstrate an important characteristic of that dynasty (faith) it will have major ramifications for its continuation. Judah has come to a significant turning point in history and it is incumbent upon Ahaz to fulfil his ‘messianic’ obligations as Yahweh’s anointed and save his kingdom and people by trusting in the plans of his God and not his political strategy.

What is here in this war oracle is the creation of what Robert Alter calls a ‘type-scene’, one that will be repeated in the narratives of chapters 36-39 – with Ahaz being replaced by his son Hezekiah. Whatever may be said about the Immanuel prophecy, one must recognise that it is intrinsically linked via this ‘type-scene’ to the Hezekiah narratives.

As in verse 3, verse 10 says that Yahweh is the one speaking. In the earlier verse Yahweh speaks to Isaiah but here he speaks directly to Ahaz. One might presume that Yahweh is still speaking these words to Ahaz through Isaiah, who acted as his mouthpiece, but the reader’s attention is being drawn to a significant point in the narrative. The offer of a sign is being given by Yahweh himself and is not from the expediency of his prophet. Therefore, the rejection of the offer of a sign (v. 12) is not just a rejection of Isaiah but is tantamount to rejecting Yahweh himself. It also means that any ‘pious’ rejection on the grounds that it would put Yahweh to the test (v.12) makes no sense in that it is Yahweh himself who makes the offer directly to the king. Ahaz is to ask for a sign from ‘the LORD your God’ (v.11). The use of the singular personal pronoun in verse 11 indicates that at this moment Ahaz is still God’s

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anointed, he still has the opportunity to trust the promise that has been given in verses 4-9. As Scullion points out, it is a last effort to set Ahaz in faith before Yahweh and Isaiah is convinced that the Davidic line will continue but ‘he is now experiencing in the person of the king what it is to “make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy…”’ (6:10). The offer is of a קָנָן ‘sign’, something that by its very nature points beyond itself and functions ‘to mediate an understanding or to motivate a kind of behaviour.’ The sign that was given did not need to be miraculous or supernatural and the merism of verse 11 ‘let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven’ (NRSV) indicates that it could be anything. I’m inclined to view it as the offer of a sign to Ahaz that encompasses the miraculous, and this for two reasons.

First, it would seem somewhat redundant to offer a sign that has no limits if it was likely that a simple confirmatory sign would suffice. After all, Ahaz does not appear to be a man who could be easily persuaded that Yahweh’s promise of protection could be fully depended on. Secondly, of the two signs offered to Hezekiah in chapters 37 and 38, that offered in 38:8 (a miraculous sign) shows affinities with the offer in chapter 7 in that ‘the dial of Ahaz’ is specifically mentioned, drawing the reader’s mind back to the earlier account. Having said this, the ambiguity of the nature of the sign offered in verse 11 continues the theme of confusion that began in chapter 6.

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79 F. J. Helfmeyer, ‘אֹתוֹ ‘oth’ TDOT 1.169, 171; Wegner, An Examination of Kingship in Isaiah 1-35, 94.
80 Hayes and Irvine, Isaiah, the Eighth Century Prophet, 131. Contra this position see, J. A. Motyer, ‘Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14,’ TynBull 21 (1970) 120
81 There is some issue over the proper translation of this phrase in verse 11b. In the Hebrew it is literally עַשֵּׂרָה נַעֲשֵׂר ‘go deep in asking’. Most translations follow the Aramaic Targum and the Greek translations of Symmachus and Theodotion which read עַשֵּׂרָה as Sheol with the ending indicating direction toward a place. Both translations get to the same essential meaning when ‘heights’ at the end of the clause is seen as a contrast.
82 Wegner, An Examination of Kingship in Isaiah 1-35, 95; Bostock, A Portrayal of Trust, 200.
83 A response to this second suggestion may be offered with regard to the different settings in the Hezekiah narrative. It would seem that the setting of chapter 37 is closer to that in chapter 7 with both kings facing the threat of an invading army. However, the threat to Ahaz in chapter 7 is simply that; a threat. The mention of the coalition army’s inability to ‘mount an attack’ (7:1) shows that they were not at the gates of Jerusalem breathing down the neck of Ahaz and the people. The case is very different in chapter 37 where Sennacherib’s army is already there in great force (36:2). Although the heart of the sign to Hezekiah in chapter 38 is a confirmation that he will live another fifteen years there is also the mention that Yahweh will deliver him and the city from the hand of the king of Assyria (38:6). This cannot be simply arbitrary in the midst of a promise of new life but an essential aspect of the promise. Therefore, the setting for the sign in chapter 38 is closer to that in chapter 7 in that the threat of attack is imminent but has not yet materialised.
Here in verses 10-13 the reader is reminded of the courtroom setting that was developed throughout chapters 1-5 and the initial verdict that is laid out in chapter 6 (6:9-13). The prophet has been calling the king and the people back to trust and dependency in Yahweh with a real promise of deliverance from their enemies (7:4-9a) with the condition of the king’s faithfulness (7:9b) and the knowledge that the message will be heard but not received (6:9-10). Verses 10-11 act like a last offer of leniency from the prosecuting lawyer if the defendant will confess. Ahaz’s response to the offer is very instructive, ‘I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test’ (7:12). Scholars almost universally agree that Ahaz’s response is one of false piety (cf. 39:8), rejecting the sign with the façade that it would be putting Yahweh to the test even though he was the one who had offered the sign in the first place. Here in the dock Ahaz responds to the offer of a sign with the proper legal language of the law code (Deut. 6:16), but as with most people who defend themselves in court, he misuses this piece of legislation to fit his predetermined plans. It is almost a claim of ‘not guilty’ while trying to hide behind his supposed legal rights.

Verse 13 gives the reader the prosecution’s response to Ahaz’s legal jargon, ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?’ One should note the first words of Isaiah’s response to Ahaz הָאָרַיא ‘Hear then’. The reader is immediately taken back to the language of Isa. 6:9-10. Isaiah is not just giving an ‘angry reply’ to a king who represents a people who have frustrated him but is here doing what Yahweh had commanded him to do in his

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86 Clements states, ‘Ahaz clearly knew from his first encounter with Isaiah that he would not be likely to find his further message acceptable.’ Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 87.

87 Courtroom language may be implied by Isaiah’s response with the use of the interrogative particle at the beginning of his question, הָאָרַיא.

commissioning in chapter 6. Whatever follows from this point onwards will be a message that will be misunderstood by most of the hearers. This will be vital to the understanding of the Immanuel prophecy in verses 14-15 which follows on immediately after these words in verse 13. That Ahaz will not be the only one who will be affected by this confusion is indicated in Isaiah’s use of ‘house of David’ and the plural personal pronouns used throughout this verse. Delitzsch sees this whole episode as the turning point for the house of David.89 He sees in the confrontation between prophet and king a working out of the commission given in chapter 6 and notes that the consequences of Ahaz’s rejection of a sign would affect the whole of Jerusalem, in the present but also well into the future.90 It also should be noted that Isaiah’s use of ‘house of David’ in verse 13 could imply that it was not the king alone who was responsible for the decisions being made to follow the military route rather than Yahweh’s way.91 His ‘wearying of men’ may indicate that his subjects ‘expected from him a vigorous new policy to rescue the country from its difficulties’92 or that Ahaz ‘had delayed and procrastinated in the hope of avoiding the necessity for making a difficult decision.’93 Wildberger notes that ‘make weary’ belongs to the form of speech used in a בַּנַּי (‘controversy’) (Mic. 6:2; Job 4:2, 5) and that in essence the prophet is primarily thinking of himself in these words and is not willing to be insulted by Ahaz and his supporters any longer.94

As the end of the verse indicates, it is not just Isaiah or the people who are being wearied by Ahaz’s words but Yahweh (the prosecutor).95 What is significant in Isaiah’s concluding words in verse 13 is his use of ‘my God’ as opposed to ‘your God’ (cf. v. 11). Isaiah is drawing attention to the importance of what is being said by

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89 Delitzsch, ‘Isaiah,’ 215. He goes on to say of the prophet in verse 13, ‘in accordance with the command in ch. vi. he was obliged to speak, even though his word should be a savour of death unto death.’
90 We may once again see a parallel here with the Hezekiah narratives, where the decision of the king will have a long-term effect on the fate of the people of Jerusalem (39:5-7). Oswalt believes that the apocalyptic flavour of the wider context of chapter 7 (8:23-9:6 [Eng. 9:1-7]; 11:1-16) suggests that the consequences of Ahaz’s act are more far-reaching than given in the bare facts of the event. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39, 206-207.
92 Watts, ‘Isaiah 1-33,’ 97.
93 Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 87.
95 There is an echo here of Isa. 1:14 where the feasts of the people had become a burden to Yahweh and he became ‘weary’ of bearing them. See, Gordon C.I. Wong, ‘Faith in the Present Form of Isaiah VII 1-17,’ VT 51,4 (2001) 535-547 (544).
his use of ‘my God’ a term he does not use anywhere else in the book.\textsuperscript{96} Wildberger states that Isaiah’s laying personal claim to Yahweh is ‘intended to show that the connection between Yahweh and the house of David has been broken.’\textsuperscript{97} But how can such a thought be reconciled to the inviolability of the promise made to David in 2 Sam. 7? This seems to be the same question that the exiles would have been asking themselves when they saw the destruction of Jerusalem and what appeared to be the complete end of the Davidic dynasty. It is in just such an environment that it is claimed that messianism took on its eschatological flavour. But even in this context all hope of the return of the Davidites to power was not lost, especially as this was envisioned in messianic expectations. This then is not God’s breaking of his promise to David, for God remains God, but a rejection of its present regime and all who follow its path of self-hardening unbelief. God will be ‘my God’ to all who put there trust exclusively in him and will be with the king who embodies the ideals of his kingship (cf. ‘God [is] with us’ – v. 14). Verses 10-13 give the reader a context for interpreting what is to follow, having seen that the trial of Ahaz proved him to be unfit to rule the people of God and no better than the idol worshipers in Judah (6:9-13). A significant crisis has occurred within the house of David and what follows gives an answer to what Yahweh will do next.

**Verses 14-15 - The Giving of the Immanuel Sign**

More ink has been spilled over the Immanuel sign than over almost any other passage in the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{98} Therefore it will be helpful to look at these verses in two stages. First, it will be necessary to briefly outline how scholars have understood the meaning of יִבְנֵתָה אֶלֶּה and יִבְנֵתָה. Second, I will offer my own interpretation of the material in light of the exegesis above and the best of the scholarly material.

**The Immanuel Sign in Scholarly Literature**

The title יִבְנֵתָה ‘Immanuel’ can mean; ‘God with us’, ‘God is with us’, ‘God be with us’, depending on how one interprets the surrounding material. The meaning of

\textsuperscript{96} Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, 306.
\textsuperscript{97} Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, 306.
the designation הָלַּלָה ‘the almah’ is not so easy to decipher and has been an issue of debate for centuries.\(^9\) The essence of the contention is around whether the term should be translated ‘virgin’ or ‘young woman’. Those who propose that הָלַּלָה should be translated ‘virgin’ offer a number of lines of argument.

Some point to the importance of the word נָחָה ‘behold’ at the beginning of verse 14 as an indication of a special birth taking place.\(^1\) Others point to the LXX rendering of הָלַּלָה as παρθένος which is said to be an unambiguous reference to a virgin.\(^2\) This is further enhanced by the citation of Isa. 7:14 in Matt. 1:23. There is also a counterargument presented to the proposal that if Isaiah had wanted to stress virginity, he would have used the word בֶּן הָלַּלָה. The response takes the form of arguing that in most cases בֶּן הָלַּלָה means ‘girl’ and that הָלַּלָה is in fact the technical term for a virgin.\(^3\)

The final argument is to point out that in all the uses of הָלַּלָה in the Hebrew Bible either the term is clearly indicating a virgin or they have an indeterminate, neutral sense.\(^4\) The majority of scholars tend not to be persuaded by these arguments and contend that the term should be rendered ‘young woman’. This is not to conclude that the young woman cannot also be a virgin but that the term itself is not synonymous with virgo intacta. In answer to some of the arguments for the term exclusively meaning ‘virgin’ it has been pointed out that not all cognate literature from the ANE supports this translation.\(^5\) Some have maintained that the word παρθένος did not have the meaning ‘virgin’ when the LXX was translated.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) See, G. J. Wenham, ‘Betula: A Girl of Marriageable Age,’ VT 22 (1972) 325-348; Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 84.


\(^5\) J. Walton, הָלַּלָה, NIDOTTE 3, 415-416.

\(^6\) G. Delling, παρθένος, TDNT 5, 826-837.
thesis on the meaning of the term הַמָּלַת has also been brought into question and it is not certain that the majority of references in the Hebrew Bible do in fact mean ‘virgin’. 106 Again, some scholars have disagreed with the thesis that הַמָּלַת means ‘virgin’ in every instance where the word is not in an indeterminate, neutral sense, seeing particular difficulty in determining the meaning of Prov. 30:19. 107

It might be best to suggest that the term is etymologically derived from a word meaning ‘to be sexually strong, sexually mature, sexually ripe or ready.’ 108 What seems precluded from the term is the idea that the young woman has previously given birth to a child and what is not semantically excluded is the idea that the young woman could be a virgin. What seems felicitous about this simple definition of הַמָּלַת is that it leaves open the broadest range of interpretations of the term as it is used in Isa. 7:14.

Having determined a tentative definition of the word הַמָּלַת the main interpretations of that designation and consequently of the title הָיָם אֶל can now be examined. I will list below the most common approaches:

**A Royal Figure**

The woman is associated with the Davidic household, possibly the queen or another member of the royal harem. Some see the woman as Abijah (2 Chron. 29:1), Ahaz’ wife and therefore Immanuel is the heir to the Judean throne, Hezekiah. 109 This

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108 *BDB*, 761.
position is very attractive in that it takes seriously the threat to the Davidic dynasty in chapter 7 while giving the sign the force of reassuring the dynasty that ‘God will be with them’ and that his promise to David stands. It also makes sense of the reference to ‘Immanuel’s land’ in 8:8 and the second reference to the name at 8:10 appears to be an allusion back to the promise given by God in 7:7. Added to this is the suggestion that the Immanuel sign should be tied to the figures in 8:23b-9:6 (ET 9:1-7) and 11:1-5, which are associated with the ‘throne of David’ and the ‘root of Jesse’. However, it is hard to see how an unspecified son of Ahaz born to a new queen would carry the force of the entire passage, thus leaving Hezekiah as the only real option.

An Ambiguous Figure

The woman is someone present at the time of the meeting between Ahaz and Isaiah, whether known or not to those in the royal court, who does not need to be specified in the text. The unspecified nature of the woman commends itself on a purely pragmatic level, in that it avoids addressing the difficulties associated with a specific woman known to the reader. Having said that, there can be no certainty that the woman was present at this meeting and this interpretation makes little sense of the subsequent references to Immanuel in chapter 8.110

The Prophet’s Son

The woman is the wife of the prophet Isaiah, whether the mother of Maher-shalal-hash-baz or another wife.111 This interpretation takes account of both the sign nature


in the names of the children mentioned in chapters 7 and 8 (cf. 8:18), as well as dealing seriously with the intertextual connections between the two chapters. It is obvious that the mother of Shear-jashub cannot be the נְלֵה as she does not fit the definition outlined above, having already borne a son. Therefore it is often held that the woman should be associated with the prophetess in 8:3. It is unlikely that Maher-shalal-hash-baz is Immanuel because of the reference to ‘your land, O Immanuel’ (8:8), for in what sense would the land belong to the son of Isaiah? Regardless of this one has to import the idea into the text that the mother of Immanuel is a different prophetess to the mother of Shear-jashub, something that is both speculative and unsupported by the text.112

A Collective Figure

The woman is viewed as a collective allegory with the Immanuel child seen as the faithful remnant.113 The specific designation of the woman takes various forms, viewed either as Israel, the Daughter of Zion or any woman who happens to be pregnant at the time of the oracle. This interpretation takes account of the individual and corporate elements that run throughout the book, often interchangeably, and this provides a link between the early prophecies concerning kingship and the servant passages of Isa. 40-55. The major downfall of this particular view is the use of singular forms to refer to the child,114 and it is unlikely that Ahaz would have understood this sign anymore than he would a sign that pointed to a future messiah.


112 Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 103.


114 Wegner, An Examination of Kingship in Isaiah 1-35, 121.
A Future Messiah

The woman is viewed as the mother of the future Messiah. In this case Isaiah would have beheld the woman in a vision. The value of this interpretation lies in its long history within the Christian community and the serious attempt to wrestle with the use of Isa. 7:14 in Matt 1:23. It also is to be commended in recognising a forward trajectory in the early oracles of Isaiah that push towards an eschatological goal by the end of the book (read holistically). The most recurrent objection to this position is that it seems to have little significance for Ahaz and the house of David who are being addressed and it does not appear to take account of the elements of the prophecy that seem to have an immediate or near future fulfilment (7:15-17).

What can be ascertained from all of these positions is just how uncertain scholars are over the specific referents of these two titles and this evidences a lack of any sort of consensus. Below I will outline my own interpretation.

An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14-15 (16-25)

Verse 14 begins ‘therefore’ indicating that what is to follow is inextricably linked to the preceding discourse. In light of Ahaz’s rejection of the offer of a sign of any magnitude and his wearying both Yahweh and men, God will give him a sign of his own choosing. The ‘you’ to whom the sign is given is plural, showing that whatever follows will be of significance to the whole Davidic dynasty and therefore indicative of the promises made to that household in the past, as highlighted by allusions in the previous verses and chapters. The word הָנִּיח ‘behold’ cannot bear the weight of exclusively prefacing a threat, even if in most cases it typically introduces announcements of judgment in Isaiah and the Hebrew bible. It functions here to both introduce a sign of threat to the household (7:17) and salvation from their enemies (7:16).

Irvine, Isaiah, Ahaz, 164-165.
In light of these considerations it would seem unlikely that the sign given by
the Lord to the Davidic household would be devoid of Davidic implications. This is
why the interpretations that see the ‘young woman’ as a generic woman or the wife of
the prophet fail on these grounds. The threat is coming against the continuation of the
line of David and therefore against the promise Yahweh has made to ‘make sure the
kingdom before him forever’ (2 Sam. 7:16). What makes this even clearer is the
meaning of the child’s name in verse 14, ‘God with us’. The surety of God’s promise
to David is based in part on the words in 2 Sam. 7:9a ‘and I have been with you
wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies before you.’ Not only do these
words give a clear echo of God’s presence being ‘with’ the Davidic king but the
reminder is given of the times God cut off the king’s enemies. Surely this speaks
volumes in the present situation where the enemies of Judah threaten the Davidic
household but will be cut off (Isa. 7:16).117 Added to this is the reuse of the name
‘Immanuel’ in Isa. 8:8. In that context the prophet restates that Rezin and the son of
Remaliah will be swept away (cf. Isa. 7:16) and speaks of how the might of Assyria
will come flooding into Judah like a river, covering the land and reaching even to the
neck (8:8). The fact that Judah is mentioned and then the land is called ‘your land, O
Immanuel’ seems to be an unambiguous reference to the ruler (king) of the land.118

This then indicates that Immanuel is not simply a sign by the meaning of his
name but the sign refers to a person who will be involved in what will happen to
Judah. This person appears to be a Davidite, one who will one day be ruling the land
of Judah. This appears to narrow the focus of the referents in verse 14 to a wife of
Ahaz and a child born to his household. This cannot simply be any son of the king but
one who will rule the land and be on the throne when Assyria sweeps through Judah
up to its neck (up to Jerusalem). The book of Isaiah states that the person on the
throne at such a time was Ahaz’s son Hezekiah (36:1). Extra weight is given to this
interpretation when one views the words spoken in Isa. 8:9-10 as a foretaste of what
the Assyrians would say to the nations and Judah when they swept through and

117 Other passages that express God’s special presence with the king can be found in: Ps. 46:7; Mic.
3:11; 1 Kings 11:38. See Collins and Collins, King and Messiah as Son of God, 36-37; Wildberger,
Isaiah 1-12, 311.
118 Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 64-65. Seitz highlights the interpretative importance of Isa. 8:5-8 and 8:9-10 for
determining the referent of the Immanuel sign in 7:14 but comes to different conclusions with regard to
the meaning of 8:9-10. However, he notes, ‘Because of the suitability of both these oracles to the
situation of Jerusalem’s deliverance in 701, it would make sense to interpret Immanuel as none other
than Hezekiah.’
conquered their lands. The words in verses 9-10 of chapter 8 sound very similar to those spoken by the Rabshakeh in chapters 36 and 37. The Rabshakeh taunts Hezekiah and Judah by reminding them that no nation has been able to stand against the power of Assyria (36:18-19; 37:11-13; cf. 8:9), taunts the people of Judah for heeding the counsel of Hezekiah and listening to his words (36:14-18; 37:10; cf. 8:10a) and proclaims that God is with them in conquering the nations (36:10-17; cf. 8:10b; 10:5-6). This may be a rhetorical play on the name Immanuel on the literary level that acts as a taunt against the reigning king of Judah who is known as ‘Immanuel’ in 8:8.

A further line of evidence for this interpretation may be seen in the words of verse 15. The eating of curds and honey has been variously interpreted. The four most common interpretations are: 1) These are the foods of royalty, the food of gods or a fertile land,119 2) these are ordinary foods of a small infant, its first solid foods,120 3) these are the foods left after a time of invasion and siege,121 and 4) the food acquired when a city is not under siege.

The first of these interpretations seems overly optimistic and does not take account of the context of the chapter as a whole. The second is perfectly reasonable but also a little redundant. If the choosing between good and evil at the end of the verse indicates the young age of the child then a note about first solid foods seems unnecessary and again fails to take account of the wider context. In Isa. 7:20 it speaks about the coming of Assyrian attack when they will ‘shave’ the land. Verses 23-25 say that the land will be left uncultivated (producing honey through the bees who will pollinate the wildflowers) and become a place where cattle will be let loose (producing plenty of milk for curds).122 This is even more explicate in verses 21-22 where it says that there will be an ‘abundance of milk’ and that everyone left in the

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120 Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 88; Irvine, Isaiah, Ahaz, 166.


122 Rydelnik, The Messianic Hope, 156.

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land will eat curds and honey. Intertextually then, curds and honey are the foods of oppression and siege and the time referent here once again points to Hezekiah’s reign.

The difficulty of this interpretation is the note at the end of Isa. 7:15 about the child knowing how to refuse the evil and choose the good. Most commentators see this as a time in infancy and expect everything to take place before the child has grown to the age of discernment. However, the reference need not be to an age of accountability but to the exercise of the rule of a monarch.\(^{123}\) This would again be a reference to the time of Hezekiah especially if one sees Isa. 7:14 in a line of oracles about the child also expressed in 9:5-6[6-7]. More specifically it would be a reference to Hezekiah having a similar choice to make to his father Ahaz between good and evil. Verse 16 would then simply reiterate the point in verse 15 with a new emphasis; the two kings that have come up against Ahaz will no longer be a threat to Hezekiah by the time he has his own major decision to make in the face of great opposition. This is followed in verse 17 with a time marker of the child’s future decision, a time when God will bring on Judah such trouble that they have not had since the kingdom divided, when the king of Assyria lays siege to Judah. Verses 18-25 describe what the coming of Assyria will be like, it will be a time of great destruction when the land of Judah will be left in ruins and all that will be left to eat will be siege food (7:21-22).

It appears evident from the material presented above that the most likely referent for the Immanuel sign in Isa. 7:14 - on the literary level - is Ahaz’s son Hezekiah. Taking into account the literary parallels and intertextual connections the material in Isa. 7 and 8 seems to point quite clearly in the direction of Hezekiah, especially as the coalition enemies had been destroyed by the time Assyria had come into the land of Judah (7:16). One thing that is clear from these earlier ‘messianic’ oracles is that they were written in conjunction with the material of Isa. 36-39.\(^{124}\) When examining the other ‘messianic’ oracles of Isa. 9 and 11 it will become apparent that they are on a trajectory that will run through chapters 36-39 and beyond. If the author/redactor wishes the reader to see Hezekiah in association with the Immanuel sign in chapter 7 then in what ways does Hezekiah meet or fail to meet

\(^{123}\) Beale, *We Become What we Worship*, 128-129. Beale makes the point, “‘the discerning between good and evil’ is a Hebrew expression that refers to kings or authoritative figures being able to make judgments in carrying out justice. Elsewhere the phrase usually refers to figures in a position of judging or ruling over others (2 Sam 14:17; 19:35; 1 Kings 3:9; Is 7:15-16).”

\(^{124}\) This will become even clearer in subsequent chapters.
these other expectations? It will be in the answer to this question that the main argument of the thesis will be seen.

The previous section explored how the first of the passages traditionally designated ‘messianic’, Isa. 7:1-17, related to the Judean king Hezekiah. Here the second of the so-called messianic oracles in Isa. 8:23-9:6\(^\text{125}\) will be examined with the intention of discovering how it also might relate to Hezekiah. A number of scholars have proposed a connection between the Immanuel child and the child mentioned in Isa. 9:5.\(^\text{126}\) As noted above, this oracle belongs to the wider division of Isa. 1-12 and therefore it will be important to bear in mind how what precedes this oracle and that which follows it will effect its interpretation. Fundamental to this will be the identity of the child in 9:5 and the epithets that are given to him. Before this can be ascertained the section must be examined in its wider context to see how it continues and develops what has come before.

**Isaiah 8:11-22**

When examining the Immanuel oracle in Isa. 7 the apparent connections with Isa. 8:1-10 were explored, suggesting that 8:7-10 in particular spoke to the situation that would occur in Judah when the Assyrian army invaded the land. The conjunction ‘For’ (אַחֲרֵי) at the beginning of 8:11 indicates that the material to follow is connected with that which has immediately come before.\(^\text{127}\) Yahweh appears to be addressing the prophet directly in verse 11 and the faithful hearers (remnant) in 13ff. as indicated by the use of the second plural pronouns in verse 13. The prophet is ‘warned’ or ‘admonished’ not to walk in the way of the people who are fearful and in dread

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125 The numbering of the Hebrew text differs from that found in English translations. Most scholars agree that Isaiah 8:23 in the Hebrew text, though related to the verses that immediately precede it, begins a new section that naturally ends at 9:6. Thus English translations take 8:23 as the first verse of chapter nine and finish at verse 7. For the sake of clarity I will refer to the Hebrew verse divisions for the remainder of this chapter (unless stated otherwise).


because of a so-called conspiracy (8:12 – cf. Syro-Ephraimite War). Isaiah and the faithful followers of Yahweh did not have to fear like the people and king Ahaz (7:2) because they had already been given the sure word of deliverance (8:7a). It might appear then that 8:7b-10, if it refers in some way to the invasion of Sennacherib, breaks up the natural flow of thought from 8:7b to 8:13. However, the interpolation of the second and third references to Immanuel in 8:8b and 8:10b seems to offer a reason for hope for the steadfastness of Isaiah and the faithful in the face of widespread fear. The child whose birth is mentioned in 7:14 becomes a reason for hope in the face of invasion in 8:10 just as Isaiah will go on to offer another child in 9:5 as a reason for hope in the face of darkness.\(^\text{128}\) The prophet and the faithful are given an explicit reason not to fear what the rest of the people fear in 8:13 – they are to regard Yahweh of hosts as holy, ‘Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread’ (8:13b). Even if God might use an agent in the deliverance of his faithful, it is he who will be their sanctuary (8:14) and more explicitly their hope will be that ‘The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this’ (9:6).

In the previous section it was shown that Isa. 6:8-13 acted as a necessary hermeneutical grid for reading the Immanuel oracle. That same interpretative grid seems to come into play again in 8:14-22. The message that Isaiah was given to speak to God’s people was one that would cause them to be deaf, blind, and hardhearted. This would affect the majority of hearers but there would be a remnant that would understand (6:13). In 8:14 Yahweh will be a sanctuary to that faithful remnant but a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel and a trap or snare to those in Jerusalem. This will not affect all without distinction but ‘many’ (םָרָעם) shall stumble, fall and be broken; they will be snared and taken. But the question may be asked, in what way will Yahweh become a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel? The answer is given in verse 16 – the testimony. It is the testimony of the prophet that will cause many to stumble but will be a sanctuary to the prophet and his disciples\(^\text{129}\) (lit. ‘those


\(^{129}\) There is no clear evidence that what is being referred to here is a prophetic school of disciples, contra, D. Jones, ‘The Traditio of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem,’ *ZAW* 67 (1955) 226-246. It is better to follow Smith and ‘regard these people simply as followers of God who accepted the truthfulness of the revelation Isaiah proclaimed.’ See, G. V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39, NAC Vol. 15A* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing, 2007) 229.
who are taught’) (8:16).\textsuperscript{130} The testimony is to be bound up and the teaching (‘law’) sealed among those taught by God. This could be taken to indicate a physical binding and sealing of a scroll but it is equally plausible that the words of the prophet would be bound and sealed in the hearts of those who would listen.\textsuperscript{131} However, the testimony would be of no avail to those who refused to be instructed. In this way Yahweh will hide his face from the house of Jacob, but the prophet will hope in him (8:17). Even if the house of Jacob would not understand or accept the testimony, listening rather to mediums and necromancers who ‘chirp’ and ‘mutter’ (8:19), Isaiah and his children would still act as signs and portents in Israel. Seeing them in reverse order the people could know that invasion was imminent (Maher-shalal-hashbaz), a remnant would return (Shear-jashub) because Yahweh is salvation (Isaiah). In light of the dark imagery of 8:20-22 Seitz says, ‘For Isaiah, his children, and his disciples, the teaching will be a sanctuary in the troubled times ahead, until Immanuel reigns and the Assyrian threat is finally halted at Zion’s neck.’\textsuperscript{132}

It must be noted that the hope that is offered in 8:23-9:6 is not only a hope to the house of Judah but encompasses the lands of others tribes in Israel, even possibly nations outside Israel (8:23). How can Isaiah’s focus on the security of Zion suddenly be expanded to take in these other locations? It would seem that the best explanation lies in the links this passage (8:23-9:6) has with the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7).

\textbf{Isaiah 8:23-9:6 and the Davidic Covenant}

When examining the early chapters of the book of Isaiah it was discovered that there were a number of allusions to the Davidic covenant found in 2 Sam. 7. It was discovered that there were conditional as well as unconditional elements within the Davidic covenant and that some of these elements would be fulfilled within the king’s lifetime and the lifetime of his immediate descendants as well as aspects that were projected into the future. Although it can be said that Solomon was the obvious immediate fulfilment, bringing peace in his own lifetime, he certainly did not fit the ideal that is anticipated in the wider context of the promise. H. Kruse had argued that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[130] See, Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 82.  
\item[131] Smith, Isaiah 1-39, 229.  
\item[132] Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 83.  
\end{footnotes}
the Davidic covenant gave rise to early messianic or ‘pre-messianic’ expectations. As previously noted, Heskett believes that a proper definition of ‘messianism’ requires an eschatological event that fulfils the promises in 2 Sam. 7. However, he argues that this could only take place after the monarchy has ceased to exist. It is nowhere clear in Heskett’s work why such an eschatological event must be the end of the monarchy after the time of the exile in 587 BCE. He does not argue sufficiently against the idea that 2 Sam. 7 already contains an aspect of messianic hope projected into the future where David’s house and kingdom shall be made sure before God and his throne established forever (2 Sam. 7:16).

One need only read the account of the division of the kingdom under Solomon’s son Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12) to understand that the promise to David was far from fulfilled in all its particulars by any immediate descendant. More was anticipated in the Davidic covenant. Much of what is laid out in 2 Sam. 7 seems to flower in the words of the ninth chapter of Isaiah. The promise to the Davidic dynasty that its future would be made sure forever is reaffirmed in Isa. 9:6. Other elements of the Davidic covenant are evident in the choice of words here in Isa. 9. For instance, Yahweh says of David’s descendant ‘I will be to him a father (חַי) and he shall be to me a son (נוֹב)’ (2 Sam. 7:14a). If there is any weight to the argument that the names given to the child in Isa. 9:5 are reflections of the character of Yahweh, there is a child bearing the name ‘everlasting father (חַי)’ something it is said Yahweh would be to David’s descendant. Also in Isa. 9:5 the reader is told that ‘a son (נוֹב) is given’ echoing once again the words of the Davidic covenant. After reminding David that he had cut off all his enemies before him, Yahweh says ‘I will make for you a great name, like the great ones of the earth’ (2 Sam. 7:9). The cutting off of enemies is reflected in Isa. 9:3-4 and who can deny that the child in 9:5 is given a great name?

134 Heskett, Messianism Within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah, LHB/OTS 456 (London T&T Clark, 2007) 3.
Also, the reassurance that ‘I will give you rest from all your enemies’ (2 Sam. 7:11b) is surely captured in the name ‘Prince of Peace’ and the following note ‘his authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace’ (NRSV) in Isa. 9:5-6.\(^{137}\)

It is often suggested that kingship language is purposely being avoided in Isa. 9, especially owing to the use of the title ‘Prince (מלך) of Peace’ rather than ‘King’.\(^{138}\) This need not indicate that the child described in 9:5 would not be king but could simply reflect Isaiah’s thought that Yahweh was Israel’s supreme monarch and the ‘ideal king’ would be subservient to his direction.\(^{139}\) In 2 Sam. 7:8 David is described as ‘prince (דָּודֵו) over my people Israel’ using a different designation for prince; ‘the two terms are related in meaning but not synonymous.’\(^{140}\) The king need not be designated מֶלֶךְ in every instance and it is obvious from the context that the ‘Prince of Peace’ will do his work ‘on the throne of David and over his kingdom’ (Isa. 9:6). Whoever the child is in Isa. 9:5 it is said that ‘the government shall be (is) upon his shoulder’ suggesting that he will be the leader of the people. The clearest allusions to the Davidic covenant in Isa. 9 are found in verse 6. The parallels can be laid out below:

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	ext{וְהַעֲפֹרָה}
\]
\[
	ext{וְשָׁבַת}
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\[\ldots \text{and I will establish his kingdom} \] (2 Sam. 7:12b)

\[\ldots 

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\(^{137}\) It should be noted here that there is some uncertainty with regard to how the Hebrew should be read in 9:6. Williamson suggests two possible reading: ‘There will be no end to the increase of the government and to peace’ (‘reading with the qere and constructing both nouns governed by l as dependent on ‘there is no end.’’) or ‘The government shall be great and there will be no end of peace’ (‘deleting the first two letters of the first word (including the troublesome final mem in a medial position) as a dittograph of the ending of the previous word.’). See, Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 39. Neither proposed meaning would affect the parallel drawn above.

\(^{138}\) W. Harrelson, ‘Non-royal Motifs in the Royal Eschatology,’ in B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (eds.) Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Mualenburg (London: SCM Press, 1962) 147-165 (151). Harrelson sees the reason for this relating to Isaiah’s desire not to associate his words with the present Davidic monarch, being disenchanted with him.


\(^{140}\) Haziel, תְּדֹת, 195.
‘...his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it’ (Isa. 9:6)

וַהֲקַנְנֵהוּ אֲהַלְכֵם מִולָלָהוּ וְעָרַ֥בֵּלָהּ

‘...and I will establish his throne forever’ (2 Sam. 7:13b)

עִלָּ-כָּלָ֖ם רֹדֶ֣ר וּמִולָלָהוּ לָ-חַ֥פֶּס אַֽחַד... עָרַ-בֵּלָּהּ

‘...on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it...forever’ (Isa. 9:6)

It can be seen from the parallel verses above that whole nouns and verbs are repeated, giving the impression that, if the author was not quoting directly from a written record he was clearly familiar with the Davidic covenant and particularly the wording used.  

A final note of comparison between these two passages comes right at the end of Isaiah’s oracle in 9:6. Robert Gordon has written with regard to the Davidic covenant that ‘David is reminded of Yahweh’s initiatives in the past, as he has experienced them in his own life, and learns that the future depends, equally, on Yahweh’s ‘I will’.’ This summary encapsulates the essence of Yahweh’s words to David and is reminiscent of the final remarks in Isa. 9:6 – ‘The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.’ Just as David is assured that all that Yahweh promises him will be accomplished in his Sovereign’s power, so the people hearing and reading Isaiah’s oracle receive the same assurance on the same grounds.

What has been learned, then, is that whomever the child mentioned in Isa. 9:6 designates, his work and destiny is inextricably linked to the promises of the Davidic covenant. To those who first encounter Isaiah’s oracle it would seem most likely that the descendant spoken of in the Davidic covenant would be someone coming in their own generation or the not too distant future. The tenses in the Hebrew verbal system are notoriously difficult to determine, especially in this section of Isaiah. It is this ambiguity that gives special resonance to the oracle and allows for the promises made here in association with the Davidic covenant to have a present or future connotation. This will be explored below.

141 This is also argued in, Williamson, Variations on a theme, 36.  
143 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 408-409.
The Relationship of Isaiah 8:23-9:6 to Chapters 36-39

As was proposed when reading Isa. 7:1-8:10, it appears that 8:23-9:6 was written in parallel with Isa. 36-39. Although these connections will need to be examined in more detail in the following chapter it will be necessary to outline some preliminary remarks that will be pertinent to the interpretation of this oracle.

The joy of the people spoken of in 9:2 directly relates to the yoke of burden, the staff for the shoulders and the rod of the oppressor being broken in 9:3. Earlier it was seen that these images relate to a time of siege and oppression and the most relevant experience of this for the people would be the invasion of Assyria (8:7-8). It was also noted that the use of ‘rod’ (תַּחַלַת) here in 9:3 makes one think of the use of term in 10:5 to designate Assyria. Similar language to 9:3 is used explicitly of Assyria in 10:24-27, it mentions ‘rod’ (תַּחַלַת), ‘burden’ (כָּבָל), ‘shoulder’ (שֶׁבֶר) and ‘yoke’ (נָעַר) and in 14:25b it is explicitly stated ‘his yoke (נָעַר) shall depart from them and his burden (כָּבָל) from their shoulder (שֶׁבֶר)’. In 14:25a it says that Yahweh will ‘break’ Assyria and this image is also used in 9:3. The imagery of the warrior’s boot of tramping in battle tumult and garments rolled in blood (9:4) would surely be the kind of images conjured up by the words of the Rabshakeh’s in 37:11 – ‘Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, devoting them to destruction’. Not only did the Assyrians lay waste all the nations and their lands but they cast their gods into the fire (37:18), ironically all their triumphant battle gear they so proudly wore would also ‘be burned as fuel for the fire’ (9:4). The oracle ends at 9:6 with the declaration that ‘The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this’ and this exact phrase is spoken in 37:32 after the announcement of a ‘remnant’ or ‘a band of survivors’ going out of Jerusalem.145 It says in 9:6 that Yahweh will establish and uphold the one on the throne of David and his kingdom and in 37:35 he says that he will defend the city to save it, ‘for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David’. If the final form of this oracle did not appear until after the period of Sennacherib’s invasion then it is hard to see how the oracle in 8:23-9:6 would not come to be read in light of those events. One could be forgiven for assuming, from the

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144 The term ‘burden’ is only used three times in Isa. in 9:3, 10:27, and 14:25. In the last two cases the word refers directly to the oppression of Assyria. See, Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 178.
145 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 407.
literary parallels, that the king at the time of Sennacherib’s invasion, Hezekiah, is the referent of this oracle.

The impression that one is left with from a holistic reading of the oracle in 8:23-9:6 is that the author/redactor wants to draw the reader’s attention to the Hezekiah narratives. Before moving on to examine the possibility that Hezekiah is the ‘son’ spoken of in 9:5 there is one question that remains. How can the advent of Hezekiah’s reign be good news to the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations? This is where the earlier discussion of the Davidic covenant comes into focus. The promise to David and his descendants was given in the context of a united Israel. The descendant who would inherit the fullness of the Davidic promises would be one who would not only rule the people of Judah but ‘of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end’ (Isa. 9:6).146

Although the kingdom was divided in the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah the imagery of Isa. 8:5-8 suggests that Jerusalem still constituted the ‘neck’ of the broader land of Israel, over which the Assyrians would flow in destructive power. A defeat of Jerusalem would mean a final defeat for all Israel, something that becomes apparent after the Babylonian exile. However, it can be seen from Isa. 36-37 that Assyria were unable to ‘cut off the neck’ and this victory for Yahweh and Jerusalem would have brought hope to those other areas that had tasted bitter defeat. Finally there was a king in Judah who had trusted in Yahweh and won a victory for his people against an overwhelming enemy. There would have been a tangible hope that Hezekiah would be the king who would restore the unity of the kingdom of Israel. That such a hope and perception had arisen by the time of the writing of 2 Chronicles is evident in its portrayal of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30). As Dillard says, ‘The portrayal of Israel united under a Davidic king is only one aspect of the Chronicler’s modelling of Hezekiah in the image of David and Solomon.’147 There is then the hope that the northern tribes of Israel, the first to be brought into ‘contempt’ (Isa. 8:23), would one day be made glorious by the defeat of a great enemy (Isa. 9:3-4) through the agency of a special son (Isa. 9:5) whose kingdom would increase by the zeal of

Yahweh (Isa. 9:6). The Chronicler then may be reflecting a widespread idea that Hezekiah was such an agent.

The ‘son who is given’ in Isaiah 9:5-6

The most prominent question and the one that has gained most attention in scholarly study is the identity of the child born, ‘the son given,’ in Isa. 9:5-6. The answer to that question will depend upon how one views the form of the poem in 9:1-6. There have been four main suggestions with regard to the form of the poem:148 1) a direct prediction of a future Messiah,149 2) a hymn of thanksgiving,150 3) a birth announcement,151 4) an enthronement or accession oracle.152 Below I will try to

148 It is important to note that there is some overlap between positions 2,3 and 4.
highlight the positive aspects of these four positions as well as some of the drawbacks in accepting them fully.

**A Direct Prediction of a Future Messiah**

Identifying the child in Isa. 9:5 with a future Messiah figure has been the traditional position of Christian interpretation as well as the position of some Jewish interpreters. One of the strengths of this position is that it takes the birth of the child in 9:5a as a real birth and not just as figurative language and does not require a timeframe division between the birth of the child and the son being given in 9:5b.

The position also takes seriously the extravagant appellations ascribed to the child, deriving these theologically through the incarnation and Christology. It would also seem that the following verse (9:6) speaks most naturally of an eschatological event, thereby requiring ‘an eschatological figure, the Messiah.’ However, it is the very strengths of this position that might be seen as the greatest weaknesses. As ever, the question of contemporary relevance arises. How does an oracle, presumably originally given around the eighth-century, affect its first recipients if the events it speaks of will not occur for another seven hundred years? How does the announcement of the birth of a child in the distant future bring about the end of the Assyrian oppression that seems to be spoken of in the preceding verses? Of course one could posit the idea that the oracle had a contemporary fulfilment that

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did not exhaust the meaning of the oracle. However, there is no consensus on how the contemporary and future fulfilments relate.

A Hymn of Thanksgiving

As Wegner notes, there are similarities between the form of Isa. 9:1-6 and the hymn of thanksgiving or Danklied such as the use of second and three person forms to speak of Yahweh and the giving of reasons for thanksgiving and joy in verses 3, 4 and 5 by the introductory ד. Also, the form of a hymn of thanksgiving does not negate the use of other forms present in this poem such as the concepts found in the traditions of royal theology and even in an accession oracle. Herbert sees the hymn as having several partial fulfilments over different periods (one of those being Hezekiah) and this forms an essential part of later messianic expectation, especially in light of the exile. If Isa. 9:1-6 is compared with the hymn of thanksgiving in Isa. 12, it can be seen that the eschatological elements evident in Isa. 12 might well be at play in embryonic form in the earlier chapter. Again, like the traditional position described above, the hymn of thanksgiving does not exclude the possibility of an eschatological figure at play in 9:5. However, there are a number of dissimilarities with the form of a hymn of thanksgiving and the poem in Isa. 9:1-6. The poem in Isaiah does not begin with an invocation to the people to praise God, it does not centre on giving thanks to God but on the benefits of his work, and the giving of such a grand set of titles in 9:5 is not found in any other hymn of thanksgiving. If a fixed form for the thanksgiving hymn is a necessity then Isa. 9:1-6 falls short of this requirement and cannot be exclusively designated by that title.

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A Birth Announcement

The birth announcement has the same benefit as the traditional position in positing a way of viewing Isa. 9:5 as containing a real birth. A birth announcement contains the following elements: a) declaration of the birth, b) announcement of the child’s name, c) explanation of the child’s name, d) a further prophecy/promise concerning the child. It appears that all of these elements are found in Isa. 9:5-6 with the exception of the explanation of the child’s name. One of the most attractive reasons for accepting the oracle as a birth announcement is in its correspondence to the birth of the child in Isa. 7:14. In this way the problem of the extravagant appellations given to the child can be circumvented by proposing that the titles in Isa. 9:5 are simply theophoric names. As Goldingay says, ‘the child’s name in Isa 9:5(6) is a description of his God rather than of the child himself.’ The titles given to the child could then be translated, ‘Planner of wonders; God the war hero (is) Father forever; prince of well-being or ‘One who plans a wonder is the warrior God; the father for ever is a commander who brings peace.’ The fact that the specificity of the child is not required in this interpretation also seems attractive on first glance. However, if one looks at other examples of those characters given theophoric names in the book of Isaiah ( - ‘Yahweh has brought salvation’ and – ‘Yahweh is my strength’ as just two examples) they always refer to a specific person known at that time. Both Wegner and Goldingay enlist the help of the compound name found in Isa. 8:1, 3 ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ but again, the reader is

163 Gen. 16:11; 17:19; Judg. 13:3; Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:13, 31.
164 Gen. 16:11; 17:19; Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:13, 31.
165 Gen. 16:11; Isa. 7:15-16; Lk. 1:14.
166 Gen. 16:12; 17:19; Judg. 13:4-5; Isa. 7:17; Lk. 1:16-17, 32-33.
167 Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 169.
171 Goldingay, ‘The Compound Name in Isaiah 9:5(6),’ 243. Wegner has ‘wonderful planner (is) the mighty God’ and ‘the Father of eternity (is) a prince of peace.’ Wegner, ‘A Re-examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,’ 111.
well aware of the specific person to whom this name is attached so why would the child in Isa. 9:5 be any different? Although ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ consists of four words with two compound elements ‘speeding to the plunder, hurrying to the spoil’ and the name in Isa. 9:5 could function in the same way, the name of the prophet’s son is quite irregular in Hebrew and the two elements of his name say virtually the same thing. This is not the case with the names of the child in Isa. 9:5.

There is another reason to be cautious about this interpretation. At the beginning of Isa. 9:5 it says of the child that ‘the government shall be (is) upon his shoulders’ and in 9:6 it says that his government and peace will increase and his kingdom will be established. It seems highly unlikely then that the titles given to the child in 9:5 say nothing about the child himself but simply about his God. One further caution has been proposed. If the notoriously difficult perfect verbs in 9:5 should be translated as events that have already taken place then it would mean that the child described in the verse has already been born before the names are given. This is not the order of the normal birth announcement formula. Nevertheless, even with these objections in place there is no reason why the main proposition of this form of the birth announcement, that these are theophoric names, cannot still be at play in a broader interpretation. Taking the name ריבג לא ‘mighty God’ as one example this same title can be seen to be directly applied to Yahweh in Isa. 10:21. The names given in 9:5 are then expressions both of the character of God and of the child described in this and the following verse, something expected of an ideal Davidic king. The only clear reason for rejecting the idea that these titles also tell the reader something about the king is if it is presupposed that such titles could not be ascribed to a human king.

An Enthronement or Accession Oracle.

The position that the form of the poem in Isa. 9 and particularly the giving of the names to the child in verse 5 reflects the ancient Near Eastern practice of giving throne names in an accession oracle has been popular in much critical study of this

172 Smith, Isaiah 1-39, 240.
173 Young, Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 159-161.
174 As argued in, Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 43.
passage and Hans Wildberger has been one of its most compelling modern advocates. Wildberger recognises some of the difficulties surrounding how Isaiah could mention throne names that belonged to the festival of enthronement in Egypt, such as the giving of appellations that speak of the child in divine terms and how Isaiah came across Egyptian court practices in the first place. On the latter point Wildberger points out that one of Solomon’s wives was Egyptian and that Jerusalem had been under the control of Egypt until it was conquered by David. On the earlier point about the ascribing of divinity to the child he suggests that even in Egypt such practices did not take away from the uniqueness of the gods but rather spoke of the Pharaoh as the ‘image’ of the divinity. The most attractive feature of this position is the fact that it allows for a contemporary fulfilment and therefore indicates a reason for hope for the people who have been or our going through darkness. The child is then seen to be one of the Judean kings and most often Hezekiah, who will go on to play an important role in the book of Isaiah. Also, the giving of so many titles is somewhat unprecedented in the Old Testament but seems to accord well with the giving of such titles in Egyptian practice.

However, a number of arguments have been levelled against this interpretation. There does not seem to be any explicit example of a royal accession oracle anywhere else in the Old Testament. The oracle in Isa. 9:1-6 departs from those passages that have often been seen as accession oracles in a number of ways, especially in the fact that God does not address the king directly in the oracle (as he

\[\text{Isaiah 1-39, 75. For a differing approach see, Vermeylen, Du prophete Isai, 1.235; Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 211.} \]

\[\text{176 H. Wildberger, ‘Die Thronnamen des Messias, Jes. 9,5b,’ ThZ 16 (1960) 314-332; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 383-410.} \]

\[\text{177 Wildberger, ‘Die Thronnamen des Messias, Jes. 9,5b,’ 325ff.; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 400-401.} \]

\[\text{178 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 401.} \]

\[\text{179 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 404. He says, ‘So that one can avoid a misunderstanding, the Pharaoh in Egypt is called the “image” of the divinity; cf. Gen. 1:26; 3:5; Ps. 8:6….And it is very obvious that Isaiah has no intention of calling the uniqueness of Yahweh into question, just as a passage such as Ps. 45:7, which practically designates the king as בֵּיתָם (divine), would not do this.’} \]

\[\text{180 Wegner, ‘A Re-examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,’ 103. Wegner points out in favour of the position that this speaks of Hezekiah’s accession that he was a godly king, who in many ways corresponded to these ideas. Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 170.} \]

\[\text{181 Wegner, ‘A Re-examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,’ 103; Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 172.} \]

\[\text{182 2 Sam. 7:10-16; Ps. 2:6-12; Ps. 110:3.} \]

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does in the others) but addresses the people in the third person. The word ‘child’ is not used in any other accession oracle. In the Egyptian practice five titles are given to the king but, although possible, it is highly unlikely that five titles are evident in Isa. 9:5. Moreover, if it is correct that Isa. 9:5 is announcing a birth that has not yet taken place (as would be typical of the birth announcement form), this too would stand against the typical Egyptian practice. Although many of the arguments against the position that this is an enthronement oracle modelled on those in Egypt are weighty and militate against a direct parallel being drawn, they do not eradicate certain legitimate points. It should be noted that in his work Wildberger never makes a direct equivalence between the ANE practice and that in Isaiah. He speaks rather of ‘a prophetic imitation’ and ‘the pattern of what took place’, seeing in the Isaiah oracle ‘formulations that surpassed what was commonly used in the palace – and which also went beyond what was generally accepted in Israel.’ Therefore, Isaiah takes up his own unique prophetic formula to speak of a recently enthroned king in Judah in amplified language that served the rhetorical purpose of giving hope to those in despair and light to those in darkness (9:1).

This then draws up the difficult question of how the verb tenses should be rendered in this passage. Has the child been born as the perfect verbs seem to indicate or will the child be born in the future, therefore seeing the verbs as prophetic perfects? A future tense reading of these verbs would favour the traditional position and the birth announcement while the past tense reading would favour the view that this was an accession oracle. Robb Andrew Young has made a strong case for reading

184 Wegner, ‘A Re-examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,’ 104; Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 172. See also, Barth, Die Jesaja-Worte, 168; Laato, Who is Immanuel?, 192.
185 Wegner, ‘A Re-examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,’ 104; Wegner, An Examination of Kingship, 172. See also, K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament (London: IVP, 1966) 107-111; Laato, Who is Immanuel?, 192-194. It would seem more likely that there are two names here. The last two names consist of two members the first of which is in the construct state and the following are dependent genitives. The first two names also consist of two members that are linked with the first member of each being in the position of an appositional genitive. See, Young, The Book of Isaiah 1-39, 333.
188 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 401.
189 For the use of the waw plus the imperfect consecutives to continue a prophetic perfect in 9:5 see, GKC § 111w.
the birth of the child in 9:5 as an event that has already taken place,\textsuperscript{190} preferring to see the Hebrew verbal system as primarily aspectual rather than based on tense.\textsuperscript{191} He notes a number of points in favour of his argument. Young says that the two wayyiqtol verbs in 9:5 leave no doubt that ‘the child has already been born and provided with a name, in agreement with the preceding passive qal יָנָלַי and nifal יָנָל.\textsuperscript{192} He questions the use of the designation ‘prophetic perfect’\textsuperscript{193} and notes that the ancient versions of Isaiah - LXX, 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, Syriac and Vulgate - render the oracle in the past tense. He also notes that if the prophetic perfect is a legitimate grammatical term then this oracle has ‘such a tight cluster of perfect verbs with future meaning (which) is unprecedented in the Hebrew Bible.’\textsuperscript{194} Young then goes on to provide an historical reconstruction that ultimately sees Hezekiah as the most likely referent for the child in 9:5.\textsuperscript{195} Although one could question some of the points that Young has made with regard to the proper rendering of the verbs in this oracle\textsuperscript{196} he has made a positive case for a reading that sees Hezekiah as a legitimate referent for this important child mentioned in 9:5.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The reading of Isa. 8:23-9:6 has highlighted a number of important points for the interpretation of the oracle. First, it was demonstrated that this oracle is closely tied to the preceding oracle in Isa. 7 particularly in the depiction of the giving of a son as sign of both destruction and hope. Secondly, as with the oracle in Isa. 7, this oracle is closely tied to the Davidic covenant and therefore the promises that are made there.

Again, it has been seen that this oracle suggests intentional intertextual relations to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[190] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 156-158.
\item[191] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 156 n. 17. Young still uses tense based terminology such as ‘past’ and ‘future’ for the sake of clarity.
\item[192] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 156-157.
\item[193] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 156. See also, Max Rogland, \textit{Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal in Classical Hebrew} (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003).
\item[194] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 157.
\item[195] Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 162-164.
\item[196] The use of the prophetic perfect is still seen by many as a legitimate grammatical term (see footnote 32 above). Also, it is not clear that Rogland’s work to which Young appeals fully supports his thesis in that a possible future meaning is not excluded from Rogland’s reconstruction because the past sense refers to the vision which itself may still carry a future meaning within it. See, Rogland, \textit{Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal in Classical Hebrew}, 73-76. It should also be noted that Young’s dismissal of the plain future meaning of יָנָלמ in verse 6 as simply referring to the events in that verse and not to the entire oracle does not seem to be the best reading.
\end{footnotes}
Isa. 36-39 that are beyond the superficial and therefore provide a reason for reading these materials together.\textsuperscript{197} The great hope of the people is therefore tied to the birth and reign of Yahweh’s ‘anointed one’ who will be given a great name as promised in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:9) and deliver his people from their enemies, bringing in an era of peace and justice (Isa. 9:6). In this way Hezekiah is seen as more than another ‘anointed’ successor to the throne or even an ideal king but the one long hoped for, the new David or even a ‘Messiah’ in the sense of an anointed deliverer. However, a number of scholars have rejected the idea that Hezekiah is the one spoken of in this oracle. It appears that the appellations given to the child in 9:5 and the achievements of the king in 9:6 go beyond anything that could be said of Hezekiah and his reign. It would seem the case then that someone else is expected as the true fulfilment of this oracle, a new and better David. How then can these tensions be held together – Hezekiah as a clearly suitable referent and yet failing to meet all the demands of the oracle? I propose that this is exactly the purpose of the oracle in the first place. In line with the hermeneutical principle found in Isa. 6:9-10 the oracle in Isa. 8:23-9:6 provides both interpretations with a rhetorical purpose. Hezekiah is being offered as a ‘Messiah’ figure to those who continually and wilfully reject the word of Yahweh and who cannot see that another and greater Messiah is being spoken of in this Oracle. It will be the remnant of faithful disciples (cf. Isa. 6:13; 8:16) who will see past the earthly and immediate figure offered here and see a hope that is future and as yet unfulfilled.

\textsuperscript{197} The next chapter will substantially expand these intertextual parallels.
Part 4. - Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 11:1-16

The third of the most prominent so-called ‘messianic’ oracles in the early chapters of the book of Isaiah is the focus of this subsection. The oracle that speaks of a shoot coming forth from the root of Jesse has been understood to be messianic from the earliest times but the exact extent of the pericope that can be described as ‘messianic’ is hard to determine. Some older commentators saw Isa. 11:1-16 as an integral whole and examined the chapter as a unity.\(^{198}\) Others have shortened the scope of the pericope to Isa. 11:1-9, seeing some thematic connection between these verses and verses 11-16 with verse 10 acting as a bridge between these sections; most see this as coming from the hand of an editor.\(^{199}\) However, for those who have examined this oracle in specific reference to its messianic implications it has been the smaller section Isa. 11:1-5 that has come under investigation since it speaks specifically of the shoot from the root of Jesse and his endowment with the Spirit.\(^{200}\) The identity of this shoot from the root of Jesse that will be of specific concern for this study but I will not be restricting my interpretation of the oracle to these verses. I will be looking at 11:1-16 as a whole but focusing attention on the figure in verses 1-5.

It is not possible to give a sensitive and thorough examination of Isa. 11:1-16 without reference to its surrounding literary context. These verses taken in isolation


would give no clues with regard to the identity of the shoot of the root of Jesse but a careful investigation of the literary context becomes quite suggestive in this regard. It must be noted at the outset that this oracle has seldom been recognised to relate to Hezekiah even by those who identify him with the figures in Isa. 7:14 and 9:5-6, but has been seen as relating to a unidentified Davidic figure or with the remnant spoken of in Isa. 10:20-22. The most important question in relation to this study then is how this oracle might relate to Hezekiah and in what ways this affects the overall premise of the study. This oracle relates to Hezekiah in the same way that was discovered in the previous two oracles examined and that the same hermeneutical principle derived from Isa. 6:9-10 is at play. I believe that up to verse 5 the reader might continue to assume that Hezekiah is still in view but with verse 6ff. a much greater dissonance is created with the figure of Hezekiah. I will look at verses 1-5 in relation to what came before and the to what follows.

Isaiah 11:1-5 in its Present Literary Context I (9:7-10:34)

The section Isa. 9:7[8]-10:4 appears to be a unit that picks up from the end of chapter 5. The thematic link is established by the concept of judgment for wickedness, oppression and pride in both chapter 5 and 9:7-10:4. Two structural links are also apparent in these sections with a seventh ‘woe’ (יָשָׁר) pronounced in 10:1 following the previous six woes declared in chapter 5 (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22) and the continuation of the refrain ‘for all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is

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201 See particularly, Laato, Who is Immanuel? 316; Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 95-110; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 262-265. Wildberger makes an interesting suggestion that the poem was written in reaction to Isaiah’s disappointment with Hezekiah - Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 467-469. One recent study has identified the figure in Isa. 11:1-5 with Hezekiah - Young, Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 164-180.


204 The difference in numbering between the Hebrew text and modern English translations as noted in the previous section (8:23[9:1]-24[9:6]) continues on through the rest of chapter 9. The MT has 9:7-9:20 and the English translations have 9:8-9:21. I will follow the MT for the purposes of continuity.

205 This would actually be the eighth woe if one counts the woe the prophet pronounces against himself in 6:5. I believe this to be the case and deal with it in an earlier section.

stretched out still’ (5:25) four more times in 9:7-10:4 (9:11, 16, 20; 10:4). These sections should be read together and understood to indicate that even though Yahweh will work salvation for his people through his chosen agent (7:14; 9:5-6) the great curses against his people that come to a seeming crescendo in chapter 5 are still in force and will precipitate the need for the delivering agent.

It was evident earlier how the sin of idolatry in Isa.1-5 had led to the judicial pronouncement of conformity of the sinner to his idol (6:9-10) and how the first signs of threat (7:1-6) had led to the announcement of a deliverer from the house of David (7:14). This pattern was repeated in the following section with the pronouncement of the people’s idolatry (8:19) having led to darkness and anguish (8:21-22) and the declaration of a deliverer from the house of David (9:5-6). With the explicit link back to the discussion of sin and judgment in chapter 5 this new section 9:7-10:4 begins what appears to be a third expression of this pattern that is expected to culminate in the pronouncement of a deliverer from the house of David, which appears to be the case in 11:1-5. Although 9:7-10:4 is structurally linked to chapter 5 there are also indications in the text that it is to be read in conjunction with the material in chapter 6. Not only are these connected by the woe declarations (6:5; 10:1) but the mention of ruin (נַחֲלָה) in 10:3a picks up from the two earlier mentions of laying waste (נָחַל and נָחַל) in 6:11.207

Laato describes Isa. 10:5-34 as “contentually” a unit as it deals with Assyria and its threat against Judah.208 In fact he goes on to state that there are ‘good reasons prima facie to regard 10:5-11:9(12:6) as a redactional unit.’209 This new section from 10:5ff. introduces hope for Israel/Judah as Yahweh turns his anger away from his own people and against the rod of his anger, Assyria, which he has used to punish and discipline his people. This is not a completely new section that is unrelated to what has preceded it but once again links with the previous chapters with another ‘woe’ (נַחֲל) at the beginning of 10:5, the mention of Assyria ‘taking spoil and seizing

207 There may also be an intention link between the mention of Yahweh’s glory (6:3) and the people’s glory (10:3b). See, Goldingay, Isaiah, 76.
208 Laato, Who is Immanuel? 197.
209 Laato, Who is Immanuel? 197. His reason for this assumption lies in the use of the waw consecutive with perfect verbs beginning 11:1-9; 11:10-16 and 12:1-6. See also, Nielsen, There is Hope for a Tree, 124-125.
plunder’ in 10:6 (cf. Maher-shalal-hashbaz – 8:1, 3-4), the treading down and trampling of the army (9:4; 10:6) and the use of terms such as ‘rod’ (ןְדֵד) in 9:3 and 10:5.210

But 10:5ff. does not simply look back and develop the ideas of the preceding sections but looks forward to build toward themes that are picked up in later parts of the book; particularly Isa. 36-37. In 10:7-14 there is a description of Assyria’s pride and arrogance in their own military power and boasting against Samaria and Jerusalem about defeating the idols of other nations with the implication that Yahweh is no greater than these. In fact Assyria believes that it has done all of this in its own strength and by its own wisdom and understanding (10:13). There are strong connections with the words and descriptions of Assyria here and the Hezekiah narratives in Isa. 36-37 (especially 36:4-10, 13-20; 37:10-13; cf. 10:15; 37:23-24). This can be seen in the words of the king of Assyria in 10:9-11 the pattern of the advance that they would make through Samaria up to the neck of Jerusalem, where the Assyrians threatened to make an end of them and their idols like they had to Samaria and her images (10:11).211 This offers a similar picture to the one put forth in 8:5-8 and it was suggested earlier concerning that text that its most obvious fulfilment was in the Hezekiah narratives of chapters 36 and 37. The following section 10:17-19 introduces the motif of tree imagery directed at Assyria who will become only a remnant as Judah had been warned would happen to them (6:11-13; cf. 10:20-22) and the motif is developed in 10:33-34 where the reference to cutting down and the fall of the majestic trees of Lebanon is picked up again in 37:24.212 The tree imagery of 10:17-19; 33-34 is broken up by an extended reflection on the remnant motif spoken of in 10:19 in reference to Assyria but focused on Israel in 10:20-23. This short section brings the reader back to a theme that was introduced in 6:13 in a very negative context of the burning of Israel’s stump. Remnant imagery was also picked up in 7:3 with the appearance of Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub (שָׁרוֹן יָשָׁעַב) and the name is used again in a different context at 10:21, demonstrating that 10:20-23 is connected

210 For further connections between 10:5f. with particularly chapter 9 see the discussion above examining 8:23-9:6.
211 Goldingay says of 10:9, ‘Apart from Samaria, all cities named are in Aram; all fell to Assyria between 738 and 717 B.C. But they are named from north to south, so that the words picture the Assyrians advancing steadily toward the gates of Jerusalem itself.’ Goldingay, Isaiah, 87.
212 See, Nielsen, There is Hope for a Tree, 128.
to the wider literary context encompassing Isa. 6-9.\(^{213}\) This becomes more evident in 10:21 with not only the reuse of the prophet’s son’s name but with the mention of Jacob (cf. 8:17) and the ‘mighty God’ (cf. 9:5). Although the remnant concept will have negative connotations for the larger part of Israel - they will no longer be as the sand of the sea – 10:22 - and this concept is mostly a negative one,\(^{214}\) 10:24-27 introduces great hope for the remnant.\(^{215}\) The section is introduced with a bridging ‘do not fear’ oracle in 10:24\(^{216}\) where it says that God’s people who dwell in Zion are not to be afraid of Assyria because his fury will be turned against Assyria for their destruction (10:25).\(^{217}\) This section both looks back to 9:3 with the mention of Midian (10:26) and the breaking of a yoke (as well as ‘burden’ and ‘shoulder’ – 10:27) and it looks forward to the objective deliverance of the people from Assyria in the Hezekiah narratives.

This section also introduces a new exodus theme with the mention of deliverance from Egypt, a theme that recurs in the book.\(^{218}\) Before the reintroduction of the tree imagery in 10:33-34 there is the march of the Assyrian army toward Jerusalem; at Nob Assyria will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion (10:32). In their present context these verses would seem to indicate the march that Sennacherib’s troops took to Jerusalem where Isa. 36 picks up,\(^{219}\) even if there is some question with regard to specific historical events being portrayed.\(^{220}\) There is some ambiguity with regard to the referent of this tree felling imagery in 10:33-34 with some proposing Judah\(^{221}\) and others Assyria.\(^{222}\) That these verses in the final

\(^{213}\) As also proposed in, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 270.
\(^{214}\) As pointed out in, G. Hasel, *The Remnant*, Andrew’s University Monographs 5, 3\(^{rd}\) ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrew’s University, 1980) 96-98.
\(^{215}\) Wegner suggests that the most likely time that the people living in Zion would have needed this encouragement of deliverance from Assyria was in 701 BCE. See, Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship*, 242.
\(^{216}\) See the earlier discussion of ‘al tira oracles in the royal narratives at Isaiah 7:1-17.
\(^{217}\) Isa. 10:24-27 seems to correspond thematically to 10:5-10.
\(^{218}\) See particularly Isa. 43:16-21; 51:9-11 and the discussion of the new exodus themes in Chapter VII of this study.
\(^{219}\) Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 366.
\(^{220}\) See, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 274.
\(^{222}\) Vermeylen, *Du prophete Isaie*, 266-268; Ronald Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (NCB, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 120-121; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 261. Others scholars believe that these verses only came to refer to Assyria at a later stage of the books development and may have originally
form of the text are meant to be understood to refer to Assyria is well illustrated by Nielsen’s structural proposal for the larger unit 10:5-11:9. 223

Seeing a logical pattern in the structure of 10:5-11:9 as a whole, it is likely that the judgment oracles in 10:16-19 and 10:33-34 would be parallel and make reference to the same patient being judged. We know that the patient of 10:16-19 is Assyria so the most likely patient of 10:33-34 is also Assyria. However, the mention of only a remnant of Israel returning (10:20-23; cf. 7:3) and the imagery of the shoot from the stump (11:1; 6:13) seems to imply that the references to judgment in the oracles were never exclusively about Assyria but encompassed Israel as well. Was this seeming move from the felling of Judah to the felling of Assyria intentional and what purpose would this serve to the larger message of the book as a whole? The felling of Israel at each successive stage (whether by Assyria, Babylon or other enemies) never spelled a complete end to the people owing to the covenant God had made with his servant David. However, the felling of Assyria would be complete and in the context of the book of Isaiah this is demonstrated in their not being mentioned after the Hezekiah narratives; from that point the focus shifts.

The loose pattern and literary contexts surrounding the first two oracles in chapters 7 and 9 is very much evident in the verses surrounding 11:1-5. The people of Israel are judged (9:7-10:4), Assyria will be the agent of that judgment but will not be able to bring a full end as they will be judged for their pride (10:5-19, 24-34) and the hope of Israel will be found in the promise of a deliverer from David’s line (11:1-5). It has already been seen that the promised judgment of Assyria’s pride is fulfilled in the context of the Hezekiah narratives and it would be logical to assume that once again Hezekiah would be associated with the promised deliverer. The major problem with associating Hezekiah with the figure in 9:5-6 was the language of the reign of this king (prince) that went beyond what is found in 36-39, or even 2 Chron. 29-32 for

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that matter. In the verses immediately following 11:1-5 (6-9) there is a picture of a glorious future that appears to be tied to the reign of this anointed one.224

Isaiah 11:1-5 – ‘The Shoot from the Stump of Jesse’

The first verse of chapter 11 picks up the tree imagery brought out in the previous chapter, particularly in the immediately preceding verses (10:33-34). It was discovered that the referent of the lopping off of the boughs and the cutting down of the thickets related most clearly to God’s punishment of Assyria. That similar pruning has taken place in Judah seems to be indicated by the reference to the ‘stump’ (עֵץ) of Jesse in 11:1 and this is accompanied by other horticultural terms such as ‘shoot’ (איִּמְטָרַה), ‘branch’ (עֵרֶבַע), ‘roots’ (עֵרֶבַע), and ‘fruit’ (עֵרֶבַע). Whatever the precise meaning of these terms may be, the reader is expected to read this oracle in conjunction with what has immediately preceded it, in other words, this oracle was not produced in isolation from what has already been said up to this point. A major interpretive issue surrounds the import of the term עֵץ. Wegner is representative of the majority consensus when he believes it ‘best to interpret עֵץ as “stump” or “trunk” because of its parallel structure with יִנָּה seeing the shoot sprouting from a ‘stump’ rather than a ‘cutting’ or ‘stock’.225 If this is the right interpretation of

224 For those who see a connection between the Spirit anointed king in 11:1-5 with the paradisiacal peace announced in 11:6-9 see, Laato, Who is Immanuel? 204-205; Nielsen, There is Hope for a Tree, 135; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 467-469; Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 105-108; Peter D. Miscall, Isaiah – Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 44-46; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 265; Brevard Childs, Isaiah, OTL (Louisville, Kentucky: WJKP, 2001) 103-104. For those who see verses 6-9 as deriving from another time period, see the German studies listed by these authors such as, K. Marti, Das Buch Jesaja, Kurzer Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament X (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1900) 113; O. Eissfeldt, Einleitung in das Alte Testament unter Einschluss der Apokryphen sowie der apokryphen- und pseudopigraphischen Qumran-Schriften. Entstehungsgeschichte des Alten Testament, Neu Theologische Grundrisse. 2. Vollig neubearbeitete Auflage (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1964) 429; H. J. Hermisson, Zukunftserwartung und Gegenwartskritik in der Vertundigung Jesajas, EvTh 33 (1973) 54-77 (59); H. Barth, Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit. Israel und Assur als Thema einer Produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajauberlieferung, WMANT 48 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977) 73f. 225 Wegner, An Examination of Kingship in Isaiah 1-35, 232. For others who see ‘stump’ as the best translation and therefore indicating what is left after a time of devastation see, Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 254-255; Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 122; John D. W. Watts, Isaiah 1-33, WBC Vol. 24 (USA: Word, 1985) 171; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 482; Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 97; Brueggemann, Isaiah 1-39, 99; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 263-264. Williamson appears to see the stump as continuing the imagery of a felled tree from the end of chapter 10 (pg 51) but goes on to state, ‘11:1 would not refer so much to a restoration after foreign invasion as to a hope of a fresh beginning after God has purged his people by some unstated means.’ See, Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 53.
the term מְמוֹר then it presupposes that this figure from the line of Jesse will arise after a period when Judah has been devastated, most probably after a period of siege.

In a desire to maintain his position that Hezekiah is the referent of 11:1 and that the entire pericope comes from the hand of Isaiah ben Amoz, Robb Andrew Young believes that מְמוֹר should be interpreted as something closer to ‘root’, something that is ‘alive’ and ‘virile’.\(^{226}\) He argues that although ‘stump’ is the most likely translation in relation to cognate languages one should interpret terms from the data within the same language.\(^ {227}\) There are two other occurrences of the term מְמוֹר in the Hebrew bible in Isa. 40:24 and Job 14:8. In the Isaiah passage the meaning ‘stump’ is highly unlikely and Young makes a good case to see Job fitting into this same interpretative framework.\(^ {228}\) However, it is not necessary to change the standard designation of מְמוֹר from ‘stump’ in order to be able to see Hezekiah as a possible referent in 11:1. The reader has already been told in Isa. 8:8 that the Assyrians would sweep up to the neck of Judah leaving destruction in their wake and in Isa. 36:1 it can be seen that the Assyrians have taken the fortified cities of Judah. This suggests that Jerusalem was nothing more than a ‘stump’ left in Judah at the time of this invasion and the shoot that would sprout up in righteousness and faithfulness (11:5) would be Hezekiah. Evans goes further when he states ‘The ‘stump of Jesse’ (11:1) probably refers to the reduced and weakened kingdom, which in the time of Ahaz is no more than a vassal to Assyria.’\(^ {229}\) Although Evans point is valid, the period of the Assyrian invasion at the time of Hezekiah is to be preferred and inevitably incorporates the earlier period of his father’s reign, which led to that particular situation. If the oracle relates to the reign of Ahaz then the shoot from the stump would most likely be Hezekiah and if the period of the siege of Jerusalem is in mind then Hezekiah is still the most likely referent for he will come forth as the faithful one (11:5) from the stock

\[^{226}\text{Young, } Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 173.}\]
\[^{227}\text{Young, } Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 173.}\]
\[^{228}\text{Young, } Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 173-176.}\]
\[^{229}\text{Craig A. Evans, } To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation, }JSOTSup 64\text{ (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 182 n.107. See also Brueggemann’s comment that this verse speaks to the context of a deep failure that could relate to a crisis in either Ahaz’s or Hezekiah’s day; Brueggemann, }Isaiah 1-39, 99.\]
of Jesse and will not be destroyed but bear fruit (11:1) in the form of a new generation (39:7).\textsuperscript{230}

The reader is not explicitly told the exact temporal location of this oracle and this is part of its ambiguity and why it can be reapplied in later periods. However, two possible locations can be implicitly derived from the text. The first is the one mentioned with regard to the Assyrian invasion of Judah and the siege of Jerusalem. Not only does the ‘stump’ language fit within this particular period but also the tree imagery directly connects back to the preceding oracle, which above, spoke to that situation. Added to this is the reversal of the situation in which the poor are treated with inequity (10:2) when one will judge the poor with righteousness and decide with equity (11:4). What is being described here is; after a period of injustice under an unfaithful king (cf. 7:12-13 – Ahaz) that leads to a time of judgment under a foreign power (cf. 7:17 – Assyria) who will in turn be judged for their pride (cf. 10:12) equity will be restored by one who judges rightly (11:4 – Hezekiah?). The second possible location for the oracle in chapter 11 is less precise but relates back to what is spoken by Isaiah in chapter 6. It has been noted that there is an allusion in 11:1 to what is spoken by the prophet in 6:13 about a stump that remains when it is felled with the holy seed as its stump.\textsuperscript{231} It must be conceded that different Hebrew words are used for stump (דָּבָק - 6:13 and tranny - 11:1) and therefore the match is not a perfect one. This being the case Seitz states, ‘though a different word for “stump” appears at 11:1, the controlling image remains the same.’\textsuperscript{232} This would be similar to someone describing the same event but using different English words, though the words were not the same the imagery would convey the same sentiment. The figure in 11:1-5 is also contrasted to the state of the people in that he will have understanding (11:2), something missing from God’s people (1:3, 6:9) and he will not judge by what he sees or hears (11:3) in contrast to the people who will be confused by what they see and hear (6:9-10).\textsuperscript{233} Again, there is a reversal of previous judgments in the coming of this figure in chapter 11 who, unlike the people with unclean lips (6:5), will strike the earth with the rod of his ‘mouth’ and with the breath of his ‘lips’ he will kill the

\textsuperscript{230} It must be noted that the fruit that Hezekiah produced in the immediately following generation (Manasseh) was not very faithful. However, the same could not be said of his grandson (Josiah).

\textsuperscript{231} Miscall, Isaiah, 44; Brueggemann, Isaiah 1-39, 99; Childs, Isaiah, 102.

\textsuperscript{232} Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 97.

\textsuperscript{233} Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 482; Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 49; Childs, Isaiah, 103.
wicked (11:4) and will not be blind, deaf and without understanding like the people of
his kingdom (6:9) but will make his decision based on the counsel of the Spirit (11:2).
It is possible to see the reference to the felled terebinth or oak in 6:13 as pointing to
the same situation assumed by the language of 11:1 (allowing for the interpretation
related to the reign of Hezekiah) but the imagery of burning and the description of
devastation seems to speak to a period beyond the Assyrian invasion.

Therefore, if 11:1 is related to 6:13 there is an alternative timeframe and an
alternative referent with regard to the figure described in 11:1-5 to contend with. It
may be wise to follow Wildberger when he says, ‘one must avoid any attempt to
discover the “when”; that is in the hand of God; faith must content itself with
knowing that a saving event will still come.’²³⁴ The situation found at this point is the
one that this study would expect to be the case. If the Isa. 6 hermeneutic is at work
here in chapter 11 then there is an explanation for these two competing hypotheses.
This hermeneutic proposes that both the Assyrian invasion at the time of Hezekiah
and an undetermined time in the future can both be found in the oracle in chapter 11.
This would also mean that both Hezekiah and another unknown future figure could be
related to the figure described in verses 1-5. In philosophical terms those who believe
that Hezekiah is the one described in these verses have ‘justified true belief’²³⁵ or
‘textual warrant’ for presupposing this to be the case but with incorrect or distorted
knowledge. Theologically this distorted knowledge would relate to a broken
relationship with the one who can supply true knowledge (6:5-9). Those who see this
figure as one who will appear at a future time, may have true knowledge owing to the
reverse of their relational status (8:16) but have insufficient details to specify the
object of this oracle.

There is another reason to see this figure associated with Hezekiah and that is
with reference to the oracle in 8:23-9:6. In that oracle there were established many
strong affinities with what is found in the Hezekiah narratives. If the figure in 9:5-6 is
related to the figure in 11:1-5 then it can be seen why Hezekiah could be associated
with this latter figure. The connections between 9:5-6 and 11:1-5 have been noted by

²³⁴ Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 470.
a number of scholars. One of the most striking parallels is found in the second pair of gifts bestowed by the Spirit in 11:2; הָנְדָם ‘counsel’ and מְצוּזָה ‘might’ which picks up two of the child’s epithets in 9:5 – ‘Wonderful Counsellor’, ‘Mighty God’ (מְנוֹן וּמְצוּזָה). Laato sees all four names of the child of 9:5 in the description of the figure of 11:1-9; seeing ‘Wonderful Counsellor’ in the Spirit’s first gift in 11:2, ‘Mighty God’ in the second in 11:2, ‘Eternal Father’ in 11:2b-4, and ‘Prince of Peace’ in the peace of paradise described in 11:6-9. Although these thought concepts are possible affinities I would agree with Williamson that they are not altogether convincing. It is more likely that the paradisiacal peace of 11:6-9 reflects the description of the child’s reign in 9:6 when the increase of peace will have no end. It can also be seen that the reign of both figures is marked by ‘righteousness’ (9:6; 11:4,5) and it is ultimately Yahweh who will bring about all that is said about both figures; either by zeal (9:6) or the Spirit (11:2). There is enough of a link between these texts to warrant the conclusion that the same referent is in mind in both cases. That being said then, Hezekiah is again a likely candidate, for his reign could certainly be described as righteous and he was a man who walked in faithfulness (11:5; 38:3). Nevertheless, there are enough elements in the oracle of chapter 9 to warrant the idea that Hezekiah was unable to fulfill all that was expected of this anticipated deliverer.

The material in 11:2-5 exacerbates the ambiguity of the referent of this figure. Again, this material points both backward to earlier parts of the book and speaks to elements that will reappear and develop in later parts of the book. It was discovered in the other two oracles in chapters 7 and 9, examined above, that they related closely to the Davidic covenant found in 2 Sam. 7. Although there is less of a semantic relationship between 11:2-5 and 2 Sam. 7, than there is in 9:5-6, there are still good reasons to see its influence in the background. Verse 2 speaks of the figure in verse 1 being endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh and the gifts that accompany this

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238 Laato, *Who is Immanuel?* 204.
239 Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 47 n.30.
240 Sweeney, ‘Jesse’s New Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah’, 116. Sweeney says, ‘Hezekiah does indeed serve as a righteous model in Isaiah 36-37 insofar as he turns to YHWH in a time of crisis and thereby saves Jerusalem from the Assyrians.’
endowment. The description of the Spirit coming upon him at the beginning of the verse is quite unique in that it is said to הַנֵּן ‘rest’ upon him. When one thinks of other Israelite kings upon whom the Spirit of Yahweh came, such as Saul, it is recognised that the Spirit could equally depart from him (1 Sam. 16:14).\(^{241}\) The idea of the Spirit of Yahweh resting upon someone seems without parallel. However, the closest parallel can be found in the description of David’s anointing at the hand of Samuel where it says, ‘the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon David from that day forward’ (1 Sam. 16:13). Once again there is a mysterious figure in the book of Isaiah who is being closely related to David. The earlier use of Jesse rather than David in Isa. 11:1 would bear this out. It has also been recognised that the description of the figure in 11:2-5 has many echoes to the description of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3.\(^{242}\) Solomon asks Yahweh for an ‘understanding mind’ (lit. a heart to hear and judge) to be able to govern the people and discern between good and evil (1 Kgs 3:9) and Yahweh gives him a ‘wise’ and ‘discerning’ mind (1 Kgs 3:12). It says in Isa. 11:2 the shoot of the stump of Jesse will be given the Spirit of ‘wisdom and understanding’ as well as ‘knowledge’ and the ability to ‘decide disputes’ (11:3) and ‘judge’ and ‘decide’ with righteousness and equity (11:4).

It is interesting that in Solomon’s description of his father David in 1 Kgs 3:6 he speaks of him walking in ‘faithfulness’ and ‘righteousness’, the very same attributes that will accompany the reign of the king in 11:5. Just as was evident in chapters 7 and 9, the figure in chapter 11 is closely associated with king David and therefore with the promises made to him. But the mention of the Spirit of Yahweh resting upon this figure also has parallels in the book of Isaiah (cf. 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1).\(^{243}\) As mentioned above, not all of these occurrences speak of the same person(s) receiving the Spirit but particularly in the case of 42:1 and 61:1 the figure is an individual anointed by Yahweh for an important task, much like the figure in 11:2. The figure mentioned in 42:1 is called Yahweh’s ‘servant’ upon whom he places his Spirit and Yahweh describes him as one in ‘whom my soul delights’ (the mutual response is found in 11:3). The servant will bring forth justice to the nations (42:1; 11:3-4) and will establish justice on the earth (42:4; 9:6). A similar description is

\(^{241}\) Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 471.
\(^{242}\) Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 471-472; Childs, Isaiah, 103.
\(^{243}\) For the drawing of similar parallels see, Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 171; Blenkinsopp. Isaiah 1-39, 264.
given to the figure in 61:1 who says ‘the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me...’ This Spirit anointed servant is given the task of bringing good news to the poor and to pronounce the day of God’s vengeance (61:1-2; 11:4). There is also a parallel between the descriptions of righteousness as a piece of clothing; a robe in 61:10 and a belt in 11:5. It can, therefore, be seen that the figure in 11:1-5 relates both to the promises and expectations of David as well as to a coming servant who will bring about the justice and salvation that is the will of God.

In all three so-called messianic prophecies (7:14; 9:5-6; 11:1-5) this hermeneutic is at work that gives a dual proposal as to the object of these prophecies. Hezekiah meets many of the expectations surrounding these oracles and yet fails to fully embody all that is expected. If he is in mind in these three oracles then there was great hopes placed on his shoulders that he was never able to deliver. Turning to the narratives that speak directly to the reign of this king in chapters 36-39 the same pattern will be seen emerging. The hope of God’s people appears to rest on their king (Isa. 36) and he seems to affirm the hope placed in him (Isa. 37). But the king is fallible (Isa. 38) and his faithfulness not without blemish (Isa. 39). What the people needed to understand was that ‘the zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this’ (9:6; 37:32).

Isaiah 11:1-5 in its Present Literary Context II (11:6-16)

Even though the preceding wider literary context of Isa. 11:1-5 speaks of the timeframe of the Assyrian period up to and including the reign of Hezekiah and shows many affinities to him, the greatest difficulty in associating Hezekiah with the figure in 11:1-5 comes with relation to the subsequent verses (6-16). It is here that the dissonance with Hezekiah begins to show itself most clearly.

After the mention of the shoot (11:1), his endowment with the Spirit (11:2) and the faithfulness and righteousness of his reign (11:3-5) the reader is introduced to a somewhat peculiar view of the future. As mentioned above, quite a number of scholars see the paradisiacal picture presented in 11:6-9 directly relating to the announcement of the figure in 11:1-5 and his righteous reign.\(^{244}\) In its present form 11:6-9 appears to be the outflow and benefits of the reign of the Spirit anointed shoot

\(^{244}\) After mentioning a number of thematic intertextual references in Isa. 11:1-9 to earlier parts of the book Childs states, ‘from the perspective of the present literary unit, both in terms of position and function within the larger book, vv. 1-9 must be treated as an integral unit.’ See, Childs, Isaiah, 102.
from the root of Jesse. Mowinckel, Wildberger and Laato have suggested that these verses reflect ancient Near Eastern myths about a righteous king who will bring peace and harmony not only to the human world but to the animal world as well. Delitzsch and Young interpret these verses literally as a prediction of what will ultimately come about in the eschatological age.

It has been suggested that the animals of 11:6-8 represent the different spiritual conditions of humanity or the animals may be symbolic of particular nations - Assyria is described as a lion in 5:29 - reflecting a convention employed in Daniel 7-8. Blenkinsopp highlights a subtle parallel between 3-5 and 6-8 ‘consisting in the contrast between the strong and the weak in both the human and zoological realms.’ The parallel between the functioning of the human and animal realms is certainly an element of what is being described in these verses and the promise of an end to hurt and destruction on God’s holy mountain (11:9) would again fit well within the picture of Yahweh’s deliverance of his people from their enemies in Isa. 36-37. However, the language of 11:6-9 goes beyond the earthly referent to something of a figurative return to creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-31 and the reverse of Gen. 3:14-19).

This is indicated in a number of different ways. Animals that are natural enemies ‘stretch out, lie down together’ without fear (11:6, 7) a picture of the lack of enmity found in the garden. Natural carnivores such as the lion are pictured as herbivores (11:7) reflecting a return to the animals being given every plant for food (Gen. 1:30). Yahweh’s rule from his holy mountain will extend beyond Judah and

245 Seitz suggests that 11:6-9 ‘describes an almost mythological scene of natural harmony that is apparently to attend the rule of the king.’ See, Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 106.
248 Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, 383-387.
250 Blenkinsopp. Isaiah 1-39, 265. See also, Goldingay, Isaiah, 85.
252 As proposed by Smith, Isaiah 1-39, 273.
Jerusalem to encompass the whole earth (11:9, cf. 2:2; 4:5) something at the heart of God’s command to his image bearers in the creation account (Gen. 1:28). Also there is a close intertextual link between the language of these verses and that found in Isa. 65:25. The image of the wolf (בָּשָׂש) dwelling or grazing with the lamb (כּבָּק and הָלֶך) is pictured in both oracles (11:6; 65:25) as is the phrase ‘the lion shall eat straw like the ox’ (11:7; 65:25). There is a mention of serpents in both - cobra and adder 11:8 and serpent 65:25 - and the phrase ‘and dust shall be the serpent’s food’ (Isa. 65:25) draws on the imagery of Gen. 3:14.253 The phrase ‘they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain’ is picked up and reapplied in the later verses (11:9; 65:25).254

When the context in which Isa. 65:25 is set is examined, it can be clearly seen that it is an eschatological one, particularly with the use of the phrase ‘For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth’ in 65:17. Is there here an application of non-eschatological verses (11:6-9) into an eschatological context (65:25) or is chapter 65 simply picking up what is already there in chapter 11? The latter of these two points seems to be the most likely, with chapter 11 speaking in seed form what will be expanded upon and grow in chapter 65. This then brings up another question; if 11:6-9 is speaking of a return to a new created order that goes beyond any purely earthly referent, how does this chapter relate to an earthly king such as Hezekiah who would be unlikely to bring about such a future utopia? This is where the rhetorical hermeneutic is most evident in this chapter and becomes more blatant than in the earlier messianic oracles. It was clearly demonstrated above that the immediately preceding literary context of 9:7-10:34 speaks most directly to the coming of the Assyrian invasion that will reach to the heart of Jerusalem and yet be halted before it can completely destroy. The primary reason for their defeat will be Yahweh’s punishing of their pride but he will also use a Davidic descendant as an instrument for the people’s deliverance (11:1-5). This Davidic deliverer has already been spoken of in the book of Isaiah (7:14; 9:5-6) and in both cases the context of Assyrian invasion

253 Young, Hezekiah in History and Tradition, 168.
pointed most clearly to Hezekiah being the likely candidate for this position. All evidence up to the end of 11:5 would indicate that the reader is to assume that Hezekiah is also in mind here. However, a continued reading on in chapter 11 sees the focus of the oracle expanding and looking beyond the horizon of Hezekiah to a time of even greater peace. Hezekiah is certainly Yahweh’s anointed king and reading on in the book of Isaiah a picture of him as a faithful, righteous deliverer of his people is given. Nevertheless, Isaiah wants God’s people to realise that the deliverance they can receive from the hand of the Assyrians will not bring about their complete freedom. That is something that lies far ahead in Israel’s future. In the earlier messianic oracles in chapters 7 and 9 elements could be seen of this future perspective that looked beyond the immediate historical horizon but in chapter 11 this becomes even more prominent.

Chapter 11 can also be seen as not only a looking beyond the immediate context but beyond the Hezekiah narratives, with elements that will be picked up and developed in chapter 40ff. There are more connections between 11:1-16 with 40ff. than those that exist between 11:6-9 and 65:25. There is the Spirit coming upon the root of Jesse (11:2) that comes upon Yahweh’s servant (42:1; 61:1) and Israel (44:3; 59:21).\textsuperscript{255} The imagery of moral attributes and clothing in 11:5 is expanded upon in 59:17.\textsuperscript{256} The idea of nations coming to inquire of the root of Jesse who will receive glory (11:10) is later applied to Israel who has been given Yahweh’s glory and the nations will come to Israel for light (60:1-3). The language of lifting (extending) the hand, raising a signal and the return of Israel’s sons in 11:11-12 is also used in 49:22.\textsuperscript{257} Finally there is the new exodus theme that is introduced in 11:13-16\textsuperscript{258} where the reunited remnant of Ephraim and Judah will see their old enemies destroyed and depart from their exile\textsuperscript{259} as they did from Egypt, taking a highway

\textsuperscript{255} The context of Isa. 59:21 indicates that the giving of the Spirit to the people (those in Jacob who turn from their transgressions) is precipitated upon Yahweh providing them with a redeemer in Zion (59:20). There is a strong echo of the theological perspective of the early messianic prophecies.

\textsuperscript{256} In 11:5 righteousness will be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. In 59:17 righteousness will be his breastplate, salvation a helmet, garments of vengeance as his clothing and zeal will be as a cloak.


\textsuperscript{258} The new exodus theme is picked up and applied quite liberally in Deutero and Trito-Isaiah.

\textsuperscript{259} It could be assumed that the whole language of 11:10-16 is postexilic, see, Ronald Clements, Isaiah I-39 (NCB, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 125-126; Jacob Stromberg, ‘The “Root of Jesse” in Isaiah 11:10: Postexilic Judah, or Postexilic Davidic King?’ JBL 127, no. 4 (2008) 655-669. However, these
from Assyria (40:3; 43:16-17; 50:2; 62:10). The consistent reuse of imagery from all parts of 11:1-16 in the rest of the book of Isaiah, especially in Isa. 40-66, implies that these verses have been read as a whole from the earliest stages of the book’s development. If this is the case there is reason to believe that the author is applying the confusion hermeneutic of Isa. 6:9-10 through the use of the literary context surrounding 11:1-5. This can be laid out below:

A. Isa. 9:7-10:34 – Context: Judgment on Assyria’s Pride and Hope for Israel’s Remnant
B. Isa. 11:1-5 – Messianic Figure – Assumed Referent = Hezekiah
C. Isa. 11:6-9 – Context: Restoration of Creation
   B. Isa. 11:10 – Messianic Figure – Assumed Referent = Eschatological Unknown
   A. Isa. 11:11-16 – Context: Hope for Israel’s Remnant (Restoration, Reunification) and the Nations

From this outline it can be seen that the introduction of the new creation theme in 11:6-9 acts as the pivot that helps introduce some doubt about the referent of the figure described in 11:1-5. If chapter 11 had finished at verse 5 it would be perfectly logical to assume that Hezekiah was the referent of these verses (1-5) as suggested by the immediately preceding context and what has already been seen from the earlier messianic oracles. However, the new creation theme introduced in 11:6-9 which seems to flow from the Spirit anointed figure in the preceding verses causes the association with Hezekiah to seem less likely. What is seen in 11:10 is not a ‘careless’ misappropriation of 11:1 in order to clumsily join 11:1-9 to 11-16 but rather an amplified redrawing of the figure in 11:1 in order to further clarify his

verses have a similar symbolic nature to verses 6-9 in that some of the nations that are mentioned no longer pose a threat to Judah and others had ceased to be a nation (such as the Philistines) even at the earliest proposed time of Isaiah’s writing. It is unlikely that the unification of Israel was completely achieved after the exile and at that time there is no evidence of a widespread turning of the nations to seek after the counsel of a Davidic king. It is better to view these verses as describing events that may be fulfilled in part in some future historical horizon but cannot be located at any one specific time, thus demonstrating that a postexilic milieu for these verses is unnecessary. One could add to this the lack of any mention of Babylon, which would surely have been mentioned in an oracle of the people’s return from exile.

nature. In 11:1 the figure is described as a shoot from the stump of Jesse\textsuperscript{262} making it perfectly reasonable to assume that he will be a future Davidic king on the not too distant horizon. However, in 11:10 the figure is described as the root of Jesse, indicating that he is in some way the source of Jesse and not just a product of his lineage. Here is a figure so closely associated with the purposes and power of Yahweh that he appears to be before Jesse and not simply another heir to the throne of Jesse’s great son David.\textsuperscript{263}

The vision of the figure in 11:10 echoes the description of Solomon in 1 Kings\textsuperscript{264} as one of whom the nations would inquire and as 11:12-13 indicates this figure related to Jesse will reign over a unified kingdom that includes Ephraim and Judah. That no king on the immediate horizon could meet any of these requirements is one reason that has led a number of scholars to see 11:10 as a later interpolation into the text.\textsuperscript{265} Added to this is the use of the expression ‘on that day’ (נַחֲמָה מַעְלָה) which indicates an indeterminate future time and is often seen as an editorial device.\textsuperscript{266} However, as Young points out, ‘such cannot always be the case, or else virtually all forward-looking prophecies, which must necessarily employ an unspecified time referent, could be classified as later additions looking back from an exilic or post-exilic setting.’\textsuperscript{267} The major reason for relegating 11:10 to an editorial bridge is that many scholars have not been able to get over the supposed ‘inexactitude of the terminology’\textsuperscript{268} of the verse in relation to that employed in 11:1. There just does not seem to be any way to reconcile the difference between the ‘shoot from the

\textsuperscript{262} It is not altogether clear why the figure here is described as the root of Jesse rather than the root of David to be consistent with the terminology used in the previous chapters. The suggestion that the author wants us to see that this person is more than another descendant of David but rather a second David seems the most appropriate. See, Wegner, \textit{An Examination of Kingship in Isaiah 1-35}, 233; Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 55.

\textsuperscript{263} If this figure appears in some way supernatural owing to his close association with the power and presence of Yahweh this should not be a surprise to the reader who has taken seriously the designations given to the figures in 7:14 and 9:5. By the end of the book of Isaiah Yahweh cannot find a man to do his work of salvation so he brings it by his own arm (Isa. 63:5).

\textsuperscript{264} See especially 1 Kgs 4:34.


\textsuperscript{267} Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 166.

\textsuperscript{268} Young, \textit{Hezekiah in History and Tradition}, 166.
stump of Jesse’ (קשת האל) and the ‘root of Jesse’ (זרעיה). That is unless the use of the rhetorical confusion hermeneutic derived from 6:9-10 is at work. The first designation of the ‘shoot from the stump of Jesse’ could be used to speak of any future Davidic descendant - such as Hezekiah or Josiah - while the second designation of the ‘root of Jesse’ and what accompanies his reign seems to speak beyond any known referent on the contemporary or not too distant future historical scene. The options are to ignore the problem, call it a careless mistake, see it as an exilic or post-exilic editorial decision, or see it as an intentional rhetorical devise. The first two options do not really deal with the problem and the third option drives an unnecessary wedge into the literary context.

It has already been seen how the rhetorical confusion hermeneutic has been employed in the other early messianic oracles and here it comes across as much more explicit. The most likely referent for any oracle is someone on or near to the contemporary scene and the hope produced in such a figure as the one in 11:1 would be vested in someone close to the time indicated in the text. It was already discovered that the time markers in the preceding literary context relate to the Assyrian invasion\(^{269}\) and hope would therefore be vested in a descendant of Jesse (David) from this time period. To the reader this would at first appear to be Hezekiah. It would appear that he is being portrayed as the people’s hope and as noted previously Hezekiah did appear to partially fulfil certain, but not all, expectations. However, as could be seen with the figures in chapters 7 and 9 Hezekiah could not meet all the expectations adjoined to these figures. This was more apparent in 9:5-6 than it was in 7:14 and here is an even more explicit expression of this in 11:6-16. The promises of 11:6-9 and 11-16 could not be fulfilled by the reign of Hezekiah or any other contemporary Davidic king. The hope of the people needed to be focused on someone greater. This is made explicit in the change of emphasis brought about in 11:10. To those blinded and hardened by their rebellion against Yahweh (9:7-10:4) this would only bring further confusion. For the faithful this would be seen as a sign that God would continue to deliver a remnant of his people from all future persecution (6:13; 7:3; 9:1-2; 10:20-27; 11:11-16) even if the time of this deliverance was left open.

\(^{269}\) Sennacherib’s invasion of 701 BCE is the most likely time period from the intertextual relationship between the mention of Assyría’s pride at boasting in chapter 10 and that given fuller expression in chapters 36 and 37 as noted above.
ended. This is acted out in the Hezekiah narratives with his fulfilling the hopes of the nation in part by his faithfulness (Isa. 37) yet failing to bring about the lasting peace promised in the early messianic oracles but rather inadvertently precipitating an even greater threat (Isa. 39). All hope is not lost after chapter 39; rather the hope of the early oracles is immediately introduced in chapter 40ff. Having laid the groundwork of the literary context the oracle in 11:1-5 must be examined.
Chapter III. - The Intertextual Relationship of the Royal Narratives in Isaiah

The purpose of this chapter will be to employ the literary tool of intertextuality to examine the relationship between what have been called the royal narratives in the book of Isaiah. What is indicated by the term ‘royal narrative’ in Isaiah is either the narrative dealing with king Ahaz in chapter 7 or those that focus on Hezekiah in chapters 36-39. Here I will be expanding the scope of the term to include all the material in chapters 7-12. My justification for this lies in the fact that chapters 9 and 11 both make reference to the Davidic kingship^1^ and I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter the interconnectedness of these three chapters to their present literary context. The intention of examining the intertextual relationship of these chapters is to discover what type of literary and theological implications this might have for the designation of Hezekiah as a type of messianic figure; failing or otherwise.

*JSOT* 28.1 (2003) 33-54.} There are a number of works that have already examined the intertextual relationship of the royal narratives. These studies have applied different methodological approaches to the text, some synchronic\footnote{J. Groves, Actualization and Interpretation in the Old Testament (SBADS, 86; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); Edgar W. Conrad, ‘The Royal Narratives and the Structure of the Book of Isaiah,’ 
these studies tease out the ‘implications’ of the intertextual relationship of these texts in any significant depth. This is particularly evident with regard to the function of these chapters within the book of Isaiah as a whole and what it tells us about the person of Hezekiah and his role. An exception to this is found in the work of Edgar Conrad who applies Alter’s concept of biblical types-scenes⁵ and his own studies on ‘war oracles’⁶ to the royal narratives⁷ to see how these relate to the book of Isaiah as a whole and what this tells us about the figure of Hezekiah. I believe that his work makes significant strides toward seeing the royal narratives within the entirety of the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah’s Royal Narratives and the Biblical Type-Scene**

As noted above, Edgar Conrad in his studies on the royal narratives in Isaiah⁸ suggests that the use of the same fixed sequence and motifs in Isa. 7 and 36-39 is similar to the convention Robert Alter called the ‘type-scene’.⁹ That the application of the type-scene convention has been profitable in Old Testament studies is evident in the literature.¹⁰ According to Alter the type-scene, which he borrows from Homeric

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literature,\textsuperscript{11} derives from ‘an elaborate set of tacit agreements between artist and audience about the ordering of the artwork’ and this is ‘the enabling context in which the complex communication of art occurs.’\textsuperscript{12} The awareness of this type of literary convention at work helps to better understand the intertextual relationships in the text, take notice of repetitions, continuities and discontinuities and ‘pick up directional clues in the narrative work’ in order to ‘see what is innovative and what is deliberately traditional at each nexus of the artistic creation.’\textsuperscript{13} In Isaiah the most obvious use of this convention is in the narratives in chapter 7 and chapters 36-39 which follow a similar pattern or type-scene with regard to the prophet’s interactions with the king. The overall designation of the broader type-scene from which this derives can be called ‘an oracle of assurance’,\textsuperscript{14} ‘an oracle of salvation’\textsuperscript{15} or ‘a war oracle’.\textsuperscript{16} Owing to the setting of the narratives at a time of war or impending war I prefer to use the designation ‘war oracle’ for this particular type-scene. The common elements in this type-scene can be laid out below:

- A threat of war and destruction against the city and its people.
- The location of the announcing of the prophetic word is in a place where the city is vulnerable.
- The king reacts with fear to the threat.
- The prophet offers a ‘fear not’ oracle that calls the king to trust in Yahweh.
- A sign is offered as confirmation of the prophetic word.
- The threat is defeated but a greater threat lies on the horizon.

All of these conventional elements can be seen in the royal narratives in Isa. 7 and 36-39. It is where these elements coalesce and diverge that is most instructive to the reader. The concern of this study lies in the portrayal of King Hezekiah and therefore it will be important to consider what can be discovered about his function in the book


\textsuperscript{12} Alter, \textit{The Art of Biblical Narrative}, 55.

\textsuperscript{13} Alter, \textit{The Art of Biblical Narrative}, 55.


of Isaiah as a whole by how he is spoken of in the ‘war oracle’ type-scene and the wider intertextual parallels and allusions between the narratives that speak of Hezekiah and those that deal with the reign of his father Ahaz.

It will be necessary to systematically lay out all the possible associations, whether continuities or discontinuities, and examine how these demonstrate a strong link between the larger literary framework of the early messianic oracles and the narratives dealing with the reign of Hezekiah. The implications for the premise of the thesis will then be drawn.

1. - Isaiah 7 and 36-39: Intertextual Continuities

Below I will list the continuities that can be found between the texts of the royal narratives in sequence and make a brief comment as to the type of associations that can be drawn. At the end of the section I will gather this material together and suggest what kind of overall picture is being built up through these parallels. For the first textual parallel I will show my working out in full and then refer the reader to the appendix for the tables of Hebrew and English texts in full.
**Isa. 7:1 and 36:2** – An invading army is moving toward Jerusalem to attack it.

In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it.

The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field.

In both accounts a king or kings send an invading army to attack Jerusalem with the intention of overthrowing the king in residence there. The motif is the same in both cases and Jerusalem is sited as the exact location of the events. Both narratives open at what might be called a crisis point.

**Isa. 7:2 and 37: 1** – Fear grips the kings at the report of the invasion. See Figure 2.\(^{17}\)

Both Ahaz and Hezekiah receive the report of the impending invasion with fear. In chapter 7 Ahaz is pictured as having a trembling heart that shook like the trees of the

\(^{17}\) This and all subsequent figures can be found in Appendix 1.
forest when blown by the wind (יווהו). In chapter 37 Hezekiah tears his clothes, covers himself with sackcloth and goes into the house of Yahweh. In both chapters the people in Jerusalem react in the same manner as their king - in Isa. 7:2 the heart of the people shook and in 36:22 Hezekiah’s officials go to the king with their clothes torn. The parallels between the two passages here are thematic rather than explicitly linguistic.

**Isa. 7:3 and 36:2** – The mention of a specific location common to both narratives. See Figure 3.

In Isa. 7:3 Isaiah is told by Yahweh to take his son with him and meet Ahaz ‘at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller’s field’. It is in this strategic location that Isaiah is to give Ahaz a message of deliverance and a call to trust in Yahweh. In Isa. 36:2 it says that the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh to Hezekiah in Jerusalem and that he stood ‘by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller’s field’. An exact linguistic parallel is apparent in these texts as the location is given its full and extended title. In chapter 7 Isaiah is told to go to this location to speak to Ahaz because he knows that this is where Jerusalem would be most vulnerable to an attack. If Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel are going to attack, then this is the most likely place for them to begin – at Jerusalem’s weakest point. In chapter 36 the Assyrians are already on the move and have taken up their position against Hezekiah and the people at this same location. The mind of the reader of this later chapter is carried back to the earlier specific mention of this location and it is only natural to assume that there is some connection being drawn between these narratives and the kings in particular. Blenkinsopp believes that it is probable that the ‘parallelism between the two passages is conscious and deliberate’. 18

**Isa. 7:3 and 37:6, 21** – Isaiah has access to the king of Judah. See Figure 4.

In both royal narratives Isaiah has an advisory role to play to the king of Judah. Isaiah may well have exercised this role to at least four of the Judean kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah – Isa. 1:1) but it is only in these narratives that this is explicitly

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seen. In 7:3 Isaiah goes directly to the king in person, accompanied by his son and in 37:6, 21 he sends a message to Hezekiah.\textsuperscript{19} However, in Isa. 38:1 and 39:3 Isaiah also had direct access to king Hezekiah. The continuity of this motif in the royal narratives indicates that Isaiah had an integral role to play in the court life of the Judean kings and he would have been well placed to see how Yahweh’s plan for the nation was unfolding and in certain cases being recapitulated.

**Isa. 7:4-9 and 37:6-7** – The prophet gives a ‘do not fear’ oracle to the king for reassurance. See Figure 5.

Owing to the impending crisis that faces the king and Jerusalem in both narrative accounts, Yahweh calls his prophet to reassure the king that the plans of their enemies will be thwarted and that they will not succeed. The fulfilment of this oracle is not made dependent on the work of the king but assured because it is a proclamation from Yahweh himself. In both cases the same Hebrew phrase נָרַתְלָה is used and, as mentioned above, this is typical of the ‘war oracle’ of assurance given to kings in military threat.\textsuperscript{20} This phrase is only used three other times in Proto-Isaiah (8:12; 10:24; 35:4), once to Isaiah and twice to the people. In the case of 10:24 the use of ‘do not fear’ appears to be in the same context as its use in 37:6. The ‘do not fear’ oracle is used nine times in the later chapters of the book (40:9; 41:10,13, 14; 43:1,5; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4) where it is often assumed that a king is no longer in view.\textsuperscript{21}

**Isa. 7:4 and 30:15-16** – Quietness and trust are to be the mark of the king of Judah. See Figure 6.

This particular parallel is not drawn specifically from the Hezekiah narratives but there are good reasons to think that it may have an important role to play in the overall intertextual symmetry of the royal narratives. Blenkinsopp notes that ‘most commentators on chs. 28-31 favor the period 705-701 as the historical background for these arguments and counterarguments...’\textsuperscript{22} and Goldingay sees Isa. 30 as being tied

\textsuperscript{19} The reason for this difference will be explored below.

\textsuperscript{20} Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary, 298; Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 37.

\textsuperscript{21} This will be discussed further in chapter VI of this study.

\textsuperscript{22} Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 411. For an alternative view that sees the reign of Josiah as the historical background to these chapters see, John D. W. Watts, Isaiah 1-33, WBC Vol. 24 (USA: Word, 1985) 395.
to the words of Sennacherib through the Rabshakeh in 36-37.\textsuperscript{23} Isa. 30:15-16 is set against a call not to go down to Egypt for support against the attack of the Assyrians (30:1-7). In verse 15 the people are called to trust (נַפְשָׁם הָיָה) in the Holy One of Israel because they have been told that ‘Egypt’s help is worthless and empty’ (30:7). The emphasis on ‘trust’ in the Rabshakeh’s speech (36:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15) recalls 30:15\textsuperscript{24} and also explicitly decries the impotent help of Pharaoh, Egypt and their chariots and horsemen (36:6,9; 30:1-5). Therefore the most likely implied historical and literary setting for the oracle in chapter 30 is the reign of Hezekiah. In 7:4 Ahaz is told to ‘be careful, be quiet (שֵׁא), do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint’ and the people are told in 30:15 that ‘in returning\textsuperscript{25} and rest you shall be saved; in quietness (שֵׁא) and in trust shall be your strength.’ In both of these cases the response to the oracle is a negative one that shows that the essence of the proclamation falls on deaf ears (7:12; 30:16). If Hezekiah is associated with this oracle against looking to Egypt for assistance then it would be closely associated to his actions with regard to the Babylonians in chapter 39. The reason his name is hidden in chapter 30 may well be the desire of the author/redactor to leave the negative portrayal of Hezekiah for the ‘reveal’ in chapter 39.

\textbf{Isa. 7:10-16 and 37:30-32; 38:7-8, 22} – Both kings are given a sign as confirmation of the words of Yahweh. See Figure 7.

In both royal narratives Yahweh gives the king of Judah a sign to confirm the word that he has spoken with regard to his actions to protect them from the present crisis. In 7:11 Ahaz is told to ask for a sign, which he then refuses to do (7:12). Depending on one’s assessment of the sign given in 7:14 it can be taken as either natural or supernatural in orientation (which fits with the parameters of ‘deep as Sheol or high as heaven’ – 7:11). In 37:30-32 Hezekiah is given a similar affirmative sign that the Assyrian invaders will not succeed and there would be survivors in the land of Judah who will remain to bring new growth to the land. If 7:14 is viewed as a future but not miraculous sign then these two signs serve a similar purpose. Watts says of 37:30-32

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Williamson} Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 89.
\end{thebibliography}

\textsuperscript{23} It should be noted that the choice of ‘returning’ or ‘repentance’ in 30:15 could also be a parallel to the name of Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub (‘a remnant will return or repent’) in 7:3.
that a ‘sign is offered to support confidence that Yahweh will be faithful to his word. Unlike the sign in 38:7-8, it was not an aid to faith in that moment. Like the sign offered in 7:14 it allowed later generations to confirm Yahweh’s fulfilment of his word.\(^{26}\) A further strength to this contention is the mention of שאריהבו ‘a remnant’ in 37:32, having a possible connection with the name of the prophet’s son שאריהב ‘Shear-jashub’ in 7:3.\(^{27}\) However, if the sign in 7:14 is taken to be miraculous through the designation ‘virgin’ then the opposite of Watts’ contention turns out to be the case. The sign in 38:7-8 is quite clearly miraculous in nature with Yahweh causing the shadow cast by the declining sun to turn back ten steps on the dial of Ahaz. The connection between this sign and that given in 7:14 is enhanced by the mention of Ahaz himself. Whether 37:30-32 or 38:7-8 are taken as the closest affinity to the sign given in 7:14 or not, it is clear that a parallel is being drawn between the situations of these two kings. In all three cases of the giving of a sign in these narratives the surety of the outcome is found in the faithfulness of the one giving the sign. This will again be important when examining the material in Isa. 40-55.

**Isa. 7:14-25 and 36:1** – The fulfilment of the prediction of the coming Assyrian invasion. See Figure 8.

The sign given to Ahaz in 7:14 is expanded upon in the following verses up to verse 25 and describes what the conditions will be like at the coming of the Assyrian army to Judah.\(^{28}\) The atmosphere created in 7:14-25 is that of an impending siege with the Assyrians coming to settle in every corner of the land of Judah (7:19) and with cultivated vineyards becoming briers and thorns (7:23). In 36:1 it says that the king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. The literary fulfilment of this oracle in chapter 7 is to be found in the parallel in chapter 36 that embodies the full measure of this earlier prediction. If it is granted that 36:1 is the literary fulfilment of the oracle in 7:14-25 and that both narratives are associated with the ‘war oracle’ type-scene, then it is likely that the reader will find the next stage of development after Hezekiah in the chapters that follow his narrative that concludes in chapter 39. Just as Ahaz was given this prediction that Assyria would sweep into the


\(^{27}\) Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 43.

\(^{28}\) The Assyrians and the king of Assyria are explicitly mention in 7:17, 18 and 20.
land and the fulfilment comes in the Hezekiah narrative, so the prediction of the coming Babylonian invasion declared to Hezekiah in chapter 39 awaits not only an historical but also a literary fulfilment.29

**Isa. 7:13 and 37:35** – The house of David. See figure 9.

The sign given in 7:14 is not just given to Ahaz but is addressed to the ‘house of David’ as can be seen in verse 13. The sign can be seen as both positive and negative in connotation.30 The positive elements derived from the surrounding context are, the imminent destruction of the coalition that is threatening Judah (7:16) and the fact that there will be people left in the land even when the Assyrians invade (7:21-22). In 37:35 Yahweh will defend Jerusalem for his own sake and the sake of his ‘servant David’. Just as he had promised good to the house of David in the face of the threat in chapter 7 so Yahweh will defend the city against the threat of the enemy who has arisen because of the foolishness of that same household. God had made a covenant with David and it can be seen that this plays an important role in both the royal narratives and will again be important in the expansion of this type-scene in Isa. 40-55 (cf. Isa. 55:3). Also, Hezekiah’s prayer for the extension of his life in chapter 38 is heard by Yahweh who calls himself ‘the God of your father David’ (38:5). God’s faithfulness to his people and the kings of Judah in particular is grounded in his covenantal faithfulness.

**Isa. 7:16-20 and 39:6-7** – The announcement of a greater threat to Ahaz and Hezekiah (Assyria and Babylon). See Figure 10.

In both of these texts the prophet Isaiah announces to the kings of Judah that their foolishness will bring about a greater threat than the one that is most imminent. Ahaz is facing the threat of the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition but refuses the offer of a sign from Yahweh in 7:12 and is told that a greater threat will come into his land, that of the Assyrian army (7:16-20). Although chapter 39 is chronologically before chapters 36-37,31 the reader is made aware that the imminent contemporary threat facing Judah is the Assyrian invaders (38:6). When Hezekiah acts foolishly with regard to the Babylonian envoys (39:1-4) he is told of a future threat that will come from this same

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29 This hypothesis will be tested in chapter V of this study.
30 See the discussion on this in chapter II.
31 For a short discussion of chronological issues see the material in chapter V.
region (Babylon), which will bring some of his own sons into exile (39:6-7). If Ahaz’s refusal of a sign in 7:12 is precipitated by his desire to form an alliance with Assyria then this is a case of biological and literary capitulation in the Hezekiah narrative. Both kings are tempted to open the door to the emerging superpower of the time and it is those very same superpowers that will, in the end, turn around to try and destroy their kingdom.

1.1. - Isaiah 8 and 36-39: Intertextual Continuities

Isa. 8:6-8 and 36:1-2 – The coming of an Assyrian invasion that will flow through Judah up to the neck of Jerusalem. See Figure 11.

A prediction is made in 8:6-8 that the king of Assyria and all his glory will sweep through and overflow, like a great river, the channels and banks of Judah, reaching up to the ‘neck’. The Assyrians will fill the breadth of Immanuel’s land (8:8). The most obvious fulfilment of these words is in the opening verses of chapter 36. Hezekiah is now on the throne and Sennacherib, king of Assyria, has swept through Judah, coming against all its fortified cities (36:1). When the Rabshakeh is sent from Lachish to confront Hezekiah in Jerusalem with a great army, the picture of Assyria positioned at Judah’s neck becomes most vivid (36:2). When the verses from these two chapters of Isaiah are read together it makes the referent of the designation ‘Immanuel’ clearer. In this literary context the mention of ‘Immanuel’s land’ in 8:8 now becomes a reference to Hezekiah in 36:2 because the king of Assyria who comes against Judah (8:7 – Sennacherib in 36:1) is looking for Hezekiah, the ruler of the ‘land’. This affinity sets up and is substantiated by the parallels in the following verses of chapter 8.

Isa. 8:9 and 36:18-20; 37:11-13 – A taunt that no nation can stand against Assyria. See Figure 12.

The typical understanding of 8:9-10 is that these verses are words of encouragement delivered by Yahweh to his people against the backdrop of the great disaster just highlighted in the previous verses. These words are seen as either being addressed to the people or against the Assyrians (or both), but in either case it is a message of

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33 Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 117-118.
deliverance to those in Judah. This is a plausible reading and within the book of Isaiah such a deliverance does come to the people in Jerusalem (chapters 36-37) yet this is not the best reading of the material. In 8:6-8 there are words of judgement against Judah as well as the kings of the anti-Assyrian coalition. The reason for this judgement is found in Ahaz’s rejection of God’s offer of a sign of assurance in 7:12 and his own desire to make an alliance with the king of Assyria. Therefore it seems highly unlikely that the following verses of chapter 8, verses 9-10, should be treated as a switch in perspective and a sudden oracle of deliverance, especially when words of judgement continue in 8:14.35

It is better to take the words of 8:9-10 as the words of the king of Assyria who, when he reaches the neck of Judah, will taunt the people there for thinking they can stand against him and he proclaims that ‘God is with us’ (8:10). As Walton says, ‘the most logical party to be speaking the words of vv 9-10 is the Assyrian ruler, claiming – as Sennacherib later will – that the God of Israel is in actuality using the Assyrian armies as a tool of punishment against the Israelites.’36 Seeing then these verses as being spoken by the king of Assyria, parallels can be drawn with similar sentiments in chapters 36-37. The taunt in 8:9 about the peoples being shattered and the countries needing to listen and strap on their armour for war, is picked up in 36:18-20 where the Rabshakeh, speaking the words of the king of Assyria, reminds the people of Jerusalem that no nation or their gods has been able to stand against their might. Again, the taunt is picked up in 37:11-13 where the Rabshakeh reminds those in Jerusalem that the king of Assyria has devoted all the lands to destruction and that they also will face the same fate. In the previous parallel it was seen how Hezekiah embodied the use of the name Immanuel in 8:8 and here again in chapters 36-37 he is facing the taunts that first appeared in 8:9. The following parallels fill this out.

35 With regard to the change of perspective from judgement to deliverance John Walton states that, ‘One would certainly not expect such a caveat by Isaiah at this particular point in the text. The context would favor a continuation of statements of judgment against Judah, and I see nothing that would preclude this section being viewed as a speech by the arrogant Assyrians. John H. Walton, ‘Isa 7:14: What’s in a Name?’, *JETS* 30/3 (September 1987) 289-306 (fn. 297).
Isa. 8:10a and 36-14-18; 37:10 – A Taunt against taking counsel and heeding words. See Figure 13.

The taunt made in 8:10 is one against the power of words. The speaker says that taking counsel together will come to nothing and the people can speak a word but it will not stand. It is therefore ironic that in the Hezekiah narratives the Assyrian commander ‘mocks the people of the city for resting on the word of God, while himself fighting only with words’ and as Jang goes on to say he, ‘never focuses on military action in Jerusalem but only on persuasive speech.’ In both 36:14-18 and 37:10 the Rabshakeh mocks the people and warns them not to put their trust in the deceptive words of Hezekiah (36:14,15,16 & 18) or in his God (37:10). The point of the taunt in 8:10 is that taking counsel and speaking mere words will not deliver the people from the threat they are facing and this is the essence of the Assyrian taunts in chapters 36-37 where such futility is reiterated. The people in Jerusalem are told not to listen to the words of Hezekiah or his God but they are rather to ‘Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria’ (36:13). Again, the irony seeps from the text because the Assyrians presume that it is the God of Israel who is with them in their victories, as the following parallel will demonstrate.

Isa. 8:10b; 10:5-6 and 36:10 – God is with the Assyrians in conquering the nations. See Figure 14.

The short speech section 8:9-10 concludes with the simple yet profound statement, ‘for God is with us’ (8:10). If this is the Assyrian ruler speaking, as I have proposed, then this statement is both controversial and requires some explanation. A similar pronouncement comes from his mouth in 36:10 where he asks the rhetorical question ‘is it without Yahweh that I have come up against this land to destroy it? Yahweh said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it’. The words of 36:10 are simply the negative form of the words in 8:10b; in both cases the Assyrian ruler claims Yahweh’s support in his destructive campaign. Unlike some of the other parallels mentioned above, this parallel has a bridging text that gives substance to the Assyrian ruler’s claims. In 10:5-6 it says that Assyria will indeed be used by God as ‘the rod of my anger’ (10:5) and that they are sent and commanded by him to destroy a ‘godless

nation’ (10:6). The explanation for this is found in 10:7, something that will be explored below. What can be said at this point is that the bold pronouncement of the Assyria ruler in 8:10 has its full embodiment and narrative outworking in the words of 36:10.

1.2. - Isaiah 9 and 36-39: Intertextual continuities


The associations of these different references to Assyria was explored in detail in the previous chapter. Sufficed to say at this point that when these chapters are read holistically it can once again be seen how the Hezekiah narratives act as a type of partial literary fulfilment of the material first expressed in the messianic oracles.

Isa. 9:4 and 37:11 – The trampling warriors bringing destruction.

There is no explicit connection between the language used in 9:4 and 37:11 but both verses express a similar concept. In 9:4 there is mention of the trampling boot of the warrior - almost certainly Assyrian according to the context - a picture of the type of destruction that the Assyrians have brought into the land. In 37:11 the Rabshakeh reminds Hezekiah and the people in Jerusalem that they have heard what the kings of Assyria had done to all the lands, devoting them to destruction. The end of 9:4 expresses hope that this destruction will be brought to an end, and as mentioned above this end did come to the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem in 37:33-38.

Isa. 9:6 and 37:32 – The zeal of the LORD of hosts.

The last verse of the oracle in chapter 9 uses an expression that is only found in one other verse in the book of Isaiah. Chapter 9 depicts the coming of a child with marvellous appellatives whose throne (of David) will be established. The reason that the great promises made regarding this child and the preservation of the throne of David can be trusted is that ‘The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this’ (9:6). The context of this chapter’s predictions would be the time of the Assyrian invasion according to the surrounding literary context and the intertextual relationship between chapters 9 and 10 already explicated. When the Assyrian invasion is given a further detailed narrative in chapters 36-37 the same
expression appears at 37:32 ‘The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this’ (37:32). In both contexts it is the promise of deliverance and the establishing of the throne of David that is in view and the zeal of Yahweh is declared to be the driving force. That the phrase only appears in this exact form in these two verses invites the reader to make a connection between these events. If the child in 9:5 is meant to be the future monarch on the throne of David then there is a connection between the child mentioned and the reigning king on that throne in chapters 36-37 – Hezekiah.

**Isa. 9:6 and 37:35** – Yahweh upholds the Davidic kingship. See Figure 15.

In 9:6 it says that the child described in 9:5 will rule on the throne of David, which he will establish and uphold with justice and righteousness ‘from this time forth and forevermore.’ It is in this verse that it will be the zeal of Yahweh that will accomplish this. Just after the mention of the zeal of Yahweh in 37:32 it says that he will defend the city to save it for his own sake and ‘for the sake of my servant David’ (37:35). In both chapters the establishing, upholding and defending of the Davidic kingship is in view. It can be seen in chapter 9 who the child is whose throne will be established and upheld, but in chapter 37 the current occupier of the throne is Hezekiah. If these two narratives are read together it is reasonable to posit a connection between the two figures.

### 1.3. - Isaiah 10 and 36-39: Intertextual continuities

**Isa. 10:5-7 and 36:10** – The Assyrian king used by God to bring punishment as the rod of his anger. See Figure 16.

The parallels between these passages was explored in Part 4 of the previous chapter. However, it is important to note that the sharing of a strong thematic connection between these passages demonstrates that they ought to be read together.\(^{38}\)

**Isa. 10:8-11, 13-14 and 36:18-20; 37:10-13** – Assyria boasts against the gods of the nations. See Figure 17.

\(^{38}\) In reference to the function of the Assyrians in the plan of Yahweh for his people and the nations, Goldingay describes the Assyrian king as acting as the prophet’s ‘lackey’, unintentionally fulfilling his prophetic words. See, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 205-206.
In chapter 10 the Assyrians are being used by Yahweh as an instrument for his purposes, but they are ready to boast in their own achievements, even to the point of seeing Jerusalem and its ‘idols’ (gods) as no more of an obstacle than the other nations to fall before them (10:10-11). For this Yahweh will ‘punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes’ (10:12). The fulfilling of this pronouncement within the book of Isaiah is found at 37:36-38. The boast of the king of Assyria in 10:8-11, 13-14 highlights a number of nations and their idols that were unable to stand against the power of Assyria and that the same fate would come upon the inhabitants of Samaria and Jerusalem and their idols. In 36:18-20 and 37:10-13 the very same sentiments are expressed by the Rabshakeh on behalf of Sennacherib, with the mention of some of the same nations. Hamath (חַמָּת), Arpad (אֲרַפָּד) Samaria (סְמַרְיָה) and Jerusalem (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) are mentioned in 10:9-11, 36:19-20 and 37:13. Although it is possible to see different historical backgrounds behind the boasts in chapter 10 and chapters 36-37, from a holistic literary perspective it is most logical to take these boasts as speaking about the same events, one prophetically and the others narratively. As Blenkinsopp says about chapter 36 when the Rabshakeh enumerates the victories of the Assyrian king against other nations and their idols ‘the author could draw on an existing Isaian diatribe couched in much the same terms (10:8-11, 13-14).’ Reading with the grain of the book of Isaiah the oracles of the earlier chapter can be seen as being worked out and expressed in a more concrete form in the Hezekiah narratives. Whatever is happening in chapter 10 it should be read in conjunction with the story portrayed in the latter chapters.

Isa. 10:15-19 and 37:22-29 – Yahweh’s words of judgment against the arrogant Assyrian king. See Figure 18.

After the king of Assyria makes his boast in both 10:8-11, 13-14 and 36:18-20, 37:10-13 a word from Yahweh is given that lets the Assyrians know that he will judge them for their arrogance and for turning from him (10:15; 37:29). Although 10:15-19 and 37:22-29 do not share a significant amount of the same vocabulary the thoughts expressed in both are very much the same. In 10:15-19 its says that Assyria had boasted as an axe over the one who hews with it and like a saw and rod had magnified themselves against the one who wielded them. This would lead to their destruction at

39 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 473.
the hand of the one they had turned against. In 37:22-29 Assyria had mocked and reviled not only the virgin daughter of Zion but the Holy One of Israel (ךֹדֶשׁ), who was their Lord. It is Israel’s Holy One (ךֻּלְדוֹשׁ) who will become a flame to devour Assyria (10:17) because the boast of Assyria has gone too far. The whole tenor of the oracle expressed in chapter 10 is once again unfolded in the narrative events of these latter chapters of the book of Isaiah. That such close patterning is simply incidental is out of the question, leaving the reader to assume what the relationship is between these chapters. One possibility is that chapter 10 somehow foretold or informed the events of chapters 36-37 and a sign of this relationship is given in the words of 37:26. Yahweh says ‘Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass…’ Whether or not the earlier declarations being referred to here are those spoken in chapter 10, it is certainly a legitimate reading of the material in light of the intertextual parallels highlighted above.

**Isa. 10:24-27 and 37:29-38** – The destruction of the Assyrians at the hand of Yahweh. See Figure 19.

The people dwelling in Zion are given a word of encouragement in 10:24-27 when they are told that after using Assyria as his punishing rod Yahweh will direct his anger against Assyria for their destruction. The imagery of 10:26 is that of Yahweh of hosts wielding a whip against the Assyrians as he did against Midian at the rock of Oreb. The whip would be wielded against Assyria as they had wielded it against the nations and they were, therefore, being punished as they punished others. This is picked up in 37:29 with the mention of Assyria turning back by the way they came with Yahweh’s hook in their nose and bit in their mouth, much as the Assyrians had carried off the peoples of other nations. The imagery of the Assyrians departing and returning home after defeat is picked up and given expression in 37:37. At this point in Judah’s story they could certainly see the breaking of the yoke that the Assyrians had placed on their neck (10:27) knowing that they had been driven away from the gates of Jerusalem.
Isa. 10:33-34 and 37:24 – The imagery of trees being cut down. See Figure 20.

Here there is the use of tree imagery and the cutting down of forests expressed in both 10:33-34 and 37:24. In the first case 10:33-34 is Yahweh’s word that he will bring down the arrogant and proud Assyrians much like a forester chops down the thickets of the forest that have grown too tall. Yahweh again speaks in 37:24 but this time using the words of the Assyrians who believe that they will be the foresters, chopping down all who stand before them. Much of the same language is used in both accounts: height (מֵעָרָה), cut down (סָקָה and רָכַּת), forest (רָא הָעָר), and Lebanon (לֵבָנָון).

Again, one could propose a number of settings for the words of 10:33-34 but taking into account the intertextual parallels and the literary context it would seem most appropriate to see the embodiment of these words in their later reuse in the Hezekiah narrative. As mentioned in the previous chapter the literary connections between these two parts of the book of Isaiah sets the immediate context for what is said in the opening verses of chapter 11 (1-5). If chapter 10 looks for its initial literary fulfilment in the Hezekiah narratives and 11:1-5 carries on some of the horticultural imagery from chapter 10 then the best context for the outworking of what is said in the opening verses of chapter 11 would also be the Hezekiah narratives. That does not mean that everything in Isa. 11 must derive from the Assyrian/Hezekiah context (the previous chapter of the thesis demonstrated that it does not), but it does show that the close thematic affinities draw the reader to infer that an intentional connection is being made. The purpose of that connection is seldom, if at all, explored in the scholarly literature when it comes to its function within the narrative sweep of the whole book. The proposal here is that it functions as a rhetorical device, as outlined in chapter II of the thesis. This will be explored further below.

1.4. - Isaiah 11 and 36-39: Intertextual continuities

Isa. 11:1 and 36:1 – A land devastated and a stump remaining.

The imagery of 11:1 is that of a shoot coming forth from the stump of Jesse (the house of David) and a branch from his roots bearing fruit. The horticultural language in this verse picks up the language already used in the previous chapter, especially the verses directly preceding this one. It has been shown that the most logical narrative context for the words of the oracle in chapter 10 is the invasion of Judah and
Jerusalem by Sennacherib and the Assyrian army as recorded in chapters 36-37. Therefore, it would make sense that the same context is in view for the opening words of chapter 11 that naturally follow on from what has just been read. The image of a ‘stump’ would suggest the idea that the tree had been cut down, and the tree in question in 11:1 is that of Jesse (David’s household). In 7:13 the house of David stands for more than the royal household, it also acts as a broader representative designation for Judah as a whole. The stump then that has been cut down is Judah, represented by the Davidic household, and the context of such devastation would be the Assyrian invasion already spoken of in 8:8.\(^{40}\) Above I stated that 8:8 had its narrative embodiment in 36:1 and I believe this to be the case for 11:1 as well. In 36:1 Sennacherib king of Assyria is pictured as sitting at the gates of Jerusalem having come up against and taken all of Judah’s fortified cities. That such an invasion was as devastating as the cutting down of a tree to leave only a stump (Jerusalem) is clearly seen in the words of the Assyrian messenger in 37:11, 24. This parallel is important because it gives the clearest indication that the ‘shoot’ that springs forth from the stump of Jesse is connected to Hezekiah as he is mentioned in the opening verse of chapter 36 as the king reigning over the Davidic household. Although I have previously stated that not everything that is said of this shoot in chapter 11 finds its fullest expression in the person of king Hezekiah it certainly makes evident the idea that he has a connection with the shoot in the broader story unfolded in the book of Isaiah.

**Isa. 11:2-3 and 37:1-4, 14-20** – Hezekiah exemplifies the characteristics of the shoot. See Figure 21.

A number of characteristics are listed in 11:2-3 that will be found in the shoot and branch mentioned in verse 1. He will possess; wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. He will also refrain from judging by what his eyes see and what his ears hear. Here is someone who is not under the woe of 6:9-10. These characteristics are also seen in the person of Hezekiah in chapter 37 when he is told of the threatening words of the king of Assyria. Hezekiah does not react according to the fear of man but the fear of Yahweh whom he pictures (much

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like Isaiah in chapter 6) as ‘Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth’ (37:16). Unlike his father Ahaz who acted unwisely in departing from God’s counsel, Hezekiah acts with wisdom, understanding that he needs to bring the situation before God (37:14-15) and take counsel with the prophet when his officials seek counsel from him (37:1-4). Hezekiah is well aware of what his eyes see (the vast army at the gates of Jerusalem) and what his ears hear (the mocking of the Rabshakeh) and yet he does not base his decisions on these criteria. Instead he brings these before Yahweh and asks, ‘Incline your ear, O Yahweh, and hear; open your eyes, O Yahweh, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God’ (37:17). The shoot from the stump of Jesse in 11:1 was to be a man possessed of the characteristics listed above and it can be seen that Hezekiah embodied these to some degree.

**Isa. 11:5 and 38:3** – The righteousness and faithfulness of Hezekiah. See Figure 22.

The shoot and branch of 11:1 is described in 11:5 as possessing ‘righteousness’ as the belt of his waist and ‘faithfulness’ as the belt of his loins. Although the word righteousness is not used explicitly of Hezekiah in the narratives of 36-37 it is certainly there implicitly. He is described as the one who removed the high places and altars from Judah and Jerusalem (36:7) and told the people to trust that Yahweh would deliver them from the hand of the king of Assyria (36:15, 18), actions that would certainly mark him out as righteous. This along with the actions mentioned above show that Hezekiah was a man that led the nation with justice and righteousness (9:6). The other characteristic mentioned in 11:5 is that of ‘faithfulness’ something that is explicitly stated about Hezekiah in 38:3. Although this attribute comes from the mouth of Hezekiah himself when he proclaims to have ‘walked before you in faithfulness’ (38:3) he is not corrected by Yahweh or his prophet in the following verses and the plea for his life is answered, vindicating his words. Of course it could be pointed out that neither of these characteristics is very evident in Hezekiah’s actions in chapter 39 but that does not take away from the fact that he did possess these during his reign on the throne of David.
2. - Isaiah 7 and 36-39: Intertextual discontinuities

Not all of the intertextual parallels between the royal narratives can be said to be continuities of the same themes and motifs but some are seen in how they contrast these in the different oracles and narratives. Intertextual continuities may relate to two kings in different narratives receiving the same assurance of deliverance from a great enemy or acting in the same way. Intertextual discontinuities, on the other hand, may relate to two kings facing the same type of situation but acting in vastly different ways. This would then suggest that one of the two accounts is departing from the same biblical type-scene. Below I will list the intertextual discontinuities that can be found between Isa. 7 and 36-39.

**Isa. 7:1 and 36:1, 18-20** – Contrast between the weak Rezin and Pekah and the strong Sennacherib.

The picture given of Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel in chapter 7 is one of a formidable coalition that causes Ahaz and the people of Judah to shake with fear (7:2). However, in the previous verse it says these men had come up to Jerusalem to wage war against it ‘but could not mount an attack against it’ (7:1). Even though they were a force to be reckoned with, they are seen as somewhat weak and unable to get the job done and bring Jerusalem to its knees. This is in contrast to the opening verse of chapter 36 where ‘Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them’ (36:1). Add to this the words of the Rabshakeh in 36:18-20 where he warns the people of Jerusalem not to trust the words of Hezekiah because no god or nation had been able to deliver their land from the hand of the king of Assyria. As Conrad says, ‘In the literary world of the book, then, Sennacherib and Hezekiah are portrayed as more significant kings than Pekah, Rezin, and Ahaz.’

Ahaz and Hezekiah are facing similar threats in their respective accounts but the threat to Hezekiah is portrayed as much greater. Just as the threat is greater so is the portrayal of the king of Judah. Following Conrad’s use of the type-scene motif, the reader would expect that the next threat in the book would be greater than that of Assyria and that the king who would arise to deal with that threat

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Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 42. Conrad goes further in stating, ‘Because of the attention given to Sennacherib and Hezekiah, the Assyrian deliverance appears to be of greater importance than the deliverance from the alliance of the Syrian and Israelite kings.’ The development in portraying the threat and deliverance as greater will continue as one continues beyond the Hezekiah narratives. I will address this in a subsequent chapter.
would be even more faithful than Hezekiah. This will be the proposal of chapter VI of the thesis.

Isa. 7:2-3 and 37:1-2 – The different response to fear between Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Ahaz’s reaction to the threat of the coalition army is one of fear (7:2). Hezekiah’s reaction to a similar threat from Assyria is the same (37:1). However, the response of the kings to these situations is different. Ahaz does not seek the counsel of God’s prophet when he hears of the impending threat and waits for Isaiah to come to him with words of comfort (7:3). When offered a sign of confirmation that Yahweh will deliver Judah, Ahaz rejects it, assuming that his help will come from elsewhere (7:12). When Hezekiah hears the words of the Rabshakeh delivered to him by his officials he tore his clothes, went to the house of Yahweh and sent his officials to seek out the prophet Isaiah (37:1-2). Both kings face the same type of situation and yet their responses are different according to their level of faith. Hezekiah is portrayed as the better man and the anti-type of his father in the earlier narrative. However, Hezekiah will be shown to be lacking in faithfulness (chapter 39) and therefore, following the type-scene, a more faithful king will be anticipated in the later part of the book.

Isa. 7:12-13 and 37:30-32; 38:7-8, 22 – Ahaz’s refusal of a sign and Hezekiah’s acceptance.

It was mentioned above that there is continuity in the Ahaz and Hezekiah narratives in that both kings are given a sign that Yahweh will deliver them from the threat that is looming at the gates of Jerusalem. In much the same way that the kings reacted differently to the fearful situation before them so here the response to the giving of a sign is contrasted. In 7:11 the prophet encourages Ahaz to ask Yahweh for a sign of any degree of difficulty42 as a mark of assurance that his kingdom will be delivered.

42 Ackroyd believes that there is a linguistic link between the words of the prophet in 7:11 and those in 38:8. He says, ‘the wording of the offer of a sign in 7:11 – ‘go deep’ (h’mq) and ‘on high’ (lm’tlh) – could well be compared to the use of the roots ‘lh [[‘go up’]] and yrd [[‘go down’]] in 38:8, which also incorporates repeated use of the word m lwit [[‘steps’]] (5 times). See, Peter R. Ackroyd, ‘Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function,’ in W. C. Delsman and J. T. Nelis, et al (eds.) Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. J. P. M. van der Ploeg, O. P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979, AOAT 211 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982) 3-21 (17). Reprinted in Robert P. Gordon (ed.) The Place is Too Small: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study Vol. 5, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 478-494 (491).
Ahaz refuses the sign in an act of false piety, knowing that he already has other plans in place as a means of deliverance (7:12). The prophet’s reaction is one of anger against Ahaz and the house of David. In contrast to this Hezekiah is given two signs in two separate situations in 37:30-32 and 38:7-8 that we can presume from the narrative flow are gratefully accepted by the king (see especially 38:9-20). Unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah is not offered the opportunity to choose a sign and this is because Hezekiah had already approached Yahweh in faith and prayer during the Assyria crisis (37:16-20) and his personal crisis (38:2-3). Also unlike his father, Hezekiah is not afraid to ask for a sign when the need arises (38:22). Once again there are differing images of the kings of Judah; Ahaz the unfaithful man who will not accept the word of Yahweh and Hezekiah the man who depends upon it.

**Isa. 7:16-20 and 39:6-7** – The announcement of a greater threat to Ahaz and Hezekiah (Assyria and Babylon).

See the discussion above under the continuities section. At this point it is sufficient to say that the main contrast between the Ahaz and Hezekiah narratives lies in the fact that the announced threats will result in a different degree of destruction for the people of Judah. The announcement of the Assyrian threat suggests that the attack on Judah will culminate in the Assyrians sweeping through Judah reaching to the neck of the land (i.e. Jerusalem – 8:8). The fulfilment of the Assyria attack is recorded in 36:1 where the fortified cities have fallen but Jerusalem still stands under siege. However, the announcement of the coming Babylonian threat is declared to be worse in that some of Hezekiah’s own sons will be taken into exile and made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (39:7). Here the Babylonian attack is pictured as sweeping on through Jerusalem and ultimately affecting even the house of David. Part of the fulfilment and aftermath of this attack is described in a literary form in 40ff. It also highlights the expectation that a greater threat is still to come, one that will reach beyond Israel and Judah and come upon all nations.

2.1. - Isaiah 9 and 36-39: Intertextual discontinuities

**Isa. 9:4 and 37:18-19** – The reversal of the agents of burning.

Above it was demonstrated that the warriors spoken of in 9:4 were none other than the Assyrian army. There is an oracle of the final outcome of the Assyrian warriors once
they have set up their attack against Judah and Jerusalem. In 37:18-19 Hezekiah states in his prayer that the kings of Assyria had laid waste to nations and lands and ‘cast their gods into the fire’ (37:19). The fearful picture in Hezekiah’s mind was that of the Assyrians burning the gods of other nations, a practice they had no doubt become accustomed to. In an ironic twist it states in 9:4 that every boot of the trampling warrior and every garment rolled in blood ‘will be burned as fuel for the fire.’ Just as the Assyrians had disposed of the gods of the nations in the fire so the battle gear of their own warriors would suffer the same fate. In one case the Assyrians are imagined as victorious and in the other they are the victims of their own practices.

3. - The Relationship of the Intertextual Affinities in the Book of Isaiah to the Present Study

To discover whether or not Hezekiah is presented as a false or failing messiah figure in the book of Isaiah it was necessary to examine in detail those oracles in the early chapters of Isaiah that have most often been designated as ‘messianic’. This investigation was carried out in the previous chapter by looking at those messianic oracles in their present literary contexts and seeing how these might relate to king Hezekiah. However, it would be insufficient to simply show that Hezekiah had a possible connection or role in these oracles and this is why it was necessary to systematically lay out the intertextual affinities that arise between those oracles and the Hezekiah narratives. The quantity and clarity of these affinities demonstrates that these chapters need to be read together in order to understand the flow of the overall story of the book of Isaiah and one particular theological motif, that of the royal messianic deliverer. It is possible to show that some person other than Hezekiah is the referent for the messianic oracles but it would be almost impossible to suggest that Hezekiah was that referent if there was not any clear connection between the relevant messianic chapters and those that spoke of him. Not only are there intertextual connections between the messianic figures and their literary contexts and the person of Hezekiah and his context but there is warrant to see a progression in the royal figures in their respective narratives. In a time of crisis Ahaz is expected to trust in Yahweh and therefore deliver Judah from its enemies, but he fails to do so. Following this failure the messianic oracles speak of a figure who will come from the royal household (and root of Jesse) and fulfil the requirements left unmet by Ahaz. The intertextual connections between the settings and motifs in the Ahaz and Hezekiah
narratives indicate that Hezekiah acted differently to his father and appears to be a man ready to trust in Yahweh. The lack of trust and the pride Hezekiah exhibits in chapter 39 suggest that he is not altogether the deliverer that the people of Judah needed him to be. One would then expect that this type-scene would be repeated in chapter 40ff. and the true referent of the oracles would be revealed. That is what will be examined in the subsequent chapters of this study.
Chapter IV. - The Relationship of Isaiah 13-35 and Isaiah 36-39

To produce a truly holistic reading of Isa. 36-39 it will be important to see how chapters 13-35 set the scene for some of the literary and theological motifs that will be picked up in the Hezekiah narrative. The purpose will be to discover what relationship these chapters have to the themes already examined in this study and how they carry forward the thought concepts of earlier chapters.

Reading with the synchronic flow of these prophetic chapters it will be seen that they speak to both the earlier narrative chapters as well as to those that focus on the person of Hezekiah. Themes of faithfulness and an undivided commitment to and dependence on Yahweh are brought out clearly in these chapters. In this sense they act as a bridge between the royal narratives. The chapters between these narratives are not simply an interruption to the narrative flow but a highway on which various motifs can move forward. This will be seen when looking at the material in Isa. 13-35.

1. - The Literary Function of Isaiah 13-35 in the Book as a Whole

That these chapters have a theological and literary coherence - even if the events described relate to differing historical periods - has been demonstrated in the work of others.¹ It has been common to divide the larger section 13-35 between 13-27 and 28-39.² However, chapters 28-35 belong more to the oracular and visionary genre of the preceding chapters (13-27) than they do to the narrative world of chapters 37-39. Also, others may prefer to divide the oracles of the nations (13-23) from the so-called ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’ (24-27). However, Beuken notes the interconnected nature of 13-23 and 24-27 and states, ‘In my view, they present an indispensable forward

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movement in the sequence of actions as this continues into chs. 28-39. That is why I will be dealing with the larger section 13-35 as a unity, recognising that smaller literary sub-division exist.

As mentioned in chapter II, if Isa. 1-5 demonstrated why Yahweh had to bring a covenant lawsuit against his people and if chapter 6 was the judgment meted out against God’s people, then chapters 13-27 are the judgments that fall against those nations complicit in the sin of his people. Thus why certain nations are sentenced with total destruction (13:19-20) and others have the possibility of parole (23:15-18). The judgment against the nations is universalised in what is often referred to as the ‘Isaianic Apocalypse’ (24-27) and then returns to specific nations in a section thought to be related to Hezekiah’s reign (28-35). Isa. 13-35 can therefore be divided into three complementary sections:

1. Prosecution (oracles) of the nations (Isa. 13-23)
2. Prosecution of the whole earth (Isa. 24-27)
3. Judgment and Restoration of Israel (Isa. 28-35)

Each of these sections helps to advance the message and themes of chapters 1-12 and carries forward the motifs that will be picked up in the Hezekiah narratives. That the oracles against the nations are connected to the chapters preceding this section is seen in the affinities brought out in the opening words. Isa. 13:1 begins with the words ‘The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw’ and would draw

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4 Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 197.

5 The point is not to argue for the absolute unity of chapters 13-35 but to look at how the chapters between the recognised literary units 1-12 and 36-19 function together. For one possible view of literary coherence see, E. J. Young, ‘Isaiah 34 and its Position in the Prophecy,’ WTJ 27.2 (May 1965) 93-114 (100).

6 Isaiah 24-27 is often treated as a separate unit to the rest of the book but it also works as a bridge across which various theological motifs are carried. For a review of differing opinions with regard to the function of these chapters in the book see, D. G. Johnson, From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24-27 (JSOTSup, 61; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) 11-17; Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 311-324.

the reader back to the words of 2:1 ‘The word which Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.’ With the exception of the change in word order and the use of oracle (נַבּות) instead of word (רָבָה) and the use of the preposition (לָל) to introduce Judah and Jerusalem at 2:1, the rest of the vocabulary is identical. What is introduced here is both continuity and discontinuity by drawing the reader back to the material at the beginning of chapter 2.

The discontinuity is seen in the opening verses of chapter 2 (2:1-5) which present a positive picture of the mountain of the house of Yahweh being lifted up (2:2) and many peoples flowing to it to receive teaching and fair judgment which will enable peace (2:3-4) and the opening verses call on the house of Jacob to come and walk in the Yahweh’s light (2:5). This is in contrast to the presentation of Babylon in chapters 13 and 14 where the downfall of the nation and its king are made explicit. Elsewhere a contrast is drawn between the extent of the judgment brought against both nations. Zion will regain its habitation after judgment (1:7-8; 5:3, 6:11; 8:14; 10:24) while Babylon is said to lose its forever (13:19-20). In relation to later chapters, Beuken also contrasts ‘The Song of a City’ (Ch. 12) with ‘The Prophecy about a City’ (Ch.13) and ‘A Song on the Holy One of Israel’ (Ch. 12) with ‘A Dirge on the King Masque of Babylony’ (Ch.14).

The continuity is seen in the way 2:6ff. unfolds an indictment against the house of Jacob for its idolatry (2:8), demonstrating that they will face judgment similar to that faced by Babylon in later chapters. There is also a shared descriptive vocabulary with words such as ‘beauty’ (יָבוּש), ‘splendour and loftiness’ (יִפְרָע), and the mention of ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’ (סֹודָה גּוֹמוֹרָה) picked up with reference to Zion (1:9; 4:2-3) and Babylon (13:19-20). The connections with chapter 2 go beyond those seen with Babylon, as affinities are found with other parts of the oracles against the nations. The indictment against the house of Jacob is not just with regard to their idolatry but their relationship with the children of

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7 Beuken, ‘Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah,’ 115; Williamson, The Book Called Isaiah, 164. Similar words are also found in the superscription to Isaiah (1:1).
9 Beuken, ‘Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah,’ 116, 118.
foreigners like the Philistines (2:6; 14:28-32) the mention of silver and gold and treasures (2:7) making one think of Tyre (23:1-18 - this being made more explicit in 2:16 with the mention of the ships of Tarshish, also mentioned in 23:1) and reference to horses and chariots in 2:7 drawing the reader towards the oracle concerning Egypt in 19:1-15 via 31:1.

The exhortation against the proud who will be brought low 2:9-22 is similar to the words used of both Assyria (10:33; 14:25) and Babylon (13:11) in subsequent chapters. In fact it is this contrast between the concepts of ‘high’ and ‘low’ that demonstrates the natural flow of thought from chapters 1-12 into chapters 13-23.\(^\text{11}\) This theme is also picked up as a contrast with regard to kingship. Yahweh is praised for his pre-eminence and his name is exalted (12:4) while the king of Babylon is brought down from his loftiness to Sheol (14:11ff.). In fact even within chapter 14 the haughtiness of the king of Babylon being brought down (‘not to rise up’ – 14:21) is contrasted with Yahweh (who will rise up – 14:22).\(^\text{12}\) Kim demonstrates how the theme of the humiliation of the nations continues with Moab, Ethiopia and Egypt facing the same highs and lows.\(^\text{13}\) The holistic picture here is one that connects the early reading of the lawsuit against the house of Jacob with the oracles against the nations. It is as if, as mentioned above, the great prosecutor is now handing out sentence to the nations complicit in their rebellion. It is interesting to note that nothing is said in the Hezekiah narratives with regard to that king bringing benefit to these judged nations, whereas the servant will not only raise up the tribes of Jacob (49:6a) but will also bring light and salvation to the nations (42:6b; 49:6b) when he is ‘lifted up’ (52:13).

2. - Prosecution (oracles) of the nations (Isa. 13-23)

Below, I will examine how the material in this section relates to the Hezekiah narratives and advances the argument of the thesis.

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\(^\text{13}\) Kim, ‘Little Highs, Little Lows: Tracing Key Themes in Isaiah,’ 140. For more on this theme with regard to Moab see, Brian C. Jones, Howling Over Moab: Irony and Rhetoric in Isaiah 13-16 (SBLDS 157; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996).
Babylon (13:1-14:23)

Isaiah 13:1 opens with ‘an oracle concerning Babylon.’ What seems surprising is that the first oracle is against Babylon when one would expect the target to be the oft-mentioned Assyria. However, Assyria is not out of view as will be seen in the following oracle (14:24-27), and as Sweeney states, ‘…the summary-appraisal in 14:24-27 demonstrates that the pronouncement concerning Babylon in 13:1-14:23 fulfills Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Assyria.’\(^\text{14}\) Coupled with this is the idea that each of the nations mentioned in chapters 13-23 had been under Assyrian threat at some stage in their history and that they may all have been possible partners in an alliance with Judah against Assyria.\(^\text{15}\) Nevertheless, it is Babylon that has been chosen as the opening focus of these oracles against the nations and this may be doubly emphasised if these ten oracles in chapters 13-23 are divided into two sections of five. In that case Babylon would be the opening focus of both sections and prominently placed there by the author (redactor) for the reader’s attention.\(^\text{16}\) It may be that Babylon does not refer exclusively to the particular nation at that time but may also refer to all who stand in opposition to Yahweh and his dealings with his people.\(^\text{17}\) In fact Berges suggests that the king of Babylon in 14:4ff. is representative of all earthly rule opposed to the divine king.\(^\text{18}\)

What comes across from the oracle concerning Babylon is both a note of warning and of hope for Israel. The warning is that Babylon will end up like all other nations that oppose Yahweh and his plans for his people and they are not to be trusted any more than Assyria. The hope for Israel is that Yahweh will have compassion on them and choose to work with them again (14:1-3). Reading forward to the Hezekiah narrative in chapter 39 the great and resilient king of chapters 36-38 has chosen not to heed this warning (not unlike his father Ahaz) and acted more like the people of 6:9-


\(^{17}\) This use of Babylon as figure for all the enemies of God’s people is picked up in later literature. See especially Revelation 18 (cf. 14:8; 16:9; 17:5; 1 Peter 5:13).

than the hoped for messianic figure of 9:5-6 and 11:2. However, just as chapter 40 will strike a different note of hope against the darkness at the end of chapter 39, so the oracle concerning Babylon sets forth a better way for Israel.

**Assyria (14:24-27)**

The arrogant spirit that is symbolically represented by Babylon is given its first solid form in Assyria in 14:24-27. These verses have been dealt with as they relate to the earlier oracle against Assyria in chapter 10 and described how the defeat of Assyria as depicted in these chapters was set against the background of the messianic announcements in chapters 9 and 11, which in turn were connected to the promise of 7:14 in the context of Assyrian ascendancy. Childs calls these verses a ‘summary-appraisal’ of what is described in more detail in chapter 10. Yahweh states that he will ‘break the Assyrian in my land’ and that their yoke and burden shall depart from his people’s shoulders (14:25). This is his plan and purpose (24, 27) no less than the giving of a child to govern his people with righteousness and peace (9:6[7]). These are two aspects of one greater plan and the fall of Assyria as the context. The concrete representation of this fall is given expression in 37:33-38.

**Philistia (14:28-32)**

Isa. 14:28 gives an explicit time marker for the pronouncement of this oracle ‘In the year that King Ahaz died’ (14:28). At the important transition point between the end of one monarch’s reign (Ahaz) and the commencement of the sole reign of another (Hezekiah) Philistia is warned against rejoicing over the aforementioned destruction of Assyria (‘the rod that struck you is broken’ – 14:29). The reason they are not to rejoice is that another destructive force will arise against them, for ‘smoke comes out of the north’ (14:31) and the remnant of Philistia they will slay (14:30). Whatever the context of this oracle, the reader is reminded that ‘Yahweh has founded Zion’ and the afflicted of her people will find refuge there (14:32). Again, an oracle of warning and judgment against Zion’s enemies does not mean the same for Zion itself. As the

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20 It is important to note that the use of ‘Zion’ in Isa. 40-66 most often speaks of the eschatological Zion and not simply the historical Jerusalem. There may be indications that this oracle looks beyond the present time to a coming age and that is why this designation is employed. For the use of this designation see, P. Wilcox and D. Paton Williams, ‘The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,’ *JSOT* 42 (1988) 79-102 (81-85).
politics of the world is played out around God’s people they are inclined towards a different path.

Moab (15:1-16:14)

The lament at the beginning of the oracle (15:1-19) makes way for an appeal to be made to the ruler of the daughter of Zion (16:1-5). In this appeal to Jerusalem Moab looks to return under the shelter of the Davidic household which they had broken away from after the time of David’s reign. In 16:4b-5 Moab anticipates not only refuge from present suffering but a share under the rule of an ideal king. The language of 16:5 is reminiscent of language used to describe the messianic figure in the earlier oracles. The link is most closely established with the oracle in Isa. 9 and certain words are picked up and reapplied. The mention of the enemy who tramples underfoot (למב - 16:4b) vanishing from the land is an echo of the trampling warrior (יוס - 9:4) who will be destroyed. In both contexts it is the Assyrians who are being referred to in these statements. Also, at 16:5 there is the mention of a throne being established ( THRו למשה) on which will be seated one from the tent of David who judges, seeks justice (למשה) and is swift to do righteousness (ניב), the same language used of the figure in 9:5-6. Williamson notes 22 uses of ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ in close association either in poetic parallelism or linked closely to one another, such as by the conjunction ‘and’. It is interesting that of the three occurrences of these words in association with one another that they do not refer either to a group or Yahweh himself. In Isa. 9:6; 16:5, and 32:1 a case can be made either explicitly (9:6[7]; 16:5) or contextually (32:1) that the figure establishing justice and righteousness is a Davidic king and in the first instance the figure is contextually linked with Hezekiah.

Syria (Isa. 17:1-14)

The opening verses of Isa. 17 (1-11) deal with judgment against Syria and Israel but with the anticipation that it will lead to repentance and redemption. The following

verses 12-14 concern judgment against their enemy, Assyria. Although Assyria is not explicitly mentioned in these verses there is a conjunction with 9:8-10:4 and 10:5-34 and the water imagery of these verses is an expansion of that spoken of in 8:7.\footnote{Sweeney sees here the employment of ‘themes and language from mythological traditions concerning YHWH’s subduing the sea at creation to express the defeat of the nations.’ See, Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 256. However, it is much better to take the language of chapter 17 as building on and referring back to the matrix of texts surrounding the ‘Immanuel’ prophecy. Note the affinity of thought and themes between 17:1-14 with 7:16-8:8. This literary setting would be the most appropriate background for the oracle here.} Taking this into account, the fulfilment of the final verse (14) is found specifically in 37:36.\footnote{Vos sees the reference to ‘morning’ here and in the Psalter as an eschatological term that points to the great day of Yahweh. See, Geerhardus Vos, The Eschatology of the Old Testament (ed. James T. Dennison; New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2001) 141.} The use of ‘many peoples’ and the ‘roar of nations’ in verses 12 and 13 indicate that something more than Assyria is in view. Assyria is here representative of all who oppose God’s people. Again, there is a connection with the texts surrounding the messianic oracles and the Hezekiah narratives to come. At the same time something more is in view that cannot be exhausted in any one near future period.

**Cush (18:1-7)**

Childs believes that the setting for chapter 18 reflects ‘the period of Hezekiah’s attempt to enlist support from various smaller states in order to resist Assyrian aggression (31:1ff.).’\footnote{Childs, Isaiah, 138.} Isa. 14:28-32 related one rebellion against Assyria which Hezekiah did not support while he did participate in another rebellion involving Egypt which precipitated Sennacherib’s attack on Judah recorded in chapters 36-37 (cf. 36:6; 30:1-5). The message is loud and clear to Hezekiah and the nation that God will not get involved in this skirmish, but after quietly watching events unfold (18:3-4) before doing his pruning work (v. 5) he will leave whatever is left of both sides for the birds of prey (v. 6). The oracle then concludes with the vision of a great nation paying tribute to Yahweh of hosts at Mount Zion. This indicates the wider eschatological dimension of the oracle when read in conjunction with Isa. 2:2-5 (cf. Isa. 42:1-9 and the discussion of this passage in chapter VI).\footnote{Goldingay sees the servant as the one who brings about these eschatological promises. See, Goldingay, Isaiah, 240.}
Egypt (19:1-20:6)

In relation to the judgment meted out against Egypt in 19:1-25, Sweeney states ‘Isaiah’s oracle would have been designed to convince Hezekiah to stay out of the revolt since Egypt was an unstable and unreliable ally that would fear even tiny Judah.’ Like the nations in 2:2-4 Egypt will worship Yahweh and return to him (19:19-22) and their hope will not be in rebuilding their empire but in putting their trust in Yahweh. Once more there is a somewhat eschatological picture of what Egypt will be like ‘in that day’ (וְיהָ וְיָהֹ). They will also know the hope of a saviour and defender who will be sent to deliver them (19:20). The message to Hezekiah and the people of Judah is one that is repeated throughout the book of Isaiah - do not trust in earthly alliances but trust in Yahweh alone. Egypt will not be saved by her religion (19:1-4), the Nile (19:5-10) or her counsellors (19:11-15) but her salvation will be from Yahweh of hosts (19:19-25). Verses 23-25 invite further comparisons with 2:2-5 with the idea of Egypt and other nations coming together to worship Israel’s God with them. Again, here is a message that speaks to the historical context of Hezekiah’s reign in Judah but also to the breaking in of the eschatological ‘day’ when Yahweh of hosts will be worshiped by all nations. What will become apparent as the book unfolds is that the ultimate hope for Judah, and even nations like Egypt, is not found in the reigning king in Jerusalem (Hezekiah) but in the coming Davidic ruler (the servant – cf. Isa. 42:1-6; 49:1-7; 52:13-15).

Drawing attention to the link between Isaiah paradigmatic act in chapter 20 and the words spoken in 8:18 Conrad states, ‘Chapter 20 provides a medial point in the chronology, linking two type-scenes of kings being delivered from enemy invasion, but it also provides thematic ties so tightly woven that even the same vocabulary is used.’ Conrad sees chapter 20 as providing a pathway across which the theme of kingship can travel, linking the royal narratives. His combining of the death of kings with invading enemies and signs of what is to come acts to introduce the need for a new king at chapter 40. Isaiah was symbolising a present conflict to make a point

28 The words ‘In that day’ recur throughout chapter 19 (19:16, 18, 19, 23, 24). This may be an indication of the in breaking of the eschatological last days to the impending historical horizon.
about a future event. The message is the same as that which has been at the centre of the oracles against the nations, do not trust in man but in God. This dramatic living oracle and its meaning must have become more relevant to Hezekiah and the people when Assyria taunted them about their own reliance on Egypt (36:6-10).


Isa. 21:2-22:1-5 is a vision (יִנְהַנּוּ) that tells of the coming destruction of a nation, revealed in verse 9 as Babylon. Isaiah is communicating to the people of Judah that an alliance with Egypt was doomed to failure and so is relying on Babylon. Here was a warning that was not heeded by Hezekiah, as can be seen in chapter 39, and thus why Isaiah pronounces judgment at that point. It was foolishness for Judah to link fortunes with Egypt and the same goes for Babylon who will bring about both Judah’s end and their own. The reader can discern that anyone entering into a pact with Babylon was asking for trouble. There is also an echo of the fall of Babylon in this chapter with that which begins the pronouncement in chapter 40.

The vision of destruction is continued into chapter 22 with Jerusalem surrounded by armies in verses 2b-3 and 5-8a. The people are full of revelry (1-2a) while the prophet weeps (4a). Elam is again mentioned in verse 6 linking it with the reference in 11:11. Jerusalem’s faithlessness would bring this destruction upon them (22:8a, 14). The singular use of the first verb in 8b (you looked…to the weapons) likely refers to king Hezekiah whose reservoir between the two walls is mentioned in verse 11. If this is the case then it acts as a pre-emptive vision of what would come about in chapter 39. Hezekiah would demonstrate a different kind of faith in chapters 36-37 but that he is being referenced here is given support by the mention of Shebna and Eliakim in verses 15-25. These men were court officials under Hezekiah. Shebna is seen as faithless and is contrasted with Eliakim who is seen as his opposite in verses 16-23. However, Eliakim is also brought down with Shebna because of his

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31 For a proposal that this whole subsection (21:1-10) is actually set against the background of Hezekiah’s coalition with Merodach-baladan as recorded in 39:1-8 see, Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, NAC (Nashville, B & H Publishing Group, 2007) 369-370.

corrupt family in verses 24-25. These men are pictured differently during the period of Sennacherib’s invasion with Eliakim as chief minister and Shebna demoted to secretary.\(^{33}\) What is suggested here is that their wise decisions during Sennacherib’s invasion are not enough to carry them away from the disgrace and exile to come, mentioned in verses 17-18.

**Tyre (23:1-18)**

Chapter 23 is the last of the specific oracles of the nations. Here is described the fall (1-14) and rise (15-18) of Tyre.\(^{34}\) Just as Babylon, a symbol of military power, began the oracles of the nations, so Tyre, a symbol of economic wealth and commercial power, ends the section. God will destroy all the world’s so-called great nations, regardless of whether their power is derived by military strength or economic dominance. The judgment that comes against Tyre is not because of her wealth but because of her pride. A common theme in Isaiah (cf. 2:11-17) it (pride) will again become prominent in Yahweh’s judgment of Sennacherib and the Assyrians who tell the people of Jerusalem (chapters 36-37) not to trust in their God and is also seen in Hezekiah’s showing ‘everything’ to the envoys in chapter 39. All of the oracles of the nations, and this one is no exception, are showing God’s people that they must trust only in him with humble hearts and the wealth of the nations, depicted in Tyre’s rise, will come flowing to them (Isa. 2:2-3). Here a warning is anticipated against pride and self-sufficiency that will become the final ‘off’ note in the presentation of Hezekiah. Another king (servant) will need to be raised up (chapter 53) who will display the humility called for by Yahweh (66:2).\(^{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) For the view that this oracle is a satirical lament see, R. Lessing, ‘Satire in Isaiah’s Tyre Oracle,’ *JSOT* 28 (2003) 89-112.

\(^{35}\) See Chapter VII of this study for more on this supposition.
3. - Prosecution of the whole earth - The Isaiah Apocalypse (24:1-27:13)\textsuperscript{36}

The focus of these chapters is no longer specific nations but the whole world is brought into view.\textsuperscript{37} The style is somewhat different and dealing with eschatological material.\textsuperscript{38} The purpose seems to be to broaden the horizon beyond the immediate context to what is to come. These chapters continue the flow of the previous oracles and demonstrate the next stage of prophetic thinking.\textsuperscript{39} Chapter 24 introduces a judgment on the whole earth and this is followed by: a song (25:1-5), a feast (25:6-8), three more songs (25:9-12; 26; 27:1-11) and a summary statement (27:12-13).

The focus of chapter 24 is on the judgment that will come against the whole earth but it is interrupted by glory in verses 14-16 and again in the last verse (23). The NRSV has ‘Now the LORD is about to lay waste the earth’ in verse 1. The participle ריבש (lay waste/empty) is a participle of imminent (though undated) action.\textsuperscript{40} For Isaiah this final judgment could occur at any moment. The reason for the judgment is outlined in the people’s breaking the everlasting covenant (v. 5) and the language reminiscent of the flood in Gen. 7 is picked up in verses 1-3.\textsuperscript{41} Isaiah implies that God will punish the people of the earth for breaking the covenant he made at creation and

\textsuperscript{36} The association of these chapters with the apocalyptic genre can be traced back to Duhm. See, B. Duhm, \textit{Das Buch Jesaja}, HKAT (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1892) 172-194. Blenkinsopp notes that although some aspects of the apocalyptic genre are present in these chapters there is much within them that has nothing in common with apocalyptic. He goes on to say that there is ‘a growing consensus that this designation is misleading and should be abandoned.’ Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 346. With no alternative consensus as to a more appropriate designation for these chapters I will retain the traditional title.


\textsuperscript{39} Beuken highlights that there is an argument for the appropriateness of these oracles in the wider composition of Proto-Isaiah found in J. Kreuch, \textit{Unheil und Heil bei Jesaja: Studien zur Entstehung des Assur-Zyklus Jesaja 28-31}, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 130 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlaggesellschaft, 2011). See, Beuken, ‘Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah,’ 120.

\textsuperscript{40} Motyer, \textit{The Prophecy of Isaiah}, 197.

\textsuperscript{41} Vos, \textit{The Eschatology of the Old Testament}, 82. Hayes and Irvine see these verses as referring to Hezekiah and Judah’s revolt against Sargon in 705 BCE. See, Hayes and Irvine, \textit{Isaiah}, 295-299.
that was later ratified after the flood (Gen. 9:8-17). The judgment is fixed and will not be thwarted (17-22) but even in this cosmic reckoning there will be hope for a remnant (‘leftovers’) as seen in verses 14-16. Verse 23 also is a note of hope when God’s glory is displayed to all in this judgment and here there is an echo of Isa. 2:1-5. The reader is reminded in this chapter that the more specified talk of Judah and Jerusalem in the surrounding chapters fits within a much larger cosmic matrix and, therefore, anything said about an earthly Judean leader must have a cosmic counterpart. This would make sense of the eschatological language used in relation to the events surrounding the figure in the messianic oracles (9:6[7]; 11:6-16). The reader is being reminded that the fate of present nations is only a part of a much larger plan for the cosmos.

Isa. 25:6-8 describes a great feast. Here there is a focus on God’s faithfulness and greatness in the judgment he has cast and how he has lifted up the poor and needy (vv. 4-5). As the vision in 2:1-5 had both an inclusive and exclusive aspect so here is a vision that takes in all nations but which takes place exclusively on Mount Zion (6-8). This means that though God works his salvation from within his chosen people Israel they are not the exclusive ‘people’ mentioned in verse 8. The language of the feast is descriptive of a coming age were everything will be set in order and this imagery is picked up in chapters 55, 65 and 66. What is seen in this chapter is a widening of the salvific purposes of Yahweh hinted at in the earlier chapters of Isaiah. The messianic promises, though first offered to the house of David and Israel as a whole, would work within this matrix of a greater deliverance, in line with the Abrahamic covenant, that would affect many other nations. Hezekiah could only embody certain aspects of the messianic hope as it pertained to Israel but could not

42 Seitz, Isaiah 1-39, 180-181; Oswalt, Isaiah 1-39, 446. For the view that the covenant here referred to is the Mosaic covenant see, Kissane, Isaiah, 272; D. G. Johnson, From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24-27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) 27. For the view that both the Noahic and Mosaic covenants are in mind see, R. Chisholm, ‘The Everlasting Covenant ‘and the ‘City of Chaos’: Intentional Ambiguity and Irony in Isaiah 24,’ CTJ 6 (1993) 237-253; Wildberger, Isaiah 13-27, 479-480.
43 Beuken, ‘Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah,’ 121.
44 Sweeney tries to find a specific historical situation (the defeat of Babylon) as the background for 25:1-5. However, this seems to narrow the perimeters of the vision in a way not offered by the text. See, Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 333-337
hope to give expression to the wider eschatological hope imbedded in those oracles (9:5-6; 11:4-9) and the flow of the subsequent chapters. The hope for the nations will come to be associated with the servant figure described in Isa. 40-55 (61).

The song of chapter 26 begins in verse one and continues to the first verse of the next chapter. The song of praise and joy (1-6) speaks of two cities; one heavenly (the new Jerusalem/Zion), the other earthly (the lofty city – v. 5). The people of God depicted in these verses are not exclusively from Israel (the righteous nation – v. 2) but are made up of the oppressed and the poor of every nation. Here again is a theme demonstrating that the passages that focus specially on ethnic Israel are set within a larger cosmic matrix. The concluding verses of the chapter (26:20-27:1) pick up the theme of rescue using language that is similar to that used during the delivery from Egypt in the Exodus. This new exodus language will become even more prominent in Isa. 40-55 and in relation to the servant.46

As in the previous chapter, chapter 27 begins in the future (2-6) moves back to the present (7-11) and returns to the future (12-13). Israel’s central role in God’s universal plan is revealed in the imagery of the blossoming vine that takes root and fills the whole world with fruit (6). Verses 2-6 act as a reversal of the judgment proclaimed in the song of the vineyard in 5:1-7. Certain contrasts can be seen: Fruitless (ch 5) to fruitful (ch 27); no rain given (ch 5) to rain provided (ch 27); abandoned (ch 5) to guarded (ch 27); thorns and briers growing (ch 5) to no thorns and briers (ch 27); overrun (ch 5) to spread out (ch 27).47 The new song of the vineyard in chapter 27 demonstrates God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham.


47 Brueggemann, Isaiah 1-39, 212-213.
in that whereas once the world invaded the vineyard, here the vineyard will invade the world. Verses 7-11 bring the people back to the harsh realities of discipline in order that their sins might be atoned for. One of the major offences against Yahweh was the pagan altars in the land, that is why chastisement was required and it is these altars that Hezekiah would tear down. The Isaiah Apocalypse concludes with the image of the great threshing floor of the end where God’s people will be picked up and not burned with the chaff. There is also the trumpet sound as a call for the people to come and worship the God of Israel, not just ethnic Israel but all who put their trust in him for salvation (cf. Isa. 2:1-5). Worship concludes this section as worship will conclude the whole book (Isa. 66:23).

From the conclusion of the Isaiah Apocalypse it can be seen that this section is not some new or disconnected teaching. The close relationship between chapters 5 and 27 demonstrates that this will be the inevitable conclusion to the judgment pronounced in the earlier chapter. Between these chapters is the whole web of messianic promises, themes and motifs that make up this first block of the book (Isa. 1-12). Whatever can be said of the messianic oracles and their relation to the nearer implied context and the person of Hezekiah, they are to be read in light of the future salvation that is promised in these later chapters and include nations beyond ethnic Israel.

48 Hayes and Irvine take 27:9 as a reference to Hezekiah’s religious reforms. See, Hayes and Irvine, Isaiah, 295-299.
49 Beuken notes, ‘The vision asks for a sequel with regard to the acceptance of Yhwh’s reign in Zion, for recalcitrant, later miserable / Zion forms an obstacle. Consequently, the moral reform of this city becomes the encompassing theme of chs. 28-39.’ Beuken, ‘Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah,’ 121.
50 In light of these parallels Polaski’s argument that 27:10-11 does not refer to Israel is not particularly persuasive. See, Polaski, Authorizing an End, 297.
51 This is even more apparent in chapters 40-66 as Mckeown points out. See, James McKeown, Ruth, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015) 131.
4. - The Judgment and Restoration of Israel (Isa. 28-35)\(^{52}\)

In this concluding section of the larger unit of Isa. 13-35 it turns to an important period just before the events unfolded in the Hezekiah narratives. The looming threat in the background of these chapters is the Assyrians who have destroyed much of the land and the nations that surround Judah. The question that is being asked in these chapters is whether Judah and her king will rely on Egypt against the impending Assyrian threat or on Yahweh. In chapters 30 and 31 Isaiah makes clear the folly of depending on Egypt for help, following on from the material in chapters 18-20.\(^{53}\) This concluding section amplifies the message that permeated the oracles concerning the nations in 13-23, that all nations are destined to fall if their trust is placed in anyone other than Yahweh. Within the larger section 28-35 there are two sets of three ‘woe’ oracles directed against various parties. The first three relate to God’s people and the second three towards trusting other nations (Egypt and Assyria). Chapters 34 and 35 conclude with a judgment in the desert followed by redemption in the garden.

In 28:1-13 Ephraim is representative of the northern tribes of Israel (cf. 7:1-9; 11:13). The ‘woe’ pronounced in the first verse outlines the fall of Israel. As verses 14-22 focus on the leaders in Jerusalem (the south) an earlier oracle is being reapplied as a warning to the people of Judah facing the crisis of Sennacherib’s invasion. They should take note of these words in verses 1-13 against the northern kingdom and not follow their proud (1, 3) and self-destructive behaviour. The self-indulgent leaders of the north are represented as drunkards and revilers who are even joined by priests and prophets (7) and whose behaviour is without limit (8). Drunkenness is not the greatest sin of these leaders but their refusal to listen to the warnings God has given them (12b). Isaiah’s hardening oracle of 6:9-10 is being fulfilled in the leaders who hear but cannot understand.\(^{54}\) This is brought out most clearly in verses 9-10 where the leaders


\(^{54}\) Conrad sees this at work in chapter 29. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 131-133.
don’t wish to be treated as children and yet appear to hear Isaiah’s words as baby talk. Verse 10 is notoriously hard to translate and this might be for a reason. The repetition is striking:

This is often understood to be ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line’ (NRSV). While this might be a possible rendering it is more likely that this is simply the phonetic learning of the nursery. Isaiah’s words appear to the leaders as nothing more than infant speak and they cannot or will not take the warning onboard. Isaiah’s reply is that if they won’t listen to the warnings of Yahweh then they will be spoken to by those of foreign tongue (11) namely the Assyrian invaders. The curse of 6:9-10 will become an imminent reality for the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom must pay attention. However, there is hope in that the chains of the revilers (1-4) will become a crown of glory (5-6) for the remnant that recognise the rule of Yahweh. Just such a test for the southern kingdom will be seen in Isa. 30-31 and 36-39.

In 28:14-22 the leaders of the southern tribes, most clearly represented in Jerusalem, are not immune to the pride of the northern kingdom and in fact are marked as scoffers (14). Their hope rested in their covenant with death (Sheol, v. 15) most often assumed to be with Egypt and not in what Yahweh could do for them as

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56 Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 227-228. For an alternative interpretation that Isaiah is mocking the false prophets by using the pagan mumbles of necromancy see, Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 632-633.
he had before (21). Again, this section is shot through with hope in that Yahweh had a
rebuilding project in mind as he would ‘lay the foundation stone in Zion, a stone, a
tested stone’ (16). This picks up on the remnant theme already evident in this chapter.
Hezekiah is receiving the same warning from Yahweh that will be given to him by the
king of Assyria – do not rely on Egypt (cf. 36:6). The question for Hezekiah will be
whether he will turn to Assyria or depend on Yahweh who had delivered his people in
former times of crisis.

Isaiah concludes chapter 28 with a parable about a farmer who works in
various different ways according to the type of work he is undertaking. This is
representative of the strange work (21) of God that is not arbitrary or unplanned but
which varies according to his dealings with his people throughout history. Sometimes
he works to deliver his people; sometimes he chastens them through defeat and exile.
This will be the case with Hezekiah whom Yahweh will deliver from the hand of
Assyria (chp. 37) and death (chp. 38) but will hand over his sons to the Babylonians
for correction (chp. 39). Wisdom is a theme picked up in the parable (26, 29) as the
farmer is seen as wise for taking instruction from God. The question arises, will
Hezekiah be wise and receive counsel from God as the messianic figure of the early
chapters of Isaiah (cf. 9:5; 11:2-4) or will he fail to demonstrate the wisdom of such
a figure (cf. chp. 39)?

In chapter 29 Jerusalem is represented by the title Ariel and this is evident
from the reference to ‘the city were David encamped.’ That Jerusalem is spoken of is
further confirmed by the reference to Mount Zion (8). As a reference to Jerusalem this
is unique to Isaiah and unique to these verses. Ariel can mean either ‘Lion of God’, or
‘hero’ (2 Sam. 23:20) or ‘altar hearth’ (Ezk. 43:15-16). From the woe in verse 1
(and 15) the altar hearth becomes an image of judgment against a people whose
religious observances had become merely externalised. In becoming an altar hearth
Jerusalem would become a place of burning with fire – an allusion to a siege that
would come against Jerusalem when Yahweh encamped against them (3). The images
in verses 3-8 resonate with the events of Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem (cf.

58 This is not simply a speculative association but has been recognised by others. See, Goldingay, Old
59 See, Oswalt, Isaiah 1-39, 526.
Yahweh had already made clear in 10:5-6 that he would come against the people of his wrath through the instrument of Assyria (cf. 36:10) so it was Yahweh who would besiege Jerusalem. But just as he miraculously delivered Jerusalem in the Hezekiah narratives so here in 29:5-8 Yahweh will work for his people in a way they could not for themselves. The people had turned to false religion and had become blind, drunk and in a stupor (9-10). The prophets had closed their eyes and covered their heads and had lost all wisdom and understanding (10, 14). This vision had become sealed to God’s people which none could read or comprehend (11-12; cf. 8:16). The words of the curse in 6:9-10 were coming true in their midst and is spoken in the language filtered through the earlier messianic oracles. The people believe the reverse to be the case and believe that God cannot see them (15) and their pretensions and that their maker is the one without understanding (16). In spite of all this Yahweh will reverse the situation of his blind and deaf people (17-24) opening eyes and ears (18) and making the weak strong (19-21). It will be a time when Yahweh sanctifies Jacob his people and points beyond any outcome evident in the Hezekiah narratives.

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62 See, Routledge, ‘The Siege and Deliverance of the City of David in Isaiah 29:1-8,’ 182-183. Routledge ties the judgment oracle of 10:5ff to the warning given to Ahaz in 7:7-8:8 as has been proposed in an earlier chapter of this study.

63 It has been suggested that verse 5f. continues the picture of devastation and judgment rather than deliverance. See, J. Mauchline, Isaiah 1-39 (London: Torch Bible Paperbacks, 1962) 203. This seems improbable and stretches the actual language of the text to fit this interpretation. The transition from judgment in 1-4 to deliverance in 5f. may be seen through a semantic link in 29:4 and 38:14. In defeat the voices of the people will become like the voice of ghosts and the whisper/chirp (חָסְדִּית) of the dead (29:4). The same chirp is expressed in Hezekiah’s poem of deliverance as he recalls facing death in 38:14. Hezekiah is speaking of the moan of death that had come to him in the context of the deliverance promised by Yahweh. So the chirping of the dead in 29:4 would become faint in light of Yahweh’s deliverance of his people in 29:5ff. See, Smith, Isaiah 1-39, 496.

64 Beuken sees the response of the people in verses 11-12 as an expression of their indifference and refusal to listen to what God has proclaimed. See, Beuken, Isaiah II, 96.


66 For a close examination of the vocabulary that links this chapter to 6:9-10 via the ‘Immanuel’ oracle in chapters 7-8 see, Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 130-134.
The entreaties not to go down to Egypt in chapter 30 seem to be directed toward Hezekiah and Judah, who in an act of rebellion had sought help from Egypt. The people had sought protection from Egypt (2, 3) and placed their hope in the horses they intended to acquire from them (30:16; 31:1). The problem was that Egypt by this stage was not the force they once had been and had already failed to offer adequate support to other nations that rebelled against Assyria (20:1-6). The help of Egypt is summed up in verse 7 where it is called ‘worthless’ and ‘empty’ and she is described as ‘Rahab who sits still’. This taunt against the worthlessness of Egypt is picked up in the Hezekiah narratives when the Rabshakeh similarly taunts the help of Egypt and the horses they might supply (36:6-9). Again, the people refuse to hear Yahweh’s warnings (9) and their prophets are unable to see (10) exhibiting again the effects described in 6:9-10. They are described as rebellious children (9) who are returning to the land from which Yahweh had rescued them.

Even with all that has just been described, Yahweh is waiting to be gracious to his people (18) and to bless them. This requires the people to repent and turn back to him through discipline and suffering (20). They are to cast away their idols and return wholeheartedly to their God (22), something that was part of Hezekiah’s reforms (36:7). Although a partial unfolding of the promises seen in this chapter are found in the time of Hezekiah, it appears that the promises have not been fully exhausted (cf. v. 26).

The final ‘woe’ to those who go down to Egypt appears to be set against the backdrop of the impending threat of the Assyrian invaders and could point to a time just before Sennacherib swept through Judah and up to the neck of Jerusalem (8:8).

68 Conrad notes that this oracle recalls the denunciation of the Egyptian planners earlier in Isaiah’s vision in chapter 19. As well as acting as a warning to Hezekiah we can see the oracle looking back and filling out earlier material. Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 129.
69 Cf. Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 245; Beuken, Isaiah II, 156.
71 Conrad see a connection not only with 6:9-10 but also between the concept of sealing and writing a message that will be rejected or not comprehended (8:16-20; 30:8). Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 133-134, 153, 155.
73 Cf. the parallel between 30:31-33 and 37:36-38. Smith contra Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 249-250, believes that the language of 30:23-26 could not be said to have been fulfilled after the exile. He states that the ‘images about the sun and moon as well as divine healing point to an eschatological era.’ See, Smith, Isaiah 1-39, 520.
The warning is the same as in the previous chapter; trust in Egypt is futile.\(^\text{74}\) The past tenses in the opening verse indicate that this is a rhetorical attack against Israel’s previous attempts to trust in Egyptian help\(^\text{75}\) and not in the Holy One of Israel (1), they did not seek Yahweh who would have helped.\(^\text{76}\) Verse 2 suggests that the people believed themselves to be smarter than their God but he too is wise and will bring disaster on the evildoers among his people and the Egyptians who help them (3).\(^\text{77}\) Whom will the people trust – those who are only flesh or the Spirit of Yahweh? Again, the helper will stumble with those seeking help. Verses 4 and 5 hold out the possibility of true help from Yahweh who is pictured both as a lion and as birds; both images designed to show his protection. Words of promised assurance are piled up as Yahweh of hosts will be Jerusalem’s protector, deliverer and he will spare and rescue it. As can be seen from chapter 37, Hezekiah was willing to take this olive branch and humble himself before Yahweh rather than the king of Egypt.\(^\text{78}\)

The three concluding verses of chapter 31 point to the whole complex of the book and the heart of Isaiah’s teaching. The people who became blind and deaf as a retribution for their idolatry\(^\text{79}\) are now called to put away their idols of silver and gold and return to the one whom they have deeply revolted against (v. 6; cf. 2:7-8, 18, 20). The result of this humble repentance will be the fall of Assyria, but not by the sword of man. The most immediate literary outworking of these words is clearly seen in 37:36 and again hope is invested in Hezekiah who was willing to humble himself before Yahweh. However, the language of verses 8 and 9 goes beyond these events and points both to the final destruction of Assyria and to the time when Yahweh will

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\(^{74}\) Williamson describes the material in 30:1-5 and 31:1-3 as anti-Egyptian oracles. See, Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 89.

\(^{75}\) Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 531.

\(^{76}\) Routledge, ‘The Siege and Deliverance of the City of David in Isaiah 29:1-8,’ 185.

\(^{77}\) Contra Wildberger who sees the wicked and those who help them both referring to Egypt rather than Judah (wicked) and Egypt (those who help). See, Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 210-211.

\(^{78}\) Clements denies that verses 4 and 5 point to a promise from Yahweh that he will deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrian invaders in 701BCE. Verse 4 is viewed as hostile and verse 5 is seen as deriving from a redactor in the time of Josiah looking back on the deliverance. See, Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 256-257; Kissane, *Isaiah*, 342. However, these verses are of a piece and make sense of one another in their literary context. It also doesn’t take into account the fuller context which has already spoken of Jerusalem’s deliverance (8:8). Barre views both verses as negative, see, M. L. Barre, ‘Of Lions and Birds: A Note on Isaiah 31. 4-5,’ in P. R. Davies and D. J. A Clines (eds.) *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 55-59. For the view taken here that both images are positive see, Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 219.

\(^{79}\) Cf. 6:9-10 and the previous material on this point.
light a fire in Zion and a furnace in Jerusalem that will devour all enemies.\textsuperscript{80} Just as with the messianic oracles, the immediate connection with the person and period of Hezekiah does not exhaust the promises that stretch beyond that particular king and his reign.\textsuperscript{81}

The theme that is sounded throughout this entire section of Isaiah (chps. 13-35) of the futility of reliance on any other help but the help and rule of Yahweh is brought to the fore in chapters 32 and 33 that sound the trumpet for the righteous rule of a king (32:1) and finish with the revelation that this king is Yahweh (33:22). Although most of the material in these chapters speak more to an ideal picture that goes beyond present realities\textsuperscript{82} they are also very much rooted in the time of Sennacherib’s attack on Judah. This is seen in the reference to a destroyer who will be destroyed and the breaking of covenants (33:1, 7-8) as well as the mention of a people of obscure speech (33:19), which all point to the situation befalling Jerusalem during Hezekiah’s reign. The mention of tribute being weighed is canonically connected to Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13-16) who tried to pay off Assyria but failed. The only hope is to trust in Yahweh’s reign and that is what Hezekiah will do eventually.

In chapter 32 the mention of a king reigning in righteousness and princes ruling in Justice in 32:1 is reminiscent of the earlier messianic oracles in 9:5-6 and 11:1-9 and uses some of the same language: קדוש (righteousness), מושמ (justice), מלך (reign) and שלד (rule).\textsuperscript{83} In a previous chapter the literary and specifically intertextual relationship between those earlier messianic oracles and the Hezekiah narratives was demonstrated, and therefore between the messianic figure and Hezekiah. The reader could draw the conclusion that these figures speak of the same

\textsuperscript{80} Conrad believes that verses 8 and 9 are part of the material regarding Assyria that finds its fulfilment in the Hezekiah narratives. He doesn’t appear to deal with the finality of the language in verses 8 and 9 that is not fully realised in the Hezekiah narratives. Verse 8 mentions forced labour which is not apparent in the Hezekiah narratives as it would be in the later defeat of the empire. See, Conrad, \textit{Reading Isaiah}, 46.

\textsuperscript{81} Smith takes verse 7 as an eschatological prophecy in view of similar language used in 2:20 which contextually implies an eschatological milieu. See, Smith, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 535. However, Beuken takes a contrary view. See, Beuken, \textit{Isaiah II}, 204.

\textsuperscript{82} Cf. 32:1, 15-16; 33:5-6, 17-22.

person\textsuperscript{84} and therefore that Hezekiah himself must have some association with the figure here in chapter 32.\textsuperscript{85} The wider context which associates this material with the reign of Hezekiah supports this.\textsuperscript{86} However, just as it was concluded that the oracles in 32 and 33 are not exhausted against the background of the period of Hezekiah’s reign so neither is the figure in 32:1 to be fully embodied in the person of that particular king. The king in 32:1 does not exercise rule alone but is joined by princes. This contrasts with Isaiah’s prophecy to Hezekiah in 39:7 that some of his own sons (princes) will end up as eunuchs in the court of the Babylonians. Added to this is the fact that the one described here is revealed to be Yahweh himself in 33:22. The hearer/reader is being told that the true identity of this figure and the figure so closely associated with him in the messianic oracles looks beyond Hezekiah. Although contextually the figure in 32:1 and the earlier oracles is connected to Hezekiah on the intertextual level, he fails to meet the full demands of the role.

The mention of the failing harvest (10), briers and thorns (13a; cf. 5:6; 7:23) and Jerusalem as a joyless city (13b) all speak of Sennacherib’s invasion and harks back to the earlier prophecy of chapters 7 and 8. However, the mention of a forsaken palace and the deserted populace city speaks beyond this period. Assyria would only reach up to the neck (8:8) as far as Jerusalem but Babylon would come right into the city to clear it of treasure and people (39:6-7). Again, the very real delivery affected by Hezekiah’s trust (chs. 36-37) would not be the lasting hope the people needed. After the pain of the Babylonian exile Yahweh would pour out his Spirit from on high (32:15) and prosperity would return to Israel’s land and the marks of the messianic reign would prevail: righteousness, justice and peace (32:16-17).\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} i.e. 9:5-6; 11:1-9 and 32:1.
\textsuperscript{85} For a fuller survey of various identifications of the figure in 32:1 see, Paul D. Wegner, \textit{An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectations in Isaiah 1-33} (Lewistown: Mellon, 1992) 275-301. Wegner believes the prophecy was shaped to engender messianic ideas. For the reshaping of the material that makes the verse messianic see, Childs, \textit{Isaiah}, 239.
\textsuperscript{87} Childs, \textit{Isaiah}, 241.
The promise of chapter 33 is that the destroyer will be destroyed (1) and God’s people will pray to him to be their ‘arm’ and ‘salvation’ when they would be most vulnerable to siege attack – the morning (2). The most likely background against which this material makes sense would be Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah, particularly in verses 1-4. Assyria would begin its siege against Jerusalem but through the repentance of king and people, putting their trust in Yahweh (cf. 37:3-4, 14-15) Assyria would face the destruction they aimed to bring upon Jerusalem (37:36). The destroyer is also referred to as a traitor (33:1) and this may well be a reference to Sennacherib’s receiving the tribute offered by Hezekiah and yet still attacking Jerusalem (33:18) and makes sense of the envoys of peace weeping (33:7). Added to this is the mention of the people of obscure speech and stammering tongue (33:19) that marks a reversal of the situation in 28:11 where Assyria was the referent. The spoil spoken of in verse 4 then would be the spoil that the people of Judah would gather at the retreat of Sennacherib and his troops (37:37). Also, the fact that the traitor would himself be betrayed (33:1) will be seen to be the case in the Hezekiah narratives when Sennacherib is put to death by his own sons (37:38). However, there are indications in the text that more than the immediate horizon is in view. The language of verses 5-6 and 17-24 is too exalted to be sufficiently met in the time of Hezekiah. In fact these verses seem to parallel more closely the situation described in chapter 40ff. This speaks of a time beyond any immediate horizon when Yahweh is judge, lawgiver, king and saviour (33:22). Once again Hezekiah is seen as an important figure who exhibits much of the messianic promise. Nevertheless, the hope of the people must look beyond this king to one who is related in the closest terms to Yahweh.

Chapter 34 acts as both the natural consequence of Yahweh being judge and king (33:22) and acts as a conclusion to the material concerned with the nations right

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89 In fact Beukens sees an eschatological orientation to this chapter. See, Beuken, Isaiah II, 260.
90 However, Hayes and Irvine see a reference to Hezekiah in 33:17. See, Hayes and Irvine, Isaiah, 369.
92 The function of the deity often mirrored the function of the earthly king and both were closely associated. Cf. G. V. Smith, ‘The Concept of God/the gods as King in the Ancient Near East and the Bible,’ TrinJ 3 (1982) 18-38.
back to chapter 13. 93 The common theme of chapters 13-33 was that trust in other nations over trust in Yahweh was futile because all of those nations would ultimately perish. Now Yahweh is enraged against all the nations and furious against all their host (2). 94 In the end Yahweh was working to restore Zion against all her enemies and for the sake of his servant David (cf. 37:35), a covenant and a promise that was prominent in the early chapters of Isaiah and would come to the fore in subsequent chapters (55:3). Here is a reminder of the cosmic nature of God’s plan that is worked out across the history of redemption. 95

Chapter 35 catches up themes and motifs from the earlier chapters of Isaiah but also anticipates much in the material of chapters 40-66. 96 The melody of chapter 35 is one of return from exile and thus why it has often been seen to be the obvious precursor of chapter 40. 97 The wilderness (cf. 40:3) and dry land shall be glad and the desert rejoices and blossoms (1). The people who were weak and feeble and anxious of heart (3-4) will hear similar words to those given to kings Ahaz (7:4) and Hezekiah (37:6) to ‘be strong, fear not’ (4) because God will come and save them. This is another promise of the reversal of the curse in Isa. 6:9-10 (cf. 32:3-4) where the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped (v. 5). 98 The mention of the highway (8) is parallel to talk of a highway being made straight for God in the desert (40:3). When examining the earlier chapters of Isaiah intertextually it was shown that this return was built into the matrix of the coming of the messianic figure that would bring these blessings to the fore (cf. 6:13; 11:1). If one takes this chapter to relate to the same period as that described in chapter 40 (return from Babylonian exile) then Hezekiah would be excluded as an expression of this messianic figure owing to his own partial instrumentality in bringing about the exile to Babylon (39:6).

93 Williamson follows Vermeylen in finding a literary interdependence between chapters 13 and 34. For the details of these parallels see, Williamson, The Book Called Isaiah, 216-217. See also, J. Vermeylen, Du Prophete Isaaie a l’Apocalyptique Isaaie I-XXXV, 2 Vols. (Paris: Gabata, 1977-78).
94 The consistency of the message presented in 34-35 with the chapters that precede makes Hayes and Irvine’s conclusion that these chapters do not belong to the prophet and therefore to a later period unconvincing. See, Hayes and Irvine, Isaiah, 13.
95 Both Sweeney and Beuken see the message of the chapter functioning to teach about God’s future establishment of justice. See, Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 435, 441; Beuken, Isaiah II, 284.
96 Williamson, The Book Called Isaiah, 212-220.
97 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah I-39, 456. Beuken doesn’t see here a return from exile. See, Beuken, Isaiah II, 311.
However, there are good reasons to suggest that the return spoken of here is actually eschatological in nature.\textsuperscript{99} Verse 7 speaks of the highway as the way of holiness on which the unclean shall not pass over and where even fools shall not go astray. The ransomed of Yahweh who shall return with singing (10) will be those who have ‘everlasting’ joy and all sorrow and sighing shall flee from them. This promise has close affinities with 65:17-19 where a new heavens and new earth are created and where the people have joy and gladness and no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. These verses speak to those facing exile but speak much further into the eschatological age when all things will be made new.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has demonstrated a clear literary and theological connection between these chapters (13-35) and the Hezekiah narratives. There is an evident movement of the ideas expressed in the earlier messianic prophecies with certain theological motifs, not least messianic ideas, that have a trajectory toward a partial end point in the Hezekiah narratives. However, it has become evident that Isa. 13-35 also looks beyond Hezekiah to a situation that takes on a more cosmic and eschatological dimension. It has also become clear that 13-35 anticipates a number of themes that will be developed within 40-66 and this is exactly what would be expected if the premise of this thesis were correct. Two horizons are presented in this middle section of Isaiah – one immediate and one distant – both of which will see Yahweh working for the deliverance of his people.

\textsuperscript{99} This is often connected with the New Exodus motif and the restoration of Zion. See, Scott W. Hahn, \textit{Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfilment of God’s Saving Promises} (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009) 205.
Chapter V. - The Structure and Function of Isaiah 36-39: The Hezekiah Narratives

Having surveyed the messianic oracles of Isa. 7-11 and the intertextual parallels with the Hezekiah narratives it will be necessary to demonstrate from Isa. 36-39 that their structure and function bear out this relationship. Is there anything within the structure and function of the Hezekiah narrative to suggest they further confirm Hezekiah’s role as a failing messianic figure?

This chapter will set out to determine the answer to that question by surveying Isa. 36-39 in more detail while answering some subsidiary questions. Certain of these questions arise from the text itself while others have been drawn out of the vast literature on the structure and function of these narratives. The following questions will be considered; what role does Hezekiah play in these four chapters and does that role change in the different narratives? Connected to that question is whether or not the portrayal of Hezekiah moves toward that of idealization?


chronological relationship between chapters 36-37 and 38-39? Are the final words of Hezekiah in chapter 39:8 pious, selfish or simply ambiguous? What does this, then, tell the reader about the function of this chapter in the book of Isaiah as a whole? This chapter will dig into the distinct features of the Isaiah text that demonstrate its unique perspective on the character of Hezekiah. First, the final form of the Hebrew text will be discussed with regard to its theological and literary motifs.

1. - Isaiah 36-39: A Literary and Theological Reading

One of the major themes that is picked up and employed throughout the Hezekiah narratives is that of trust (יְתָמֵי). ‘Trust’ is also a unifying theme throughout the book of Isaiah as a whole, something that is less evident in other parts of the Old Testament. As Olley points out in his study on the use of ‘trust’ in the Hezekiah narratives, ‘In contrast to the scarcity in Genesis-Kings, there are in Isaiah 17 instances of יְתָמֵי outside of chapters 36-39.’

Beyond the specific use of the term יְתָמֵי, the theme of ‘trust’ is employed throughout Isaiah in such a way as to divide the faithful from the wicked. As Olley suggests, on the one side are the wicked and faithless who act in complacency and put

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6 Questions of textual provenance with regard to 2 Kgs 18-20 (2 Chron. 29-32) will not be the focus of the chapter.
7 A number of studies have considered the importance of the theme of trust, particularly in the Hezekiah narratives. See, John W. Olley, ‘Trust in the LORD’: Hezekiah, Kings and Isaiah,’ TynBull 50.1 (1999) 59-77; David Bostock, A Portrayal of Trust: The Theme of Faith in the Hezekiah Narratives, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006). For others who speak to the theme of trust in relation to wider considerations see, Childs, Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis, 85; Smelik, Converting the Past, 110; Groves, Actualization and Interpretation in the Old Testament, 197.
8 The exceptions to this would be found in some of the other prophetic writings and the Psalms, which with 52 instances has the largest percentage of occurrences in the Old Testament.
9 Olley, ‘Trust in the LORD’, 66. Olley’s work highlights the different categories of trust.
their trust in the military assistance of other nations, and on the other side are the faithful who trust in Yahweh for deliverance and rest.\textsuperscript{10} In its most basic form the division of trust is between the good and evil, with the good being those who place their trust in Yahweh and nothing else. This feeds into the identification of those who place their trust in Yahweh or someone/something else in Isa. 36-39. The predominant question that unites these four chapters could be that asked by the Rabshakeh in Isa. 36:5, ‘In whom do you now trust…?’ Although this question is asked of all the residents of Jerusalem it is aimed particularly at the Judean king, Hezekiah. In all four chapters he is presented with a test to trust Yahweh or someone else. In chapters 36-37 the test of his trust comes from Sennacherib, in chapter 38 the test comes from Hezekiah’s own mortality and in chapter 39 the test comes from Merodach-Baladan and his Babylonian envoys. Using this as the thematic marker of the unit 36-39 the following structure can be discerned:

The Test of Trust in Yahweh (36:1-39:8)

1. A First Test of Trust from Sennacherib (36:1-22)
   (1) Can Yahweh be Trusted? (36-10)
   (2) Can Yahweh Deliver? (36:11-21)
   (3) A Promise of Deliverance (36:22-37:7)

2. A Second Test of Trust from Sennacherib (37:8-13)
   (1) The Promise Confirmed and Delivered (37:14-38)

3. A Third Test of Trust from Mortality (38:1-22)
   (1) A Test of Mortality Announced (38:1-3)
   (2) A Promise of Deliverance (38:4-20)
   (3) The Promise Confirmed and Delivered (38:21-22)

4. A Fourth Test of Trust from Merodach-Baladan (39:1-8)
   (1) A Test of Pride (39:1)
   (2) The Test Failed (39:2-4)
   (3) A Promise of Judgment

\textsuperscript{10} Olley, ‘Trust in the LORD’, 66-69.
Each of the chapters in the Hezekiah narratives will be initially examined to see what they have to say about the various questions outlined above and also how certain themes are developed and worked out across this unit as it now stands.

**Isaiah 36 – A Trusting King – Hezekiah, Greater Than Ahaz**

Alongside the prominent theme of trust, the motifs of kingship and authority are also important to these chapters, which is demonstrated not only by the interplay between the discussions of Sennacherib, Hezekiah and Yahweh but also from the use of the title ‘king’, used four times in the first two verses. Isaiah lays out the initial conflict between two kings, the invading usurper Sennacherib, king of Assyria and the king on the defensive, Hezekiah. It should be noted that neither of these kings is present in this chapter until Hezekiah appears in verse 22 and his role at this point is only to be told of the threats from Sennacherib through his messenger. The location of the verbal conflict is very significant. The Rabshakeh stood ‘by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the washer’s field’ (36:2) which was the location of Isaiah’s dialogue with Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz (7:3). It also reminds the reader of the ‘sign’ and also of ‘birth’ (7:14) which, along with trust, are current themes in both narratives.\(^\text{11}\) The reader’s mind is immediately taken back to that earlier situation of threat and how Isaiah had found Ahaz to be a man of little faith towards Yahweh. The question then arises; will his son follow in his father’s footsteps or prove to be more faithful? The answer to that question will come in the following chapter.

That the situation Hezekiah and Jerusalem faced was a dire one and that the threat was truly significant can be seen by the words used in the opening verse. It describes how the king of Assyria had come up against the fortified cities of Judah and taken them. Verse 2 then states that Sennacherib’s messenger had been sent from Lachish, the last great line of defence, and a ‘great army’ accompanied him – something Hezekiah could no longer boast. The odds against Jerusalem here are far

\(^\text{11}\) In the Ahaz context the ‘sign’ of a ‘birth’ is a positive one in the midst of judgment. However, in the Hezekiah context the idea of birth is a negative one commensurate with the circumstances: ‘They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, ‘This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth’” (37:3 – ESV). Added to this is the mention of the ‘virgin’ daughter of Zion (37:22) which, with a different Hebrew word, picks up the earlier theme from Isaiah 7:14.
worse than those faced by Ahaz in chapter 7, and the threat more obviously imminent.12

Having said this, it is surprising that in spite of all the talk of the great Assyrian army, their significant cavalry (36:8), and their past victories (36:18-20), no physical engagement takes place between the warring armies. This, as some scholars have noted, is more of a ‘war of words’ than a war of great armies, and this will become significant. Hezekiah is represented by his ‘household manager,’ ‘secretary,’ and ‘recorder’ (36:3).13 Kingship returns to the fore in verse 4 when the Rabshakeh wants it conveyed to Hezekiah that the king of Assyria is ‘the great king’. By contemporary standards and current circumstances this appears to be obvious but the Assyrian king wants not only the Judean king but his subjects to know this is the case. The end of the verse picks up that significant word – ‘trust’.14 The word trust ‘מענה’ appears seven times15 in this chapter alone and is mentioned explicitly again in 37:10. Again, this was the crux of Ahaz’s situation (7:9) and he demonstrated that his trust was not in Yahweh (7:12-13) and meant that Isaiah called forth a sign and promise of one who would trust in him because he would bring the very presence of God (7:14). The question is asked of Hezekiah, as it had been asked implicitly of his father, ‘on what do you rest this trust of yours?’ (36:4). Unlike his father Ahaz, Hezekiah was not trusting in the Assyrian king, as his rebellion against him had made clear (36:5). The Rabshakeh then presses on a sore point with regard to Hezekiah’s faithfulness when he assumes that his trust is resting on Egypt (36:6). The Rabshakeh’s words sound a lot like the words of Yahweh through his prophet (30:1-5; 31:1-3) where trust in Egypt is clearly seen as folly and without hope (36:6-9). If the Rabshakeh’s words were a reminder of mistakes Hezekiah may have made in trying to make failing alliances, his words in verse 10 suggest that his present trust in Yahweh (36:7) is misplaced because surely he has helped to bring Assyria to this point. These words were not entirely untrue, for present events had been spoken of in former times (8:7-

13 Seitz sees the mention of Shebna and Asaph as secretary and recorder as their having scribal roles and therefore they may have had a hand in the composition of the present narrative. This is entirely possible but is more speculative than demanded by the text. See, Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 246.
14 For more on this theme in the Hezekiah narratives see the studies mentioned above but for a broader selection of texts see, Gordon C. I. Wong, *The Nature of Faith* (Unpublished PhD thesis; Cambridge University, 1995).
15 The verb form appears five times.
and Yahweh had said that he would wield Assyria as ‘the rod of his anger’ and would cause them to destroy many idols and carved images (10:5-11; 36:19-20a). The Rabshakeh was not privy to the knowledge that after they had fulfilled their function they would be punished for their own arrogance (10:12; 32:20b). The Assyrians had also been confused by Hezekiah’s actions in destroying the high places and altars in Judah as they assumed that these had been set up for Yahweh (36:7). Like David and Solomon before him, Hezekiah had centralized worship in Jerusalem, calling the people back to the temple and telling them that ‘you shall worship before this altar…’ (36:7). The Assyrians now embodied what had been spoken in former times because they could only perceive that their military victories were performed under their own strength (36:9) rather than by being a pawn in the hand of the great king (10:7).

In verses 11ff. the theme of speaking and hearing comes to the fore and continues into the following chapter. This was already evident in verses 1-10 where the Rabshakeh wants Hezekiah to hear the words of Sennacherib, even rhetorically picking up the prophet’s familiar mode of address and inverting it – ‘thus says the great king, the king of Assyria’ (36:4). He even anticipates the response and what Hezekiah might say (36:7) but knows that any such response will prove futile. Speaking and hearing take on a more prominent position and focus in verse 11 when Hezekiah’s officials ask the Rabshakeh to address them in Aramaic so that the populus does not hear the threats coming from the king of Assyria. The reader is again drawn back to the theme of seeing and hearing, blindness and deafness in the oracle given in chapter 6. There, Isaiah had been told to speak to the people and say ‘keep on hearing, but do not understand, keep on seeing, but do not perceive’ (6:9). The people facing the Assyrian crisis could see the threat before them and hear the words of the Rabshakeh but Hezekiah’s officials didn’t want them to understand. In chapter 6 these words had been given as a judicial curse upon the people’s idolatry, and lack of understanding and perception were the consequences. It had also been spoken that ‘by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue Yahweh will speak to this people’ (28:11). Yahweh had also promised ‘rest’ for his people ‘yet they would not hear’ (28:12). It was Yahweh who had brought the Assyrians to the neck of Judah (8:7-8) and therefore they needed to hear the words of the king of Assyria and his threats,

16 The words of the Rabshakeh in 36:7 could imply that Hezekiah had already sent such a response to Sennacherib at an earlier point and thus why he anticipates such a response again at this point.
something the Rabshakeh insists upon (36:12). The Rabshakeh then presents the people with a choice through his rhetorical flourish in 36:13-20. Will they hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria (36:13) or Hezekiah’s words which are deceptive because he cannot deliver the people (36:14)? The Rabshakeh understands that Hezekiah’s ultimate trust is in Yahweh and that he will try and convince his people that Yahweh will deliver them out of the hand of the king of Assyria (36:15). The Rabshakeh represents everything that is wrong with God’s own people in that he tries to steer the people away from trust in Yahweh, something their idolatry had already accomplished.

This is significant because even though the hardening curse of 6:9-10 was still in affect and the Rabshakeh’s words would only intensify that hardening, in Hezekiah the people had someone, not unlike the earlier proclaimed messianic figure, who would offer the people a different model of faith and trust – someone who would ‘hear’ and ‘see’ what Yahweh was doing. The people had been much like their former king Ahaz, but now they had a new representative on the Davidic throne who was not only a reformer against idolatry (36:7) but who was encouraging the people to put their trust in Yahweh (36:15, 18). Hezekiah was embodying the earlier promise of God’s assuring presence (7:14) and seeking to establish peace and justice for the people (9:6[7]; 11:5). This would explain how his officials could remain silent in the face of the Rabshakeh’s barrage of words, in accordance with Hezekiah’s command (36:21). Confronted by such an overwhelming threat it would be unlikely the people in Jerusalem could hold firm their trust in their king if they did not believe he had a close relationship with his God. This would be even more starkly seen in the besieged land around Jerusalem (7:20-25) and the rejection of the promise of a fruitful land from the king of Assyria (36:16-17). Hezekiah’s assurance rested on a promise already given by Yahweh that he would deliver the city from destruction (38:6) and Hezekiah became the antithesis of his father, Ahaz, who had been promised a similar deliverance, even though he would not trust this promise. God’s promise to protect ‘Immanuel’s land’ (8:8-10), which the Assyrians had swarmed, was being fulfilled.

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17 It is also significant that when Hezekiah calls Isaiah to pray he tells him to ‘…lift up prayer for the remnant that is left’ (37:4). In the early hardening curse of 6:9-10 there was also the promise of an remnant that would arise (6:13) and this indicates that Hezekiah is in some way fulfilling (in part) this aspect of the oracle.
Isaiah 37 – Hezekiah, An Embodiment of the Messianic Deliverance

Hezekiah’s response to the news of threat brought to him by his officials causes him to take the position of a humble supplicant as ‘he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of Yahweh’ (37:1), showing himself to be one to whom Yahweh would look (Isa. 66:2b). It will become evident that this type of response to grave news is in marked distinction to his reaction to such news in 39:8. Again, Hezekiah acts in contrast to his father, Ahaz, when he sends his officials and the senior priests to seek out the prophet Isaiah (37:2) rather than waiting for him to arrive (cf. 7:3). Hezekiah’s call for his officials to similarly dress themselves in sackcloth demonstrates that he sees his own position as the Davidic heir in solidarity with the whole nation; an act not called for by Ahaz, under a similar threat, which would cause the house of David to weary Yahweh (7:13). Hezekiah embodies the messianic spirit evident in the earlier chapters of Isaiah when he views the threats made against him as direct threats against Yahweh. In those earlier oracles the one spoken of would be called ‘God with us’ (7:14), ‘Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’ (9:5[6]). The peace this figure would secure would be achieved through the zeal of Yahweh (9:6[7]; cf. 37:32) and this would all be accomplished under the Spirit of Yahweh that would rest upon him (11:2). Hezekiah acts with similar concern for Yahweh’s glory in his words to Isaiah, seeing the Rabshakeh’s threats as mockery of the living God (37:4b) and his hope that Yahweh will ‘hear’ (עָשָׂן) (37:4a, 4c) and rebuke Assyria for these words (דָּמָר). Once again the focus rests on ‘words’ and ‘hearing’. Hezekiah by his words to Isaiah distances himself from the people earlier cursed because of their idolatry (6:9-10). They worshipped gods that could not ‘hear’ or ‘see’ and therefore would become like them. Their gods, like the gods of the nations, were impotent to help their worshippers and unable to deliver them in time of great distress (36:18-19). Hezekiah recognised that he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem had entered such a ‘day of distress’ (37:3) and yet he was confident that Yahweh, unlike the gods of the surrounding nations, could hear and therefore rebuke the Assyrians for their mockery.

Had Isaiah closed out the Hezekiah narratives at chapter 37 the reader would be forgiven for assuming that the curse of chapter 6 had been ended in the reign of Hezekiah. Here was a king whose trust was firmly in the God who hears (36:15; 37:4)
and not in the deaf idols (36:7). His request for prayer from the prophet is not solely for himself or the officials but ‘for the remnant that is left’ (37:4d). It was evident that cities lay wasted and without inhabitant (6:11; 36:1) and peoples had been removed far away (6:12). However, only a stump contained the holy seed (6:13; cf. 37:4d). The remnant motif was very important to the context surrounding the messianic oracles and here again it is picked up in the Hezekiah narratives. It appears in this chapter that the promise of deliverance, the coming of peace, and the end of the curse pronounced on God’s people (6:9-10) were occurring in this narrative.

Isaiah’s response to Hezekiah’s request bears all the marks of a positive affirmation of Hezekiah’s view of the situation. Hezekiah was aware that this was a time of distress, rebuke and disgrace (37:3) but instead of losing faith in Yahweh he believed that he would act for the sake of his own name and rebuke the Assyrians (37:4). Words are again important as Isaiah tells Hezekiah’s servants to bring Yahweh’s message to the king, and he counteracts the Rabshakeh’s ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria’ (36:4) with the familiar ‘Thus says Yahweh’ (37:6). The king is not to be afraid of the ‘words’ he has ‘heard’ because Yahweh has also ‘heard’ these ‘words’ of reviling against him and he will act (37:6-7). Like his father Ahaz, Hezekiah’s faith is tested as to whether he will be afraid or hold firm his faith in Yahweh’s word (7:7-9). The major test arises when Yahweh’s word (37:7) seems to be fulfilled in part (37:8-9) but the Assyrian king does not fall by the sword and sends further messengers to taunt Hezekiah (37:10). Though the Assyrian king had initially turned back on ‘hearing’ a rumour he returns to Hezekiah in order to once again try to undermine Yahweh’s word and remind him that no other king has been able to stand against the mighty kings of Assyria (37:11-13). If Hezekiah were like his father it would be expected at this point that he would capitulate. However, Hezekiah acts more like Yahweh’s anointed, not judging by what his eyes see or ears hear (11:3). He takes the letter of the messenger to the house of Yahweh and spreads it out before him (37:14). Hezekiah’s prayer reflects themes already evident up to this point in the book of Isaiah. There is the focus on hearing and seeing – ‘Incline your ear, O Yahweh, and hear; open your eyes, O Yahweh, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God’ (37:17). Unlike the gods of the nations, Yahweh is a God who hears and sees. Coupled with this theme is the theme of Yahweh’s superiority to the gods of the nations and Hezekiah recognises
that the Assyrian king’s words are true; they have laid waste to all the nations and lands and cast their gods into fire (37:18-19a). But Yahweh is different from these gods, for they are no gods and the work of men’s hands, simply wood and stone (37:19b).18 The God of Israel is Yahweh of hosts, enthroned above the cherubim, the only God and he rules over the kingdoms of the earth because he made both heaven and earth (37:16). Hezekiah takes his God at his word and with trust asks not only for their salvation but that Yahweh may be recognised by all the kingdoms of the earth as the only God (37:20). His prayer shows Hezekiah to be the personification of certain messianic ideals as he exercises wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in the fear of Yahweh and refused to judge the situation merely by what his eyes could see and his ears could hear (11:2-3).

Yahweh’s Answer and the Holistic Unity of Motifs in Isaiah

It is because of Hezekiah’s prayer that Yahweh responds to him via the words of the prophet Isaiah (37:21). Yahweh’s response picks up imagery, language and motifs that are spread across the whole book of Isaiah and acts like a poetic bridge across the different parts of the book.19 The linking themes justify a holistic reading but also open up a way of reading other themes across the seams of the book. One such theme is the concern with a deliverer, who in this case appears to be associated with Hezekiah. The poem of 37:22-29 is followed by the giving of a sign which was mentioned in a previous chapter as a connection with the material concerning Ahaz. It is striking that the outworking of the sign in 37:30-32 is similar in content to the wider context of the Immanuel sign, particularly the language of 7:23-25.

The attention of the reader is drawn to the congruence of the situations that prevail around the signs given in Isa. 7 and 37. However, even though the rest of this section, 37:31-32, can be seen to occur in the years following Sennacherib’s invasion - when the remnant of the house of Judah will rebuild - it can also be seen as a promise further off into the future when there would be a wider remnant from Judah (37:31) and a narrower remnant from Jerusalem going out of Mount Zion. This would

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18 The theme of Yahweh’s incomparability and superiority to the gods of the nations who are ‘no-gods’ is central to the flow of thought in Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40-55).
be the case in the Babylonian exile but also in subsequent years. The final sentence of verse 32 connects back to the exact phrase used in the promise of a Davidic ruler who would bring peace, justice and righteousness. As mentioned before, although Hezekiah may seem appropriate on a first reading, it is difficult to see him embodying all the promises of the figure in chapter 9.

The deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian king is seen to be the work of Yahweh who will not let the siege take place (37:33) but will send Sennacherib and his army back the way they came (37:34). Yahweh will defend the city (37:35a) and he will do so, not only for his own sake but also for the sake of his servant David (37:35b). God’s covenant promise to David and his household will stand and is of paramount significance for the deliverance of the people. Hezekiah is the present occupier of the Davidic throne but, unlike the promise of deliverance made in the following chapter that was in direct response to Hezekiah’s prayer and piety, the promise of deliverance stands against the broader promise of the longevity of David’s line.

The outworking of Assyria’s defeat is described in 37:36-38. It is the angel of Yahweh who strikes down the Assyrian army (37:36) and shows that it was Yahweh’s direct intervention that brought about his people’s deliverance. This is also the case with the destruction of Babylon when Yahweh would stir up the Medes against them (13:17-18; 21:2-3). In both contexts Yahweh’s work would take place alongside a promise of restoration for a remnant, lead by an anointed figure - Hezekiah (Assyria - 37:32) and Cyrus (Babylon - 44:28-45:7). Taking in the wider concern of the book of Isaiah – sin and idolatry – it would not be surprising to find another anointed figure restoring the people (42:1; 52:13-53:12). If the deliverance from sin is the greatest concern of the book, and deliverance from human armies less so, then the deliverances involving Hezekiah and Cyrus act as types of a much greater deliverance to come. Hezekiah is tied closely to the early messianic figure through the use of similar language and Cyrus is, in some ways, tied to the servant figure. But both of these men fail to embody the fullness of the promises surrounding these figures. As in the Exodus, which will become an important theme in the following chapters of Isaiah, Yahweh will provide a way for his own people to be delivered from a similar

20 This will be explored further in chapter VI.
destruction (52:13-53:12) and this promise will encompass many nations beyond Israel (52:15).

Isaiah 38 – Hezekiah’s Sickness and the First Signs of Weakness

This chapter shares a number of the themes evident in the previous narratives but it will show a different aspect to the character of Hezekiah. Hezekiah is portrayed as strong and resolute in the face of threat in the previous chapters but here he is a man who breaks down at the knowledge of his own impending death. Here are the first signs of a man whose primary concern may not be for the people but for himself. This chapter does not have the same strong presentation of the idealization of Hezekiah. The time period at the beginning of chapter 38 is inconclusive as it begins with ‘In those days’ (בְּכָל מֵעַד בָּבֹל), which could indicate a period either before or after the events just recorded. Later in the chapter it becomes evident that these events precede those in the previous two chapters (36-37 – see, 38:6) but the flow of these chapters is maintained by starting with that connecting phrase. Even though the material of these events happened before those of the previous narrative the material should be read in its present order. The reason for this will become evident when the structure and function of these chapters is considered as a whole.

As in the previous chapter the role of the prophet, as God’s spokesman, is important in the narrative as his full title is given in verse 1 (cf. 37:2, 21). The mention of the prophet with his full designation is an indication that this chapter ought to be read in conjunction with the previous chapters. This is not just an isolated event cobbled together with three other narratives but carries on the theme of a great threat to the Davidic throne, only this time on the personal level. As Isaiah approaches Hezekiah with the tragic news that, ‘you shall die, you shall not live’, the reader is aware of a deeper tragedy in that this was the faithful king who had stood firm in faith against the Assyrians in the previous chapters and who had been delivered by Yahweh himself. Oswalt goes further in stating, ‘Is it not possible that he wished to make plain to all those who were adulating Hezekiah as the promised

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21 Blenkinsopp calls it ‘a vague temporal indication’. See, Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 484.
23 It could be suggested that if Hezekiah had no progeny at this time the threat to his life would be a serious threat to the Davidic throne. For this supposition see, Oswalt, Isaiah 1-39, 676.
Messiah that this was not the case?" Would the king be delivered from the Assyrian threat, only to be cut off as a result of sickness mid life? Just as he had done in response to the mocking and grave threats from the Assyrian king, Hezekiah takes this disaster before Yahweh in prayer. There is a marked distinction in the reasoning that stands behind the prayers of both chapters. In the previous chapter (37:14-20) Hezekiah’s prayer focuses on how Sennacherib had sent his messengers to mock Yahweh and asks that he respond for his own sake as it is his name that is being profaned. However, here (38:2) Hezekiah’s prayer inevitably concerns himself and he asks that Yahweh would respond favourably to his walking before him in faithfulness, with a whole heart, doing what is good in his sight. The focus is not on how this would affect Yahweh’s glory but about his own life. He sees this as a much greater threat than Assyria and this is seen in his weeping bitterly in response to his own prayer. Though the reader would be forgiven for thinking that Hezekiah’s response was not as positive a response as he had made in the face of the Assyrian threat, he still receives a positive answer from Yahweh (38:5-6). Yahweh has heard his heartfelt cry and grants him fifteen years extra. The mention of David (38:5) is a strong reminder to the reader that Yahweh will act in response to his anointed one and he is again acting for the sake of his covenant with David (cf. 37:35). Coupled with the promise of an extension of fifteen years is the promise of deliverance from the hand of the Assyrian king (38:6), which also opens up questions of chronology and the possible motivation behind putting this chapter after the events promised in 38:6 are unfolded in chapters 36-37. That the same events are spoken of is evidenced by the promise that Yahweh himself will deliver the city. Again, a sign is given to the king just as had been given to Ahaz in 7:14ff. and to Hezekiah in 37:30-32. The language (38:7) is reminiscent of that spoken to Ahaz in the earlier narrative and the sign is also miraculous (38:8) in nature. The appearance of Ahaz’s name is a marker that draws the reader back to the earlier narrative along with the mention of the same location in both longer narratives taken together (cf. 36:2; 7:3). Hezekiah, unlike his father, is aware that his part in this ‘deliverance’ is to simply trust.

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25 That Hezekiah would seek a sign as confirmation of his faith is different from the picture of him at the end of the previous chapter (37:14-20) and indicates that the universal idealization theory applied to Hezekiah in all four chapters (36-39) is called into question. For a challenge to the idea of universal idealization see, Childs, *Isaiah*, 282. It may also be questioned whether Hezekiah’s own claims to piety (38:2) were actually as true as he assumed. For this suggestion see, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 218.
According to Goswell the poem of verses 9-20 ‘has numerous links with the surrounding material and plays a significant function in the literary context.’26 The material in Hezekiah’s poem is quite revealing and offers up some questions with regard to his attitude to the present events and how this squares with his later reaction to a similar threat in chapter 39. Verse 9 indicates that these words were not only spoken by the king but were written down by him and added into the material of this particular incident.27 That such an action is not alien to the surrounding context is seen from the fact that chapter 37 also records a poem of Yahweh sent to Hezekiah by the prophet (37:22-29). In the poem itself Hezekiah records his feelings about the prophetic word that he was to lose his life at a relatively young age or as he puts it, ‘in the middle (quiet) of my days I must depart’ (38:10). Hezekiah is well aware who brought this about and that it was Yahweh who had consigned him to the gates of Sheol (38:10), who ‘plucked up’ and ‘removed’ his dwelling from him (38:12a), ‘cut him off from the loom’, bringing him to an end’ (38:12b, 13b). Hezekiah laments that he would no longer see Yahweh in the land of the living nor look on man anymore (38:11).

The imagery of a shepherd’s tent being plucked up and his being cut off from the weaver’s loom (38:12) suggests that Hezekiah believed his life was being taken away mid-course when he had life still to live. Hezekiah received the news with bitterness (38:15b) and records his prayer that his health and life be restored (38:16b). Verse 17 acts as a confession because Hezekiah admits ‘Behold, it was for my own welfare that I had great bitterness’ (38:17a). This confession will be important to keep in mind when considering Hezekiah’s reaction to the threat in chapter 39, where his own welfare will not be affected but that of future generations. Hezekiah is grateful that his life was delivered from the pit of destruction and sees this as an expression of Yahweh’s love (38:17b) even seeing the deliverance not just in terms of life restored but sins forgiven (38:17c). Here Hezekiah demonstrates that he understands that the

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27 Goldingay questions whether this song was written by Hezekiah, noting that ‘a writing of Hezekiah’ is more literally ‘a writing for Hezekiah’. See, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 218. However, following the almost universal consensus of translations where the lamedh (ל) is taken as ‘of’ rather than ‘for’ and Waltke and O’Connor’s discussion on its use in designating authorship, there is no reason to deny Hezekiah’s hand in the original written form. See, Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 206.
greatest deliverance given by Yahweh is always the forgiveness of sin, something missed by the rest of the people of God. The natural response to such good news is thankfulness, something that cannot be given by those in Sheol (38:18). The deliverance calls forth thankfulness for Yahweh’s faithfulness (38:18b) and this faithfulness is to be proclaimed to the next generation (38:19). What is most striking here is that Hezekiah in his thankfulness indicates that he would communicate Yahweh’s love to his children and yet it is his actions – in part - that occasion the future exile of his children and yet he does not react with the same bitterness at this news (39:8). One would expect that a messianic figure would be first concerned for the people and then for his own interests (cf. 53:4-8). Hezekiah expects his song to be played on stringed instruments throughout his days in the house of Yahweh for how he has been saved (38:20). That no such lament song was composed for the tragic news that Babylon would come to destroy and take into exile is telling. The account closes with Isaiah’s prescription that a cake of figs be applied to Hezekiah’s boil as a means to his promised recovery (38:21) and Hezekiah’s asking for a sign that he should go up to Yahweh’s house (38:22). This chapter has demonstrated the frail and flawed side of a king who, though faithful, did not show a strength that would awaken the hopes of the promised messianic deliverer.

Isaiah 39 – Envoys From Babylon and The Prospect of Exile

In this section it will be seen that the idea of Hezekiah’s increasing idealization is not commensurate with the presentation of him in this chapter. I will first present my own reading of the material and then go on to examine some of the alternative readings of this material. Chapter 39 begins with ‘at that time’, indicating that it is within the same timeframe as the previous chapter and this is further confirmed by the note that the Babylonian envoys have come because they had heard that Hezekiah ‘had been sick and had recovered’ (39:1). The one sending the envoys was the then king of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan,28 son of Baladan.29 The text states that they had come to

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28 His Akkadian name was Marduk-apla-iddina, indicating that he was a named for the traditional Babylonian deity Marduk.
29 The history suggests that Merodach-Baladan was in power on two separate occasions, for twelve years before his defeat by the Assyrian king Sargon II and for a year after the death of Sargon II in 705 BCE, indicating why the events of chapter 39 must have preceded those in chapters 36-37. See, Gary V. Smith, Isaiah 1-39, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2007) 656 n.229; J. A. Brinkman, ‘Merodach-Baladan II,’ in R. D. Briggs and J. A. Brinkman (eds.) Studies Presented to A. L. Oppenheim, June 7, 1964 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964) 6-53.
Jerusalem because of what they had heard about Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery but it is most likely that the true motivation was to gain support for a rebellion against the powerful Assyrians.\(^{30}\) There is no evidence that such an alliance was formalised but Hezekiah’s rebellion against the Assyrians could suggest that such a plan may have been discussed. The problem was that the Assyrians would soon crush Babylon and Hezekiah would be left alone when Egypt was unable to mount a genuine support. Even though Babylon was not the mighty nation that it would become (13:19; 14:4-21), it must have been significant enough for Hezekiah to welcome them gladly and show them all that was in his treasuries and store houses (39:2a). In fact the text says that there was ‘nothing’ in his house or realm that Hezekiah did not show them (39:2b). The question arises – was Hezekiah trying to impress these envoys to show what sort of support he could muster for rebellion? Whatever the motive the future would show that the Babylonians certainly liked what they saw, enough to come and take it for themselves (39:6).

Although it is not obvious in the immediate context of the opening verses it will become evident in the following verses that the visit of the Babylonian envoys is a threat to the Davidic throne,\(^ {31}\) in fact it will become the greatest threat faced by that household since its inception. Again, as in previous threats to the house of David, Isaiah appears to give a word from Yahweh (39:3a). Isaiah asks, ‘what did these men say? And from where did they come to you?’ (39:3b). This question and the following, ‘what have they seen in your house?’ (39:4a) act more as a way of getting Hezekiah to confess his role in what will lead to disaster for the coming generations than as genuine question of curiosity. It could be that Isaiah was unaware of the content of Hezekiah’s discussion with the strangers and what he showed them, but the immediacy of his proclamation of Yahweh’s word (39:5) implies that he was already aware of the answers to these questions from Yahweh himself, thus indicating why he chose to approach the king in the first place. It is reminiscent of the scene in the garden in Gen. 3 when Yahweh asks where Adam is hiding when he is already aware of the answer, opening up the possibility of confession (cf. Gen. 3:9).\(^ {32}\) Hezekiah’s

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\(^{30}\) That Hezekiah was looking for a ‘treaty partner’, see, Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-29*, 474.

\(^{31}\) Seitz notes that in the larger context, ‘Davidic kingship will come to an end’. See, Seitz, Zion’s *Final Destiny*, 185.

\(^{32}\) Brueggemann says that in the garden ‘the scene becomes a trial.’ That being the case, the scene here in chapter 39 is the same, reflecting a theme demonstrated throughout the book of Isaiah. See, Walter
response to the questions demonstrates that he felt honoured by the coming of the envoys from such ‘a far country’, from Babylon itself (39:3c). Hezekiah does not try to hide the fact that they had seen all that was in his house and that ‘there was nothing in his storehouses that he did not show them’ (39:4). It almost appears as if the king is boasting about his boasting before the Babylonian envoys, something that doesn’t quite fit with the picture of Hezekiah the reader has come to gather from the previous narratives.

Isaiah’s response to the king’s boasting is to simply give to him Yahweh’s word as it had come to him. The reader is reminded of the importance of hearing Yahweh’s word as had been so prominent in the previous narratives when Isaiah begins with the familiar ‘Hear the word of Yahweh of hosts’ (39:5). Some scholars propose that Isaiah’s announcement of the Babylonian exile in verses 6 and 7 has nothing to do with Hezekiah’s actions, except that, because the visitors were from Babylon, it provided the appropriate occasion for the announcement. This does not seem likely in light of the choice of words used by the prophet. Hezekiah had told Isaiah that he had shown the envoys ‘all (יקב) that was in my house’ (39:4) and in Isaiah’s oracle he specifically tells Hezekiah that the Babylonians will carry away ‘all (יקב) that is in your house’ (39:6a). Further to this Hezekiah boasts that ‘There is nothing (רבד אל) in my storehouses that I did not show them’ (39:4) and Isaiah states ‘Nothing (רבד אל) shall be left, says Yahweh’ (39:6b). It is inconceivable that Isaiah’s words from Yahweh are not in direct response to Hezekiah’s words and actions in light of his careful drawing out of the very words spoken by the king.

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Ackroyd states that when Isaiah asks the rhetorical question at his appearance in chapter 39 it is, ‘to lead the king to commit himself in his reply in such a way that prophetic comment upon his actions follows as a direct sequel to his own involvement.’ See, Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile’, 334. See also, Willem A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2. Isaiah 28-39 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 417. Beuken says, ‘While the removal of Hezekiah’s property rests on an offence committed by the king himself (vv 2,4, 6), this is clearly not the case with respect to the deportation of his sons.’ It is difficult to see how this is ‘clearly not the case’ unless one is already committed to the idea that a statement about the deportation of Hezekiah’s sons must be redactional. Read in the context of the whole and it makes perfect sense. When Hezekiah showed the envoys ‘all that was in his house’ there may well be a play on words with ‘house’ referring not only to his physical home but also his household. The removal of Hezekiah’s sons is included in the removal of all that he has and ‘nothing’ being left behind.

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does not have to mean the threat of the Babylonian exile was ‘only’ a response to Hezekiah’s prideful actions but that there is a particular correlation seems obvious from the language used. The language of the threat is also specific to the king himself even though the exile will affect the whole nation. Isaiah tells Hezekiah ‘some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (39:7). So much of what is said is personalised to the king and if the announcement of the threat was simply to inform the king of what would happen in future generations the prophet would not have to apply such a specific and repeated personal note.\(^\text{35}\)

Hezekiah’s response in verse 8 has occasioned a division of opinion among scholars of differing perspectives as to what type of response is being given. The three views that are represented in the secondary literature are; 1) Hezekiah’s response is one of unconcerned self-interest when he realises things will be okay during his reign,\(^\text{36}\) 2) Hezekiah’s response is one of pious acceptance, seeing the word of Yahweh as good even though it pronounces threat, and the peace in his own time as undeserved grace,\(^\text{37}\) 3) Hezekiah’s response is ambiguous and might contain elements of both 1 and 2.\(^\text{38}\) I will go on to highlight some concerns with positions 2 and 3 and make a case for view 1 below. However, at this point I will simply outline what Hezekiah has been told up to this point and how the reader would expect him to react in light of this information.

\(^{35}\) As noted in a previous chapter, Heskett and others see the rise and development of messianism against the backdrop of a threat to the Davidic throne (most notably the Babylonian exile) that needed to be overturned by a new Davidic figure. See, Randall Heskett, *Messianism Within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah*, LHB/OTS 456 (London T&T Clark, 2007) 4. Surely at this point in chapter 39 when a threat of the Davidic descendants becoming eunuchs in the palace of the Babylonians is proclaimed the climate for messianic expectation would be just right. If Hezekiah failed to fulfil earlier expectations of restoring the fortunes of Israel as the hoped for anointed then the reader would expect to see in the following chapters of Isaiah such a hope taking a new shape. This will be discussed in the following chapter.


Hezekiah is obviously proud of the accumulated riches of Jerusalem when he shows these to the Babylonian envoys (39:2) and feels no shame in telling this to the prophet (39:4). He had accumulated treasures such as silver, gold, spices, precious oil and a large armoury. All these things were for him and his future generations to enjoy. However, Isaiah makes clear that all of these things, stored up from the time of his fathers, would be carried off to Babylon (39:6) and in fact ‘nothing’ would be left. Secondly, Hezekiah who so longed to live so that he could make known the faithfulness of Yahweh to his children (38:19) has been told by Isaiah that his own children will also be carried off to Babylon. Thirdly, the children shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon, meaning that the great Davidic line could be brought to an end altogether. In view of these three pronouncements – loss of treasures, loss of children, threat to the Davidic line – one would expect Hezekiah’s response to be very similar to his reaction to the news of his impending death (38:2-3).

In Hezekiah’s earlier response there was prayer and bitter weeping, neither of which is apparent in his response in 39:8. He simply states that the word of Yahweh is good. If this word that the prophet has spoken is ‘good’, why wasn’t the earlier word equally ‘good’? The reason is that he thought ‘There will be peace and security in my days’ (39:8b). It is still possible that Hezekiah’s thought expressed at the end of verse 8 was pious thankfulness for present delivery but it is highly unlikely in light of the preceding considerations. The reader would at least expect Hezekiah to have stated that Yahweh is merciful and gracious/faithful to allow his own reign to end in peace, much as he responded in chapter 38, but this is not evident in the language used. I will now go on to engage the different views given by scholars who view the language differently.

2. Isaiah 39:8 – Hezekiah’s response; pious acceptance or self-interested arrogance?

It will be important at this point to consider the scholarly interpretations of Hezekiah’s response to Isaiah’s judgment oracle in chapter 39. In many ways how one interprets Hezekiah’s response will determine how this key transitional chapter functions against the wider concerns of the book as a whole and may even, in some cases, change how one understands the relationship between chapters 1-39 and 40-66.
The main contention of this study is that Hezekiah is, in some fashion, portrayed as a failing messianic figure, one who embodies many of the aspects of the early messianic oracles - thereby creating hope - but fails to fully embody all of those ideals. An important part of this argument is the nature of Hezekiah’s response to Isaiah’s judgment oracle in chapter 39 and the prospect of future exile for his descendants in Babylon. Of the three possible interpretations outlined above, views 1 and 3 are consistent with the concept of Hezekiah as a failing messianic figure. However, it is difficult to see this contention as having significant merit if view 2 is the most likely interpretation. It might be stating the obvious but the number of proponents holding a given view cannot determine the correctness of an interpretation, but if a large number of scholars arrive at relatively similar conclusions it is important to examine some of the best arguments behind that view.

At the outset it must be noted that there is not a significant number of monographs or articles that deal with Hezekiah’s response in Isa. 39:8 in much detail. The significance of this may be related to the difficulties in interpretation. Most commentaries give little space to this particular issue, indicating that it does not appear to hold substantial value to the overall interpretation of the chapter. Two of the most significant interactions with this particular text, taking view 2, are those of Ackroyd and Seitz. As these scholars pose the greatest difficulty in holding to views 1 and 3 I will examine their reasons for holding to the alternative view that Hezekiah’s response to Isaiah’s judgment oracle was one of pious acceptance. I will look at each scholar in turn.

In a 1974 article Ackroyd presented his interpretation of Isa. 38-39 (2 Kgs 20) as being shaped and influenced by the events of the Babylonian exile. The primary contention of the article was to show how these chapters functioned within the totality of the books in which they are found, and with regard to Isa. 38-39 how these chapters acted as a transition from the focus on the threat of the Assyrian period to the impending Babylonian threat that would come to prominence in Isa. 40ff. Ackroyd

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39 The page count for these select commentaries is as follows: Kaiser, OTL (1); Sawyer, DSB (1/2); Blenkinsopp, AB (1/2); Wildberger, CC (1/2); Miscall, Reading (1/4); Watts, WBC (1/4); Motyer, Prophecy (1/4); Oswalt, NICOT (1); Beukel, HCOT (1,1/2) Smith, NAC (1), Goldingay, NIBC (1/4); Brueggeman, WBC (1); Alexander, Isaiah (1); Delitzsch, COT (1/2).
sees Hezekiah’s actions toward the Babylonian envoys in chapter 39 as providing an occasion to introduce this protagonist and the threat of exile that will come as a result of their visit. This can be seen when Isaiah asks the rhetorical question upon his arrival to the scene in chapter 39, which Ackroyd sees is a means, ‘to lead the king to commit himself in his reply in such a way that prophetic comment upon his actions follows as a direct sequel to his own involvement.” Here Ackroyd commits himself to the idea that Isaiah’s prophetic reply is in direct response to what Hezekiah has done, a conclusion that seems at odds with how he will see Hezekiah’s response to the announcement of judgment. If Isaiah’s rhetorical question about what the Babylonians had seen was a means of getting Hezekiah to confess what he showed them, then this demonstrates that the judgment that Isaiah will pronounce is not disconnected from the behaviour of the king and tells the reader something about the king’s response. That Isaiah’s judgment oracle is occasioned in respect of the king’s actions and not simply an opportunistic announcement is further reinforced in his article. Ackroyd sees great significance in the precise wording of Hezekiah’s reply to Isaiah’s interrogation. He states,

We may properly, when we read a narrative which is told with evident literary skill, see significance in the repetitions and emphases which are employed. The mention of Babylon as the place of origin in the opening has been picked up and underlined, not simply by the repetition of the name but by its definition as ‘a far country’. The description of the showing of everything to the ambassadors is reiterated in the account given by Hezekiah: everything was shown, nothing was left unseen. We may with some propriety already suspect that it is these two elements which are significant to the narrator.

As outlined above, these precise elements are what are found in Isaiah’s prophetic reply of judgment. As Ackroyd puts it, this is, ‘the pronouncing of a prophetic judgment, based precisely upon these two elements.” Added to this is that the totality of everything taken from Jerusalem will include Hezekiah’s descendants. Ackroyd says it ‘is given a further thrust in a word of judgment upon the whole royal house.” It becomes so obvious as to almost not require comment that Isaiah’s word

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43 Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335.
44 Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335.
is occasioned by the king’s actions and not simply vaguely related to them.\textsuperscript{45} In light of the fact that the royal household will be implicated in the judgment that was occasioned by the reigning king it makes Hezekiah’s comment that Isaiah’s word is ‘good’ (בָּרוּךָ) (39:8) hard to comprehend in any meaningful sense. Ackroyd notes that Isaiah’s ‘pronouncement of doom…can hardly be regarded as ‘good’ in the simple sense of the word.’\textsuperscript{46} He goes on to see Hezekiah’s use of the word ‘good’ relating to an acknowledgement of its rightness, ‘it is a word of acceptance.’\textsuperscript{47} But this is the very question that needs to be answered; did Hezekiah see the rightness of the judgment because it came from Yahweh or because everything would be okay in his own day? The answer cannot be determined on the simple use of a word. Ackroyd then outlines three possible interpretations of what Hezekiah means by his words in 39:8b there will be peace and security in his own day.\textsuperscript{48} The first, which he notes appears in many translations and commentaries, sees his reply as smug and selfish, looking to his own interests. This interpretation he finds ‘really very unlikely’.\textsuperscript{49} The second acts more like a prayer to avert the disaster in his own time and almost sees a ready acceptance of guilt and a desire for well being in his own time. This interpretation takes away the problem of seeing Hezekiah as smug and selfish, something not revealed in the previous narratives. Ackroyd does not follow this interpretation and it must be noted that it does not seem likely from the language of the text. He prefers a third option that see Hezekiah’s words in light of his pronouncement that Yahweh’s word is good (39:8a). Hezekiah is seen as being

\textsuperscript{45} Contra, Seitz, \textit{Zion’s Final Destiny}, 158.
\textsuperscript{46} Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335.
\textsuperscript{47} Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335. Even on other occasions when leaders acknowledge that a word of judgment from Yahweh is good, there is often a sense of ambiguity about the response. In the case of Eli who receives a pronouncement of judgment against his household in 1 Samuel 3:11-14, his response in verse 18 seems ambiguous, ‘He is Yahweh, let him do what is good in his sight.’ In one sense this could be the pious acceptance of a man who acknowledges the rightness of the judgment rendered against him and his household, but it also shows a degree of the type of placid acceptance that caused him to fail to restrain his sons’ wicked behaviour in the first place (verse 14).
\textsuperscript{48} Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335-337.
\textsuperscript{49} Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 336. However, in a later article Ackroyd says that he suspects there may have been an underlying form of the material, an older narrative, in which the divine judgment came upon Hezekiah because of his involvement with a foreign power (such as Egypt in Isaiah 30-31). See, Ackroyd, ‘Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function,’ 488.
grateful that the disaster has been averted in his own lifetime and generation and that Yahweh is gracious for not bringing the judgment immediately.\footnote{Although this might be the case it is unlikely in view of the pattern found in the larger canon of scripture. Take for instance the fact that part of the reason for Israel’s 400-year sojourn in Egypt was to allow the evil to accumulate in the promised land, the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:13-16). If the judgment had been meted out to the Canaanites gradually over generations then they may well have avoided the greater judgment at the time of the conquest (regardless of ones views on that event).}

An initial problem with this interpretation, as noted above, is that it puts too much weight on a single word; ‘good’. Ackroyd had already stated that ‘good’ related to the rightness of Yahweh’s judgment and acceptance of the divine truth.\footnote{Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 335. See also, Ackroyd, ‘Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function,’ 487-488.} However, now ‘good’ is made to function as ‘gracious’ in light of his deliverance from immediate disaster. It is entirely possible that ‘good’ bears the weight of both readings but as Ackroyd would say, it is ‘unlikely’. It is more likely to be that Yahweh himself was gracious. In light of the previous narratives this seems to fit better but is not the words used by Hezekiah.\footnote{All that can be seen to be ‘good’ from the precise words used by Hezekiah is that he will not face the judgment himself. Any other reading of ‘good’ is importing presuppositions into the text.} The other issue is that such a ready acquiescence is not evident in the previous narratives in relation to the king and this comes as a bolt out of the blue. Again, how could a man pleading for his own life not to be snuffed out readily accept such a judgment against his descendants? The second interpretation would work much better in this regard but, as noted above, it is not a natural reading of Hezekiah’s words. Ackroyd places emphasis on the word יָשָׁר suggesting it has the force of certainty and relates back to the reason the word is ‘good’. However, this does not work only for his interpretation but also for the first one that he rejects. Hezekiah thinks the pronouncement is ‘good’ precisely ‘because/for’ (יָשָׁר) he is going to avoid the judgment. It appears that Ackroyd and others have a problem with a negative view of the great reformer Hezekiah because they have already committed themselves to a consistent view of his idealization.\footnote{Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 155.} In that case they have no reason to see him in a negative light. However, just because an interpretation does not fit within a pre-conceived system does not therefore make it invalid.
Ackroyd and Seitz both argue that the Chronicler confirms their interpretation in 2 Chronicles 32. My primary concern is with the text of Isaiah but it is worth exploring why Ackroyd and others bring the Chronicler in at this point. It has to be admitted that on first reading the Chronicles passage in light of their arguments it seems like the Chronicler reads the events in that way. In 2 Chron. 32:24-31 an interpretation of the events in Isa. 38-39 is given. The Chronicler in verse 24 speaks of Hezekiah’s sickness and Yahweh bringing recovery. Then in verse 25 he says that Hezekiah did not ‘make return’ (ESV) according to the benefit done to him because of his proud heart. The result was that wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem. However, verse 26b says explicitly ‘the wrath of Yahweh did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah’. The reason? Hezekiah humbled himself, thus giving credence to the idea that his words were humble acceptance. Nevertheless, it says that Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves, something not found in Isaiah 39 but evident later when Hezekiah faced the threat of Assyria and humbled himself.

It could be that verses 24-26 are speaking of the events in Isa. 37 and not Isa. 39 but there are three reasons to think this is incorrect. First, verse 31 shows that the Chronicler was familiar with the coming of the envoys from Babylon and would be aware that this event was coupled with Hezekiah’s recovery from sickness, verse 24. Second, it says in verse 25 that Hezekiah did not ‘make return’ for these benefits (of new life) but his heart was proud. This is exactly what is seen in chapter 39. Third, the end of verse 26 says that wrath came not in the time of Hezekiah, the very reality expressed in chapter 39 and confirmed in Hezekiah’s words in 39:8b. Therefore it is right to read the Chronicler’s comments regarding the coming of the envoys in 32:31 in light of the preceding and this makes sense of the fact that, ‘God left him (Hezekiah) to himself.’ This was in order to test his heart. It appears that the result of this testing is not given by the Chronicler but the evaluation was already given in verse 25, his heart was proud. As further evidence that this whole section is looking at the same event is seen in the list of Hezekiah’s possessions in 2 Chron. 32:27-29 which is a very similar list to that given at the beginning of chapter 39.

Finally, in relation to Ackroyd’s work, he has provided some thoughtful suggestions that would add weight to the contention that Hezekiah acted as a failing messianic figure. Ackroyd sees significance in the repetition of certain words like

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54 Ackroyd, ‘An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile,’ 337-338.
‘everything’ and the verb הָבַּל ‘to see’. He states, ‘It is extremely improbable that such repetition is without particular meaning.’ He goes on to say ‘seeing is to be recognised as having a fuller significance here than mere observation.’ Drawing an analogy with ‘seeing’ the Promised Land in Deut. 34:1-4 as confidence of possession he believes the ‘seeing’ of the Babylonians as their making a claim upon all they have set their eyes upon. Relying on David Daube’s work in relation to seeing as possession Ackroyd comments, ‘Daube believes that it is to be understood as a formal legal act of taking possession.’ Ackroyd understands that this was God’s doing and states, ‘It is in fact God who has decreed the handing over of the land – it is his, after all – and Hezekiah has become his unwitting agent in bringing about the loss of the land.’ In light of this material it seems clear that whatever relation Hezekiah has to the earlier messianic oracles, and there is much, he certainly falls short of this ideal as its unthinkable that the Messiah would be the victim of such an action. Also, if Ackroyd is correct, then Hezekiah’s role in bringing about the exile to Babylon is much more significant than is often thought.

Seitz’s work builds on the material presented in the studies of Ackroyd. He agrees with Ackroyd and others that there is a certain degree of idealization in the presentation of Hezekiah in Isaiah - more than can be seen in 2 Kings. However Seitz states that, ‘it must be acknowledged, against theories of unilateral Hezekiah idealization, that chapter 39 stands apart from such a move, if not in clear tension with it.’ The dramatic fall of this righteous king who had been so much of an embodiment of the earlier messianic ideal was made all the more startling because his failure of faith had not been explicitly presented or recorded - as seems more apparent in other accounts as Seitz states. The movement from hope placed in Hezekiah as Israel’s ultimate deliverer to a proud man whose actions would lead to the coming of

60 See chapters III and IV of this study.
61 In the following chapter the role of the servant will be explored in relation to the messianic oracles and it will be seen that this figure, though portrayed at times to be a victim, never leads the people into judgment by his actions but rather bears the judgment already directed against them in himself.
62 Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 155.
63 Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 155.
an even greater enemy makes perfect sense of the exclusion of direct reference to his paying of tribute to Assyria. As for the divergences between 2 Kgs and Isa. 38 (with the exclusion of Hezekiah’s poem in Kings) they only serve to further enhance the claim that the intention of Isaiah was to present a man of extreme contrasts, something not evident in Kings nor necessary for its purposes.

Seitz goes on in his work to point out at a number of places how chapter 39 seems to indicate that future Babylonian assault can be expected as a result of Hezekiah’s action (even if, as he says, the language of judgment is not personally directed at him).\(^{64}\) Surprisingly however, he agrees with Ackroyd’s interpretation of Isa. 39:8 that Hezekiah’s response is less motivated by self-interest than as indicating Hezekiah’s pious acceptance of the judgment.\(^{65}\) To support his contention Seitz also appeals to 2 Chron. 32 which he sees as implying that Hezekiah was commended for his faithfulness at the time of the Babylonian envoys visit and yet judged negatively for his response to his recovery from sickness and death. Added to the critique of this reading of 2 Chron. 32 above, it must be pointed out that Hezekiah is not anywhere commended for his response to the Babylonian envoys. It simply points out in verse 31 of that chapter that he was left alone by God to be tested. It does not say whether he passed or failed the test. The answer to that question must be found elsewhere and in both 2 Kgs 20 and Isa. 39 he clearly failed that test. Secondly, the negative judgment for his response to his recovery from sickness and death must be his actions toward the Babylonians because there is nothing said elsewhere about Hezekiah giving a proud response after his recovery. The only instance of such pride is found in Isa. 39.

### Conclusion

The material in the Hezekiah narratives presents the reader with the kind of literary and theological perspective that would be expected from the movement of the material from the earlier chapters up to this point. The early chapters present hope in the midst of darkness (Isa. 7, 9, 11, 16, 32) against the backdrop of widespread blindness and deafness to the purposes of Yahweh (Isa. 6:9-10). The expectation of the faithful remnant ( Isa. 6:13; 7:3) is of deliverance and restoration. Hezekiah is

\(^{64}\) Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 156.

\(^{65}\) Seitz, Zion’s Final Destiny, 156-158; Isaiah 1-39, 264-266.
presented as the partial fulfilment of these expectations (Isa. 36-37), even when his piety is challenged by his fallibility (Isa. 38). However, Hezekiah fails to embody all the hopes of the people as he fails to put his complete trust in Yahweh in every aspect of life and leads the people into further future darkness (Isa. 39). As Abernethy expresses it, ‘As anchored as Isaiah 1-12 is in the realities of the Assyrian era, it would be quite possible to understand 9:1-17 and 11:1-9 to refer to King Hezekiah, who ruled during the time when Sennacherib’s armies were defeated…What one finds, however, is that, even within the book of Isaiah, King Hezekiah fails and the dynasty of David is destined for exile (Isa. 39).’\textsuperscript{66} This means that the hopes and expectations of the earlier chapters remain to be fulfilled and this will require a further examination of the chapters that follow Isa. 39 to see if the hope is found within the boundaries of the book of Isaiah as a whole.

Chapter VI. - Hezekiah and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 40-66

In light of the preceding considerations of chapters 1-39 which presented the idea that another ‘messiah’ referent is required after Hezekiah’s failure, it will be necessary to examine Isa. 40-66 to ascertain whether such a figure is present. My contention is that such a figure is present in the person of the ‘servant’ whose role is outlined in what have often been designated ‘the Servant Songs’ (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12 [61:1-11]).

The Thematic and Literary Unity of Isaiah 40-66

Since the time of Bernhard Duhm² it has been common practice to divide the material in Isa. 40-66 into these two separate designations, a practice that occurs in many commentaries.³ The reason for this is the assumption that the author(s) of 40-55 and 56-66 are speaking from different locations – Babylon and Palestine.⁴ Such views have not been without challenge.⁵ However, in line with the growth in studies related

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² Berhard Duhm, Das Buch Jesaja, 4th Ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922).


to various forms of unity with regard to Isaiah as a whole,\(^6\) there have also appeared studies that look for unity in these separate designations.\(^7\)

My concern here is with a holistic reading of Isa. 40-66 and the overall literary and theological message of this second half of the book of Isaiah. It has been the contention of this thesis that when Isaiah is read as a unity a purposeful message can be discovered with regard to Yahweh’s deliverance of his people through the work of an appointed and anointed agent. This macro theme continues through the material in Isa. 40-66 where it becomes evident that these chapters act as the fuller expression of the theological ideas introduced in 1-39.\(^8\)

1. - The Final Act of Isaiah

If one were to look at the book of Isaiah as a story or play with several interlocking acts, the audience would at this stage be asking what to expect in the final act in relation to what has gone before.\(^9\) Isaiah can be divided into roughly five or six acts, depending on how one reads the end of the story. The different acts would be as follows: Act 1: Judgment, promise and prosecution – Isa. 1-6 / Act 2: Political intrigue and a messianic hope – Isa. 7-12 / Act 3: Oracles against the nations and universal expansion – Isa. 13-35 / Act 4: Hezekiah, Sennacherib and the great battle of words – Isa. 36-39.

In light of the previous four acts what would the reader expect to see next in the final act(s) of the story? Although it becomes apparent from the opening of chapter 40 that this will be a final act full of hope and redemption, it also becomes


abundantly clear that not everything is as rosy as it first seemed. One motif carried over from the earlier chapters of the book is the concept of the people being on trial, not just Jacob-Israel but the nations as well.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, what are picked up in these chapters are the concerns that first came to the fore in Isa. 1-39. In those chapters the people were taken to trial (Isa. 1-6) and the verdict was passed (6:9-10). Within that verdict hope was held out (6:13b) and a new hope for the people was announced that would not only answer their most pressing concern (Assyria) but would hold out hope for deliverance from future oppressors (Babylon/nations 13-27) and against the ultimate enemy (sin/idolatry 1-5). That hope was embodied in a kingly Davidic figure, anointed by the Spirit and securing Yahweh’s presence (7:14; 9:5-6[6-7]) and 11:1-5). As already highlighted, this figure had close literary affinities with Hezekiah who embodied much of what was hoped for, while still not fulfilling all that was required. In fact, it could be said that instead of delivering the people from all oppressors mentioned in 1-35 Hezekiah defeated the most immediate danger (Assyria) while giving a foothold to the others (Babylon and sin/idolatry). The defeat of one enemy (Assyria) had already been predicted (13:1-14:23) while the second enemy (sin/idolatry) was much harder to control. This was possible only through one who would lead the people in justice, righteousness and peace (9:5-6[6-7]), speak with the knowledge and wisdom of Yahweh (11:1-5) and embody his presence to the people (7:14). In Isa. 40-66 such a figure should be central to the concerns of Yahweh’s future plan of deliverance for the people from sin/idolatry by being what Israel never was - truly faithful. I contend that such a figure is present in the ‘servant’ described in the oft designated ‘servant songs.’


Isa. 40-48 can be read together as a unity\(^{11}\) that addresses both Jacob-Israel\(^{12}\) and the nations around them, especially focusing on the destruction of Babylon and the return of the people under the Persian king Cyrus.

The ominous warning given at the end of chapter 39 that the Babylonian king is coming to take all the possessions of Hezekiah and his ancestors (39:5-7) is immediately followed by words of comfort (40:1-2).\(^{13}\) Deliverance for Jacob-Israel and Zion-Jerusalem is set against a new exodus from exile in Babylon and therefore connects with the end of the Hezekiah narratives (39:5-6).\(^{14}\) The prospect of the Babylonian exile seen in chapter 39 gives strong credence to the idea that the following chapters will focus on this particular event and therefore the comfort being declared is implied to be for the people in that situation.\(^{15}\)

The relationship between chapters 40 and 6 is important, not so much in relation to the similarity in the nature of the ‘call’,\(^{16}\) but as strong reminder at this

\(^{11}\) For the compositional unity of the material see, Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation?’, 32.


\(^{13}\) Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 225-226.


\(^{15}\) There is nothing in the text to suggest that the words of chapter 40 were not picked up by subsequent generations and applied by prophets to their own people, both in Babylon and beyond. This has been long recognised. See, John Calvin, Isaiah (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 197-199. Calvin sees the words in chapter 40 as suited to the Babylonian captivity but not exhausted in that period. He notes, ‘These words, I have said, ought not to be limited to the captivity in Babylon…” (199).

\(^{16}\) For the connections between the call narratives see, Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 227; Christopher Seitz, ‘The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,’ JBL 109 (1990) 238-243; Zion’s Final Destiny (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 196-208;
point in Isaiah of the blinding and deafening oracle that will again become prominent in these chapters. If there is a drawing of the reader’s attention back to the material in chapter 6 then it is to this initial ‘calling’ given to the prophet to harden the hearts of God’s rebellious people. One major rhetorical focus of chapters 40ff. is on the folly of idolatry. The idols, which are simply the work of men’s hands have no power, unlike Yahweh (40:18). It was this very process of making and bowing down to idols of ‘silver and gold’ that brought about Yahweh’s judgment in the earlier chapters (cf. 2:20; 30:22; 31:7; 40:19). The lifelessness of the idols that cannot move (40:19-20) is another reminder of how God’s own people will become like that which they worship and also how, just like the idols and those who consult them, they will be thrown into confusion (6:9-10; 8:16-21).

The reference to ‘Have you not known, have you not heard?’ (40:21) is the same question put, both to the king of Assyria in the Hezekiah narrative (cf. 37:26). Yahweh is asking his people if they are in the same spiritual state as the Assyrian king. Conrad notes that the emphasis (accent) on ‘hearing’ in the recurring argumentative question ‘have you not heard?’ recalls this emphasis in the Hezekiah narratives and outlines the numerous references to hearing in these chapters. There is a clear echo in the words of 40:27-28 to the material in 8:16-22. As stated before, this material was set in the larger complex of the prediction of the Assyrian invasion and is sandwiched between the first two ‘messianic’ oracles of the earlier chapters. In 8:17 the prophet (Yahweh) addresses ‘Jacob’ and says ‘I will wait for Yahweh who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.’ At this point in Isaiah, Yahweh is seen to be intentionally hiding his face from Jacob. This was

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Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 228. For the use of metaphor and rhetorical language in relation to the incomparability of God in Deutero-Isaiah, but from a very different perspective see, Paul Del Brassey, Metaphor and the Incomparable God in Isaiah 40-55: A Thesis (Biblical Dissertation Series 9; North Richlands Hills: BIBAL, 1997).

18 This was again the point of the retributive taunt in 6:9-10 when Yahweh cursed the people by making them blind, deaf and hard of hard. See, G. K. Beale, ‘Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry,’ VT 41 (1991) 257-278; Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation?’, 44-45; Gregory Y. Glazov, The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy, JSOTSup 311 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 126-158; G. K. Beale, We Become What we Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008). A similar blinding takes place in 8:16-21 in that the prophet will bind up the testimony and Yahweh will hide himself from those in Jacob who inquire after mediums and necromancers.

19 Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 231. The references are: Isa. 36:4-10, 11, 13, 16; 37:1, 4, 6, 8-9, 11, 17, 26, 29, 37). See also the previous chapter of this study for more details.
because they had not acknowledged the signs and portents Yahweh of hosts had given Israel, who had gone off to inquire, not of him, but of mediums and necromancers.

As comfort and a new dawn of deliverance was being announced the people are being asked if they still do not understand, if they are still feeling the effects of the hardening, blinding and deafening oracle in 6:9-10. The people are being called to ‘hear’ again and reflect on how the deliverance he had promised over the Assyrians in the time of Ahaz had come to fruition in the Hezekiah narratives. Conrad aptly states, ‘He (Yahweh) has announced his plans long ago and his plans prevail. Those who ‘hear’ the book have been given a demonstration of Yahweh’s ability to accomplish all his plan: what Yahweh has previously announced he has done.’ This means that Jacob-Israel is being told to put together the pieces and see beyond their present circumstances. If Yahweh could promise long ago that he would deliver his people from the hand of the Assyrians so too his future plans would be fulfilled.

The argumentative questions continue throughout 41-47. Watts reads the language of 40-48 as trial speeches and disputations against Jacob-Israel and the nations as well as anti-idol polemics. His summary of the material in 40-48, 49-55 (and 56-66) is very instructive. He is worth quoting at length:

Chapters 40-48 explain how servant Jacob-Israel’s persistent ‘blindness and deafness’ led her to reject Yahweh’s announcement of deliverance primarily because of his choice of Cyrus. Chapters 49-55 then describe how Yahweh’s New Exodus plan, although postponed as suggested by the speech forms, will be realized through the agency of a new, faithful and suffering servant ‘Israel’ who will deliver Jacob-Israel and execute Yahweh’s plan for the nations.

These theological themes that have already been highlighted in the study of Isa. 1-39 are carried over and sometimes amplified in 40-66. Themes such as the destruction of the oppressor, idolatry, blindness and deafness, an ambiguous figure of deliverance, and the ultimate return of Israel are picked up. Much like the material in Isa. 1-6

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20 Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 232. Although Conrad would see this as an encouragement to those in exile in Babylon, this would surely (at first) be most appropriate to those who had lived through the great deliverance that had been announced in the time of Ahaz.
21 Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 234-39.
22 Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation?’, 31.
where Israel was on trial\textsuperscript{23} and Isa. 13-27 where the nations were on trial so there is in Isa. 40-48 a similar set of speech forms, often in the form of argumentative questions.

In this context, Conrad sees the announcement of Cyrus as ‘my shepherd’ as functioning in a similar manner to Hezekiah and Sennacherib who, even though they had not been mentioned by name in the earlier chapters of Isaiah, had been there implicitly.\textsuperscript{24} It is possible that the people may begin to think that the servant spoken of in 42:1-9 as bringing back Jacob and Israel would refer to Cyrus for both are under the direct supervision and responsibility of Yahweh (42:19; 45:1-8). As Stuhlmueller points out, ‘When the people objected strongly to the royal oracle and the enthronement of Cyrus as Yahweh’s “shepherd” and “Anointed King,” to lead Israel on her new exodus, 45:9-13 could have been the prophet’s response.’\textsuperscript{25} The most ‘pressing’ opponent in the view of Jacob-Israel was the Babylonians and it was Yahweh’s plan to bring the people out of that oppression by a foreign king given titles most closely associated with Israel’s greatest king, David. Cyrus would be the one to bring the people back to Jerusalem, but did such honorific titles need to be given to a pagan king? Since the people had proved time and again that they were ‘blind’ and ‘deaf’ to Yahweh’s greater plan of redemption that would involve not just them but the nations as well, it is likely that they began again to associate Cyrus with the promises delivered from of old and those related to the servant. This despite the early oracles related to a royal deliverer having strong associations with David. Although the title ‘my shepherd’ is not directly given to a reigning king\textsuperscript{26} the people were well


\textsuperscript{24} Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 237-238. Whether this was the original intent and Cyrus the original referent of 41:2 may be questioned. This does not mean that in light of the explicit oracles, Cyrus would not have have been read back into these words. See also, Carroll Stuhlmueller, ‘Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet’s Theology in Contemporary Scholarship,’ CBQ 42 (1980) 1-29 (9,16); C. Stuhmueller, Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah (AnBib 43; Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 200-205; H. C. Spykerboer, The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah (Trans. T. Wener; Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen; Franeker: Netherlands, 1976) 188; Miscall, Isaiah, 112.

\textsuperscript{25} Stuhmueller, ‘Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet’s Theology in Contemporary Scholarship,’ 16. See also, Stuhmueller, Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah, 200-205.

\textsuperscript{26} As highlighted in, Schoors, I am God Your Saviour, 210, 212; Stuhmueller, ‘Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet’s Theology in Contemporary Scholarship,’ 11.
aware of David’s background (1 Sam. 16:11; 2 Sam. 5:2) and any expectation of a ‘messiah’ would be most obviously relate to Israel’s great ‘anointed’ king. That such a title as ‘shepherd’ would become a key element in messianic thought is brought out in Schoors’ words ‘the epithet has a salvific and even a messianic sense.’

It is often noted that the title ‘Messiah’ is not used in Isa. 1-39, especially in relation to the oracles related to a royal deliverer and that such a title was not directly given to the servant in Isa. 40-55. But the title ‘Messiah’ (מֶשֶׁך) is used in Isaiah, although it is used in reference to a non-Davidic ruler; Cyrus. This would be surprising to the people who had invested so much hope in the Davidic ruler Hezekiah to be their deliverer. He had been instrumental in their delivery from Assyria but had opened the door to Babylon. Now the ‘Messiah’ being offered to the people obviously did not meet the expectations of a Davidic anointed deliverer and the people were unable to accept this aspect of Yahweh’s plan. Yet the use of this title exclusively in reference to Cyrus is precisely what one would expect at this juncture and in a book where the people are cursed with blindness, deafness and lack of understanding. Cyrus stands as a way to shock the people from their delusion and see the greater scope of Yahweh’s plan. Cyrus is not ‘the Messiah’ anymore than Hezekiah was and he certainly was not able to bring the hearts of the people back to Yahweh, bear their sins (52:13-53:12) or bring lasting righteousness and justice to Israel and the nations (9:5-6[6-7]; 42:1-9; 49:1-9).

27 Schoors, I am God Your Saviour, 269-270 as found in Stuhmueller, ‘Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet’s Theology in Contemporary Scholarship,’ 12.
28 Again, this could be true of the figure in Isa. 61:1 but at least this figure has been ‘anointed’ and this directly by Yahweh himself.
29 For the view that the title Messiah is here used in the later sense of that term see, J. Begrich, Studien zu Deuterojesaja TB 20 (Munich: Kaiser, 1969) 128f. For a contrary view see, Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation?’, 41; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 40-55, 248-249; Goldingay, The Message of Isaiah 40-55, 262-263; Childs, Isaiah, 353.
3. - The Literary and Theological Context of the Servant Songs Part 2 (Isa. 56-66)

Before moving on to examine the servant songs as the literary and theological outworking of the earlier messianic oracles I will briefly outline their relationship to the chapters that follow and the final message of the book. This will demonstrate how the servant songs fit into the larger matrix of the holistic story unfolded in Isaiah.

Chapter 56 shows that the promised salvation purchased through the death and suffering of the servant (Isa. 52:13-52:12) has not yet occurred, nevertheless, Yahweh proclaims, ‘soon my salvation will come and my deliverance be revealed’ (56:1). The promise of salvation is for those who are faithful (56:2) and for the foreigner, even the eunuch who enters among God’s faithful people and holds fast to his covenant (56:3-6, cf. verse 4). The foreigner will receive an everlasting name that will not be cut off. The language of the law and obedience to the Sabbath is implied in these verses but this salvation reaches far beyond the confines of the law, as even the eunuch is welcomed. The theme of the gathering of God’s people and coming to his holy mountain is picked up in 56:7-8, relating to the outworking of the oracle in Isa. 2:1-5. There is a great contrast struck between the leaders of Israel, pictured as shepherds without understanding who turn to their own way (56:11), and the faithful mentioned in verses 1-8. The hardening oracle persists.

Isa. 57:1-13 is another passage on the futility and folly of idolatry that picks up elements of that line of thinking in chapters 40-55. This word against idolatry is the result of the unfaithful shepherds/leaders of Israel from 56:9-12 and shows a division between the unfaithful/unbelieving who will not participate in Yahweh’s deliverance as they are told to turn to their idols for deliverance (57:13) and the faithful who take refuge in Yahweh and possess the land and inherit on his holy mountain (57:13). The promise of restoration for the faithful is expanded in 57:14-21. The mercy of Yahweh is revealed in verses 16-19 and the mention of him as ‘high and lifted up’ (57:15) is a reminder of the one whom Isaiah encountered in Isa. 6:1. The same language had been applied to the suffering servant (52:13) and demonstrates how Yahweh can be merciful to his backsliding people (57:17). The

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30 The oracle itself is spoken of as completed action.
31 The eunuch would have been prohibited from the congregation by the law (Deuteronomy 23:1).
division of peoples is further seen in 57:21 because ‘there is no peace for the wicked.’ The peace pronounced for the far and near (57:19) is again a reminder of the promised peace in the work of the servant/Messiah (9:5-6; 53:5).

Chapter 58 answers the question that has been cast up by the previous chapters; who are those who will belong to the returning faithful? It shows that it is those who worship God with their whole lives and not just with the fulfilment of tradition and fasting as an outward honouring of Yahweh (cf. 29:13). The sin of God’s people is exposed (58:1) because their external worship (58:2) is not matched by justice and righteousness toward the poor and vulnerable (58:3-7), marks that ought to be seen among those who would come under the Messiah’s rule of justice and righteousness (9:6[7]; 11:4-5; 32:1; 42:1, 3-4; 53:11). The work of redemption accomplished by the servant was to have an impact on the people who, following the Messiah, should see their righteousness going before them (58:8). The building up of the people and their return was to be accomplished by their faithful and just living. Imagery related to redemption is also implicit in this chapter that seems to focus exclusively on moral exhortation. There was only one fast prescribed in the law, on the Yom Kippur (Lev. 23:26-23) and the mention of fasting in Isa. 58 would have reminded the people and the reader of the sacrifice of that day as described in Lev. 16. In that chapter (Lev. 16:21-22) the imagery of the hands of Aaron being laid upon the goat and the iniquity of the people being borne by the goat is what lies behind Isaiah 53:6. The question arises, were the people being reminded of what Yahweh had promised to do through his servant and then called to act in such a way that reflected the reality of the redemption accomplished for them? This makes sense of the language employed in this chapter.

The themes of chapter 58 are expanded upon in chapter 59 with regard to the people’s wickedness and oppression. The refrain that is heard throughout this chapter is that the people are lacking the justice and righteousness that would be the hallmark

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33 For a contrary opinion see Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 504-505. Goldingay mentions that similar imagery to Isaiah 53:6 might be seen in other parts of the Old Testament including Leviticus 16:21-22 but concludes that this is unlikely to be the background here. This is surprising in view of the fact that his section on Isaiah 52:13-53:12 entitled ‘The Passage’s Broader Background in the Old Testament’ (pages 477-481) focuses so heavily on the use of Leviticus 1-16.
of the Messiah’s reign (59:8-9, 11, 14) and they were without the light of the Messiah that was supposed to eradicate their darkness (59:9b; cf. 8:23). The people were still labouring under the curse of 6:9-10 because they are blind and grope like those with no eyes (59:10). The sin vocabulary of 52:13-52:12 is also found here in chapter 59; ‘Iniquities’ (verses 3, 4, 12c), ‘transgressions’ (12a, 12b, 13a), ‘sins’ (2b, 12b), ‘violence’ (6c). Not only does the sin language go back to the portrait of the servant suffering to remove these sins but verses 15b-21 picture Yahweh as the very embodiment of the servant who will bring salvation. This can be demonstrated by his seeing all the wickedness of the people which displeased him (59:15b) and that there was ‘no man’, ‘no one to intercede’, so ‘his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him’ (59:16) – language that is used in the context of the work of the servant (41:28; 51:5-6). Yahweh would be clothed in the garments that marked the servant (59:17), he would come as a redeemer to Zion (59:20a). The division between the wicked and the faithful who will benefit from the redemption accomplished by Yahweh and his servant (59:20b) is again evident in this chapter. Those who are redeemed ought not only to inherit the characteristics of justice and righteousness from the Messiah but they also, like him, are endowed by the Spirit with Yahweh’s words in their mouths (59:21).

The outworking of the realities outlined at the end of the previous chapter (59:15b-21) are again seen and expanded upon in chapter 60. The people’s darkness has gone and light has come to Zion, which now manifests the aspects of the Messiah’s character and this light will attract the nations (60:2-3) much as had been the purpose of the Messiah’s coming. The language is reminiscent of return from exile but the picture here is eschatological, in that such a gathering of nations had not happened in the Babylonian return and this also picks up imagery employed in the earlier messianic oracle in 11:10-16. This is also seen in the horticultural language of 60:21, which is a reminder of both 11:1, 10 and 53:1-3.

34 Light is also a defining aspect of the servant’s work; 42:6; 49:9; 50:10.
36 Notice that although it is obvious that Yahweh is the one in view in 59:20a it simply says that ‘a redeemer’ will come to Zion. The reader of Isaiah could easily be forgiven for supposing that such a one is the servant described in the preceding chapters.
37 The picture of rulers bringing their wealth to Jerusalem in 60:21-22 is consistent with the message of 52:13-53:12 where kings will shut their mouths because of the servant and many nations will benefit
Isa. 63:1-6 portrays Yahweh as a triumphant warrior who tramples the nations in vengeance and as bringing judgment upon the peoples. He is again personified in language that is reminiscent of the Messiah/servant figure of the earlier chapters, ‘speaking righteousness’ and ‘mighty to save’ (63:1; cf. 49:2; 50:4; 9:5; 11:4). A similar refrain is heard to that in 59:16 where it was Yahweh’s arm that brought him salvation and he would be the great judge of the nations. Isa. 63:7-14 focuses on Yahweh’s mercy and portrays this as a recapitulation of the exodus, where the angel of his presence (63:9) saved the people at that time. It may be supposed that the second exodus spoken of here relates to the return of the people from exile (in Babylon), but that is not evident from the surrounding context. The mention of Moses and the exodus motif once again links this presently proclaimed salvation to the Messiah/servant figure. As mentioned above, a number of scholars believe the servant is associated with or acts as a new Moses, bringing the people into a new exodus from sin. Isa. 63:15-19 is a prayer from the people that their present experience does not match the salvation just spoken of in the previous section (63:7-14). The expectation of God’s deliverance, previously promised, was still future.

Chapter 64 continues the prayer for mercy begun in 63:15-19, picking up language from previous oracles to emphasise the present experience of the people in contrast to the promises. The speaker is not explicitly identified, but it appears that the faithful remnant, who have heard of Yahweh’s mighty deeds (64:4), are now praying for him to come down and bring the promised salvation. They acknowledge that such salvation is only possible with him, but its certainty in light of present circumstances is in question (64:5c). The people do the only thing they can and confess that they are sinful and not righteous before God and even pick up the language of the clay and the potter (cf. 45:9), which had previously been an indictment against them. Whatever the circumstances faced by the people praying, it was a time when Jerusalem was not the great city the earlier oracles had stipulated she would be (64:10-12).

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38 The function of Isa. 62 will be picked up when commenting on Isa. 61 below.
Isa. 65:1-16 acts like a microcosm of the whole book of Isaiah in that it takes up and intersperses the themes of judgment and salvation; promising judgment for the stubborn and rebellious, those practising idolatry (65:3-5, 11) and salvation for a remnant/chosen people for the sake of his servants (65:8-9), calling forth the words of earlier chapters in Isa. 56-66 where the faithful become like the faithful servant and thereby become servants themselves. The eschatological realm is entered in 65:17-25, which pictures the promise of new heavens and a new earth. The promises of salvation throughout the book take on a new depth and complexity that shows that deliverance from present enemies was never the full flowering of Yahweh’s plan spoken of explicitly in Isa. 40-55. The fact that the Messiah/servant figure of the earlier portions of the book is tied to this eschatological promise is seen in the close use of images and language in 65:21-25 that is taken up from 11:6-9. This is ultimately the nail in the coffin of any final identification of the messianic figure with Hezekiah as he cannot be said to be connected to the eschatological dimensions of these oracles.

The great division between the peoples is continued throughout the final chapter with judgment for those choosing their own ways and who delight in abominations (66:3c) and those who are faithful, who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at Yahweh’s word (66:2). The opening verse returns to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7) where Yahweh reminds the reader that a house cannot be built for him as it could not contain his presence (2 Sam. 7:4-7). The people of Jerusalem could rejoice (66:10-11) because God would extend peace to her like a river (66:12), something evident in the plan of the Messiah/servant. Isa. 66:15-16 strengthens the dichotomy between the wicked and righteous / judgment and salvation and highlights again the promise of new heavens and a new earth (66:22). The identity of the figure who brings in the blessings of these final chapters must now be considered in light of this surrounding literary context.

4. - The Introduction of the Servant Songs (Isa. 42, 49, 50, 52-53 [61])

Before examining how the so-called ‘servant songs’ act as the fulfilment of the earlier messianic oracles of Isa. 1-39, it will be constructive to introduce this figure and how the servant has been understood within scholarship. It is also appropriate to consider the anointed figure in chapter 61 owing to the fact that he shares a number of literary
and thematic features with the servant and the earlier messianic figure, associations that have been noted by others.\(^{39}\)

Scholars take differing views as to the referent of the servant in these last three songs – the prophet,\(^{40}\) the Messiah,\(^{41}\) Israel,\(^{42}\) a new Moses,\(^{43}\) or an ambiguous figure.\(^{44}\) Though some offer a different referent for the figure in Isa. 42, there is a widespread consensus that the other three songs (Isa. 49, 50, 52-53) present the same servant. Before outlining my own arguments for seeing the servant as a Davidic figure in concert with the one described in the earlier messianic oracles, it will be necessary to examine the alternative views that have held most prominence within scholarship.

In light of the many references to Jacob-Israel as Yahweh’s servant (תּוֹרֵךְ) in Isa. 40-48 it would seem most natural to continue that identity into the opening verses of chapter 42.\(^{45}\) Moreover, the vocabulary of being ‘chosen’ and ‘upheld’ has already


\(^{42}\) Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 147; Muienburg, ‘Isaiah 40-66,’ 406-414.


\(^{44}\) Clines, I, He, We and They.

been used of Israel in 41:8, 10. Yet as has been aptly noted ‘The need for a fresh introduction of the servant after reference had already been made to Israel as ‘servant’ in 41:8-9, suggests that this servant differs from Israel.’ Added to this is the fact that the corporate view of the servant in 42:1-9 is at times self-defeating. As one example; after noting Whybray and North’s critique of the corporate view of the servant in these verses, owing to the exclusively passive role Israel has played in Isa. 40-48 (over against the active role of the servant), Wilcox and Paton-Williams go on to describe the portrayal of the servant as a future idealized version of the community in opposition to their present blind and deaf state (42:18, 19). Much like von Rad, Wildberger, and Conrad they see the democratization of the ‘royal’ promises and commission now given to Israel that were first given to an individual king, seeing evidence for this at the end of Isa. 40-55 (cf. 55:3-4). They admit that there is a difference in the character of the servant in the first servant song and throughout Isa. 40-48 but not a difference in identity (i.e. Israel).

There are, however, good reasons to question this view of the servant. In 42:1-4 the servant is presented as ‘chosen’, ‘accepted’, endowed with the Spirit and bringing true and righteous judgment. However, in 42:18-20 the servant is seen as ‘blind’, ‘deaf’, and ‘seeing much without observing.’ A contrast is struck between two kinds of servant. For those advocating Israel as the referent for both, they need to resort to idealizing the picture of the servant in the opening verses or speaking of a righteous remnant version of exilic Israel that is not evident in the text. Goldingay sees the link between the servant Jacob-Israel in 41:8-16 and the servant of 42:1-6 as


ultimately compelling.\textsuperscript{52} He knows that the reality of national Israel does not fit the ideal picture of 42:1-6 (7-9) so makes these verses out to be what Israel was to aspire to be but failed to be in reality.\textsuperscript{53} Abernethy follows the same line of thinking when he sees 42:1-9 as ‘an ideal held out before [Israel] as a vision and aspiration.’\textsuperscript{54} However, 42:1-6 (7-9) is not cast as simply ‘an aspiration’ to be fulfilled but as an actuality that will be carried out by the servant described in these verses. Isa. 42:1-9 does not present the reader with a vacant role designated ‘servant’ that Israel fails to take on, but as someone appointed and anointed by Yahweh to carry out the very plans chapters 40-41 have been describing. That is not to deny that Israel was given a commission to be a light to the nations or that the figure in 42:1-9 may not be presented in an idealized manner. In fact as Webb points out, ‘the servant is far too ideal a figure to represent Israel in any direct sense.’ That is because, as he goes on to point out, the servant fills God with delight, is quiet and gentle, faithful and persevering, and does not falter or become discouraged. However, Israel is resentful and complaining (40:27), fearful and dismayed (41:10), blind, deaf (42:18-19), and disobedient (42:23-24).\textsuperscript{55} The only manner in which Israel can be meaningfully associated with verses 1-9 is in relation to the ‘bruised reed’ and ‘smouldering wick’ of verse 3, something that becomes more evident in chapter 49.\textsuperscript{56} Abernethy and Williamson take 42:1-9 as a commission for (national) Israel to be God’s ‘lead agent’ in bringing light and justice to the nations but Israel fails to do so because, as verses 19-20 make clear, they are themselves in darkness, spiritually blind, and imprisoned. It is then proposed that the ‘ideal’ held out in the opening verses of chapter 42 finds its fulfilment in Isa. 49-55.\textsuperscript{57} Once again, this assumption is never proven, nor is there a compelling reason given for taking Isa. 42:1-6 (7-9) as an aspiration, ideal, or visionary commission, while seeing the next three servant songs as having a definite referent.

\textsuperscript{52} Goldingay, \textit{Isaiah}, 239. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Goldingay, \textit{Isaiah}, 240-243. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Abernethy, \textit{The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom}, 141; cf. Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 142. \\
\textsuperscript{55} B. G. Webb, \textit{The Message of Isaiah}, BST (Nottingham: IVP, 1996) 170. \\
\textsuperscript{56} Webb, \textit{The Message of Isaiah}, 170. \\
\textsuperscript{57} Abernethy, \textit{The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom}, 141; cf. Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 142.
Another major issue with the interpretation of those who take the corporate view of the servant in 42:1-6 (7-9) and an individual view of the servant in the other three servant songs is that it misses the force of the parallel contrasts, particularly evident in 42:1-9 & 18-25 and 49:1-4 & 5-6. Just as there is movement from one kind of servant to another in Isa. 42:1-9 & 18-25, there is a similar movement in 49:1-4 & 5-6 where, in the opening verses, the servant is pictured as being called from the womb, one in whom Yahweh will be glorified. This servant (in 49:1-4) is given the task in verses 5-6 of bringing back Jacob and gathering Israel (v. 5) while also being a light to the nations and bringing salvation to the ends of the earth (v. 6). The servant in verses 1-4 must be different from the Jacob and Israel needing to be gathered and brought back in verses 5-6 and thus why the corporate view of the servant does not work in the opening verses. As Abernethy, who takes Israel to be the referent in 42:1-9, states, ‘the servant in Isaiah 49-55 closely resembles Israel, so much so that he bears the name Israel and takes up parts of its mission, but the servant is not Israel, for he has a mission to reach Israel.’ Similarly Wilcox and Paton-Williams argue, ‘it is clear that a servant who has a mission to Israel cannot simply be Israel himself.’ Yet the movement from one ‘type’ of servant Israel to another seems evident in both of the first two servant songs and therefore their conclusions should be applied to chapter 42 as well.

Wilcox and Paton-Williams, Abernethy, and Williamson, have suggested that the servant referent in Isa. 49-55 is related to the prophet. What seems strange about this interpretation is the fact that they all agree that the servant in 42:1-9 is portrayed as a ‘royal figure’ and that this royal status is transferred to corporate Israel from the individual described in the first half of the book. As mentioned above, they also see Isa. 49-55 as the fulfilment of the role offered to Israel in 42:1-9. Arguing for the

59 A commission also given to the servant in 42:6b.
61 Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 147.
64 Wilcox and Paton Williams, ‘The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,’ 86-87; Williams, *Variations on a Theme*, 132, 135-144; Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 139.
democratization of the Davidic covenant and kingship to Israel as a mandate for her position as servant and then transferring this role to the prophet - especially as he brings light to the nations and פָּדַת in the subsequent servant songs - seems contradictory. It could be argued that פָּדַת need not be limited to the duties of a king. However, one of the reasons these scholars take Isa. 42:1-9 to describe a servant portrayed in ‘royal guise’ is precisely because he is the bringer of פָּדַת which is most often a royal duty. The prophet is not king nor claims to be so throughout the book of Isaiah. The one who is seen to bring righteousness and פָּדַת in the oracles of Isa. 1-39 (9:5-6[6-7]; 11:1-15) is clearly a royal figure and has many overlapping functions with the servant. A prophet can feel solidarity with the people (cf. 6:5), but the view of Isaiah in the first part of the book is of a man who needs atonement (6:5-6) and not as one bringing atonement (53:6, 10-11). Why would this be any different in Isa. 40-55? It does not make sense of the flow of the material in Isa. 40-55 to say that the royal promises are transferred to servant Israel, then taken on by the prophet, and re-transferred to the nation (cf. 55:3).

The most difficult position to sustain is the identification of the servant in Isa. 52:13-53:12 with either a corporate entity or the prophet. Having identified 49:3 with Israel and seeing the obvious connection between this figure and the servant in 52:13-53:12, Dumbrell is forced to take a corporate view for the fourth servant song even though he concedes that the language of suffering ‘seems so personal.’ In what meaningful sense could Israel suffer to atone for itself and in what sense did the nation die? Also, it must be asked in what sense the prophet, who is portrayed as sinful earlier in the book (6:5), could make atonement for the people (cf. 52:13-53:12) when an unblemished sacrifice was a requirement of the law (cf. 53:9)? It seems most

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66 Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 139-141.
67 It may be pointed out that the prophet speaking in the servant songs is not Isaiah ben Amoz but most scholars are in agreement that the one speaking in these chapters is portraying himself as that prophet.
obvious to take the one speaking this oracle as the prophet himself but he speaks of
the servant in the third person and includes himself among those who have ‘gone
astray’ (53:6a) and whose iniquity has been laid on the servant by Yahweh (53:6b).

Finally, two other interpretations of the servant in these chapters, which have
held scholarly attention, are those that see him as a new Moses figure or as a reference
to Cyrus. That there are obvious parallels between the contexts of the servant songs
and a new exodus theme is in little doubt. Nor is it without foundation to draw a
connection between the servant and Moses. The most thorough exegetical
presentation of this connection can be found in the work of Hugenberger.\(^70\) One of the
most compelling arguments for associating the servant with Moses is the fact that
Moses is referred to as the servant of Yahweh around forty times. It would also make
sense that the one who would lead Israel on a new exodus would be a figure portrayed
as a new Moses. However, these associations need not exclude the many Davidic
parallels that also exist within the servant songs and to overemphasise the Moses
connections to the exclusion of the Davidic is without warrant in the text. For
instance, to highlight that Moses is so often designated as the servant of Yahweh
makes the connection with David even more compelling, owing to fact that David is
referred to by that title more often than any Old Testament figure. As Block points
out, on around forty occasions the name ‘David’ and יְהוָּה appear in appositional
relationship, which compares with only sixteen such associations with Moses.’\(^71\) Also,
before offering his reason to see the servant as a new Moses figure, Hugenberger
spends several pages highlighting why many scholars see the servant as a
royal/Davidic figure and then offers a critique of this position. The reasons he gives
for the Davidic association are extremely compelling but his critique of the position is
not convincing.\(^72\) Two examples should suffice. First, he notes that יְהוָּה in Isa. 42:4
is nowhere else ascribed to kings. However, in Deut. 17:18, before the monarchy is
established, Yahweh gives instructions to the people for the coming king, that,
‘…when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a

\(^{70}\) Hugenberger, ‘The Servant of the LORD in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure,’
105-139.
\(^{71}\) Block, ‘Israel’s Messiah,’ 47.
\(^{72}\) Hugenberger, ‘The Servant of the LORD in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure,’
114-118.
copy of this law (נַחַל), approved by the Levitical priests.’ It is by that law that he must govern in justice, the very thing the servant in Isa. 42:4 will establish.\(^73\) Second, Hugenberger believes that there is no obvious suggestion of royalty in the servant’s multiple calling to ‘open eyes that are blind’ (42:7). Nevertheless, in the context of the coming of a clearly Davidic figure in Isa. 9 it is explicitly said that surrounding his coming, ‘The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined’ (Isa. 9:1[2]). It is clear from the context of the first servant song that the opening of blind eyes is associated with light coming to the nations (42:6) and to those ‘who sit in darkness’ (42:7). This is also true of the second servant song where the servant will be made ‘a light for the nations’ (49:6). When assessing Hugenberger’s position, Block concludes, ‘While support for identifying Moses as the messianic servant is tenuous, the evidence for David is overwhelming.’\(^74\)

The associations between Cyrus and the servant on first reading are also strong enough to warrant consideration. Striking parallels exist in 44:28-45:13 with the servant songs. There is the coming to pass of former things that had been spoken (42:9; 49:1; 44:26, 28), the parallels of anointing (42:1; 45:1), calling (42:6; 45:4), and taking by the hand of both (42:6; 45:1). The work of both Cyrus and the servant will also be for the benefit of Israel (44:28; 45:4, 13; cf. 42:7; 49:5-7). Each of these parallels indicates that an intentional connection is being drawn between Cyrus and the servant, but as suggested above, this is in relation to the continued use of the rhetorical hardening hermeneutic of Isa. 6:9-10. One clear reason for not seeing Cyrus and the servant as speaking of the same figure is in reference to the servant’s explicit acknowledgement of Yahweh (49:1-5; 50:4-10) and the continual assertion that Cyrus does not know Yahweh (45:4ff.). Also, Goldingay, who sees the links between Cyrus and the servant as significant, disagrees with the direct correlation between these figures because Cyrus is pictured as ‘treading on people’ (41:25) while the servant will not break bruised reeds (42:3).\(^75\) In a later work Goldingay goes as far as to

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\(^{73}\) For an argument in favour of relating הַנֵּר to kingship see, J. Jensen, *The Use of tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate With the Wisdom Tradition* (CBQMS 3; Washington, D.C., The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973) 89-95.

\(^{74}\) Block, ‘Israel’s Messiah,’ 47.

\(^{75}\) Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 239.
suggest that ‘the servant is an antitype of Cyrus.’ The most compelling reason for rejecting the direct association between Cyrus and the servant is the same as that offered in critique of the corporate Israel referent, and that is that Cyrus is never pictured in Isaiah or elsewhere as suffering for the sin of the people or the nations (Isa. 50:6-9; 53:1-12).

It has not been possible to offer a full critique of every non-Davidic referent for the servant but I have tried to highlight some of the reasons that indicate caution in embracing these alternatives. Below I will lay out the evidence for the servant as a Davidic figure and, therefore, why he should be seen as the fulfilment of the promised messianic figure in Isa. 1-39.

5. - The Servant Songs as the Fulfilment of the Messianic Expectations in Isa. 1-39

That there is a consistent unfolding portrait of the servant in the songs is ably demonstrated in the words of Block, who sees the role of the servant evolving from one who is gentle but strong, establishing justice and righteousness, and carrying out a salvific work to one who meets increasing opposition and suffering that will ultimately lead to vindication.

The lack of a clear identity for the servant may indicate a sense of ambiguity and holds out the possibility of a future fulfilment. Below I will lay out my contention that the servant figure in the songs (and Isa. 61) is consistent with and a development of the figure described in Isa. 7:14; 9:5-6[6-7] and 11:1-16. It is also my contention that this figure was the expected deliverer that neither Hezekiah nor Cyrus could be because the expectations had universal and much wider implications than could be fulfilled by any contemporary king. I believe that the ambiguity of the servant is related to the rhetorical use of Isa. 6:9-10 and thus why throughout Isa. 40-55 the people are called to consider, listen, and remember the former things and not let their blindness and deafness cause them to miss Yahweh’s plan.

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77 Block, ‘Israel’s Messiah,’ 49-50.
78 Clines, *I, He, We and They*, 25-27.
First, a word must be given to the immediate context. Although the introduction of the term ‘servant’ occurs at the end of chapter 41, the servant is given a more prominent place in Yahweh’s unfolding plan outlined in chapter 42. The servant has the Spirit put upon him (42:1) and will bring justice to the nations.⁸⁰ Both the endowment with the Spirit and the task of bringing forth justice are clearly evident in the earlier messianic figure of Isa. 11:2-5 (cf. 9:6b[7b]). Both the servant and Yahweh work in partnership to bring about the long anticipated plan (42:1-17). As in previous chapters the motif of blindness and deafness is picked up (42:18-19; cf. 40:27-28). Following the use of the blindness/deafness motif it would seem most natural to see the prophet (and possibly his disciples) calling the people to recognise Yahweh’s plan. The vision of these words lies beyond the temporal reality of the people’s context and is cast as a general proclamation for all Jacob-Israel to ‘hear’. The prophet (much as in 6:5) has solidarity with the people’s position through the use of the first person plural pronouns. Conrad believes at this point that the text here presents ‘the case persuasively that Yahweh is about to fulfil his plans for the world announced long ago.’⁸¹ The ‘have you not heard?’ question is used this time for Jacob-Israel as it had been toward others (42:18-20; cf. 40:21, 28; 37:26). In the earlier context (40:27-28) Jacob-Israel had accused Yahweh of hiding himself from them (cf. Isa. 8:17), but here this was the result of the people’s own blindness and deafness. As the community is seen as blind and deaf that means they ‘cannot see and hear what Yahweh is doing in this new phase of his plan’ and therefore Jacob-Israel is invited to ‘hear about deliverance and restoration.’⁸² In relation to 40:27 and 42:18-20 Watts states that ‘Jacob-Israel is criticized for her spiritual obtuseness…it is her failure to believe the prophetic word that hinders her recognition of Yahweh’s activity.’⁸³ Clearly, as with the earlier messianic figure, Jacob-Israel is unable to recognise the agent of Yahweh’s plan. In the context of 42:23-24, the deliverance given to Israel is from their sin against Yahweh; something that comes to prominence throughout the servant songs (cf. 52:13-53:12).

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⁸⁰ Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 235.
⁸¹ Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 236.
⁸² Conrad, Reading the Latter Prophets, 235.
⁸³ Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation?’, 47.
The First Servant Song (Isa. 42:1-9)

So what can be said about the servant in 42:1-9? First, he is the same figure as portrayed in the subsequent servant songs not only through use of similar language but also through consistency of thought and structure. Like the other three servant songs he is an individual. He is a royal figure who is closely aligned with Yahweh’s purposes for Jacob-Israel as well as being a light to the nations (cf. 49:6). As with the birth of the Immanuel child the promise of his coming is announced with ‘behold’ (7:14; 42:1, 9). It also repeats the ‘behold’ of the previous chapter (41:29) to draw a distinction between the worthless idols that are a delusion and the servant of Yahweh who will bring about his purposes. As people walking in ‘darkness’ will see a great ‘light’ at the advent of a Davidic child (9:1a[2a]) so the servant will be a ‘light’ for the nations and bring out those who sit in ‘darkness’ (42:6b, 7c; cf. 9:1b[2b]). He will be given the task of ‘opening the eyes of the blind’ (42:7a), something that was promised in the return and restoration of the people in Isa. 35:5, where ‘the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.’ The promised restoration of chapter 35 had to stretch beyond the deliverance from Assyria in the Hezekiah narratives as the hardening oracle, which caused blindness and deafness, persisted beyond his time. However, the servant is being presented as the one who will bring about the hopes Isa. 35 offered. It will be the zeal of Yahweh that accomplishes the work of the child (9:6c[7c]) and when he works through the servant he will not share his glory with another (42:8a). It was the task of the ‘wonderful counsellor’ to establish and uphold the kingdom of David with ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ (9:6b) and so the servant will bring forth ‘justice’ to the nations (42:1c, 2c), establish ‘justice’ in the earth (42:4b) and was himself called in ‘righteousness’ (42:6a). This task of faithfully bringing justice and righteousness to bear was also the task of the shoot of Jesse (11:4a, 5; cf. 32:1) who would stand as a

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‘signal’ for the peoples and one of whom the nations would inquire. The concepts of ‘light’, ‘justice’, and ‘law’ mentioned in these verses all come together in the eschatological oracle of 2:2-4.\textsuperscript{87} Isa. 16:5 had also foretold of one coming to the throne of David ‘who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness’ a medial representation between the messianic figure and the servant.\textsuperscript{88} So the servant is given as a covenant for the people and acts as a light to the nations (42:6c; cf. 55:3).\textsuperscript{89}

Also important to the identity of the figure pictured in the songs is the designation ‘servant’. Outside Isaiah the language of ‘servant’, ‘chosen’, and ‘upheld’ is used particularly of King David (cf. Ps. 89:3-4).\textsuperscript{90} In light of Ps. 89:4, the promise that David’s offspring would be established and that the covenant was the grounds for this, Isa. 42:1-9 could be speaking of a king with whom the people share solidarity and the benefits of his covenant (42:6 cf. 55:3). There was already the mention of one who would sit on the throne of David and establish it forever (Isa. 9:6[7]) and coupled with the idea of the inviolability of Zion this parallel seems to make the most sense of the contrasting view of this servant (42:1-9) and the one described in 42:18-20.\textsuperscript{91} A further confirmation of the royal identity of the servant is suggested in the words of Oswalt who states, ‘..the language here is that of presentation, similar to that used of Saul to Samuel (1 Sam. 9:17)...and David (2 Sam. 3:18). It is particularly common with reference to kings.’\textsuperscript{92}

Most strikingly of all, the servant will be endowed by the Spirit of Yahweh (42:1b) something clearly repeated from the act of Spirit endowment on the shoot of

\textsuperscript{87} For the connection between 42:4 and 2:2-4 see, Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 137; Dumbrell, \textit{Covenant & Creation}, 193-194.
\textsuperscript{88} For a similar conclusion see, Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah 40-66}, 110.
\textsuperscript{89} For a full thesis defence of the concept that the servant was appointed to establish justice and righteousness in the context of covenant, see J. M. Muutuki, \textit{Covenant in Relation to Justice and Righteousness in Isaiah 42:1-9} (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2013).
\textsuperscript{90} It is also worth noting the numerous references to David and his household throughout Isaiah to see that this is not an idea imported from outside the book. See, Isa. 7:2, 13; 9:6; 11:1, 10; 16:5; 22:9, 22; 29:1; 37:35; 38:5; 55:3. Note especially the specific phrase ‘my servant David’ in 37:35. See also, Williamson, \textit{Variations on a Theme}, 135.
\textsuperscript{91} Lindsey states, ‘The expression ‘my servant’ is not only a title of honor, but also, since Yahweh is viewed as king of Israel in the immediate context (41:21; cf. 43:15; 44:6), a description implying royal characteristics.’ Lindsey, ‘The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9,’ 15. This may connect to the earlier oracle of Isa. 9:5 where the figure is designated ‘prince of peace’. The royal relationship is king to prince (cf. Isa. 32:1).
\textsuperscript{92} Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah 40-66}, 109.
Jesse (11:2). Watts notes a parallel and contrast between the servant and Jacob-Israel that also relates to Hezekiah. Israel is pictured in exile (42:21-24) for their disobedience (cf. Isa. 39:8) while the servant is pictured as obedient to Yahweh’s will (50:4-9, 10) and his obedience and faithfulness leads to Israel’s success with the restoration of Israel’s homeland and subjugation of kings (52:15; cf. 53:12). When Hezekiah is faithful to Yahweh’s will and obedient to him the whole nation benefits (36-37; 40-41) but when he is unfaithful and proud (39:1-8) the whole nation suffers. The picture of the nation suffering is brought out in 42:21-24 but in solidarity with the servant they are pictured as restored (52:13-53:12). The portrait cast in 42:1-9 and the subsequent portraits of the servant demonstrate a figure much like Hezekiah in that he embodies much that is expected of the royal figure in the early chapters of Isaiah (7:14; 9:5-6[6-7]; 11:1-5), he is faithful to Yahweh’s will and Yahweh himself calls, chooses, and equips him. The contrast drawn with Hezekiah is the negative note of unfaithfulness on the part of that great king in chapter 39, which sets him apart from the earlier messianic figure. However, no such wavering is seen in the portrayal of the servant who, much like the early messianic figure, was fully obedient to Yahweh’s will and set apart from the nation of Israel. This was the true expectation of the book from the beginning.

Reading holistically Goldingay notes that this is the perspective and expectation of the book:

First, 37:35 described David as ‘my servant’ and earlier chapters of Isaiah have expressed the conviction that some future time Yhwh would provide Israel with a human leader who would fulfil the ideal of the Davidic king (see, for example, Isa. 9; 11; 32). The portrait of the servant in 42:1-4 has royal features, not least the concern

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93 Miscall, Isaiah, 103. Miscall not only recognises the similar language used of the shoot and the servant but goes on to state, ‘with both the shoot and the servant we are dealing with royal or messianic terms and images…’ He further points out ‘11:1-9 and 42:1-4 involve all the earth and the nations; world rule is a messianic claim (at 2:2-4).’ Also, Sawyer describes the language of 42:1-4 as ‘reminiscent of the Messianic language of chapter 11, and some of the Royal Psalms…’ See, Sawyer, Isaiah, Vol. 2, 65. For others who see some connection between the two figures see, Hugenberger, ‘The Servant of the LORD in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure,’ 115; Goldingay, Isaiah, 239; Goldingay, The Message of Isaiah 40-55, 150; Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 136; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 134; John Oswalt, ‘Isaiah’ in T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (eds.) New Dictionary of Biblical Theology (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 219. In reference to the servant in Targum Jonathan and particularly at 42:1 Blenkinsopp comments, ‘the messianic status of the Isaian Servant is quite explicit.’ Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 40-55, 83.

94 Watts, ‘Echoes from the Past,’ 488.
with mispat. In principle it is entirely plausible to see these verses as having ‘messianic’ references in this sense…

The fact that confusion remains with regards to the exact figure being spoken of in these verses is portrayed as a means of differentiating between those who will be blind and deaf to the purposes of Yahweh and his plan in raising up the servant, and the faithful remnant (disciples) (cf. 8:16). The following verses (42:10-17) after the description of the servant in 42:1-9 add weight to the assertion that he is connected with the figure described in the early chapters of Isa. 1-39. The description of Yahweh in these verses is similar to how the figure is designated in those early chapters, especially the reference to ḫr ‘warrior/mighty’ God (42:13) and the activity of Yahweh’s ‘fury’ (9:1[2], 5-6[6-7]; 11:3; cf. 10:21-26; 37:32). If one retains the integral unity of the first servant song in its present literary context this should help to answer the concern that the gentle ministry of the servant in 42:2-3 is in contrast to the figure in 11:4 who slays the wicked with the breath of his mouth. In the partial literary fulfilment of the promises made regarding the early messianic figure in 11:1-5, justice was indeed established but it was Yahweh’s doing, not his kingly representative (cf. 9:6[7]; 37:32b-36; 42:4). The distinction between agency and agent and the function of Yahweh and his servant in the fulfilment of his plan is necessarily blurred as the language commits the reader to perceive (cf. 42:6-7, 16). That Yahweh’s people are once again blind to what he is planning to do to rescue them, not only from their current foe (Babylon) but the greatest enemy of the book (sin), is well seen in 42:18-20. Commenting on the accusation that Yahweh is blind to the condition of Jacob-Israel Watts states, ‘…in truth it is the people who are blind and deaf and who, in spite of his teaching and chastising them, have persisted in obtuseness. It is because of their ‘unwillingness’ that he gave them up to be plundered and hidden in prison (42:24).

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95 Goldingay, The Message of Isaiah 40-55, 150.
97 Miscall, Isaiah, 104.
98 Watts, “Consolation or Confrontation?” 39. Watts puts this section 42:18-25 under the heading ‘Trials Including Jacob-Israel’ and draws out again the covenant lawsuit imagery so prevalent in Isa. 1-39. Also, the mention of ‘prisons’ in these verses may again indicate an Assyrian setting as the most appropriate initial setting for these words. See, Westermann, Isaiah 40-66, 112; Smith, ‘Isaiah 40-55: Which Audience,’ 708. The connection is being made once again between the people’s blindness with regard to Hezekiah as the expected messianic figure and what the people will continue to miss.
The Second Servant Song (Isa. 49:1-12)

The portrait of the servant in the second song (49:1-6[7-12]) is clearly the continuation of the portrait that began in 42:1-9. As the description of the servant in 42:1-4 is expanded in 42:5-9 so a similar movement is evident in 49:1-6 (where the servant is speaking) and 49:7-12 (where his calling is outlined).\(^99\) The connection is further developed from the many parallels between these two portraits. Both figures are designated ‘servant’ (42:1; 49:3), they have a mission to the ‘coastlands’ (42:4b; 49:1a), they are ‘called’ (42:6a; 49:1b) and ‘chosen’ (42:1a; 49:7c), they are closely related to ‘Israel’ (42:1; 49:3) and given a task for the sake of Israel (42:3, 6c; 49:5, 8c; cf. 9:2[3]), both are given as a ‘covenant to/for the people’ (42:6c; 49:8b), they act as ‘a light to/for the nations’ (42:6d; 49:6c), and they work for the ‘prisoner’ (42:7a; 49:9a) and those dwelling in ‘darkness’ (42:7b; 49:9a; cf. 9:1[2]). Although the servant in 49:1-12 is not explicitly said to bring forth - that key term for kingship - the fact that he is called to ‘establish’ the land (49:8c; cf. 9:6[7]) and that a time will come when ‘Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down…’ (49:7b; cf. 52:12-13), gives strong support for the idea that he is also a royal figure and continuing the earlier portrait of 42:1-9. As Smith puts it, ‘The informed reader who can connect the dots back to the interlinking message in 42:1-13 already knows that the responsibilities of the Servant of the Lord involved the task of bringing justice to the nations.’\(^100\)

There are also reasons to believe that the portrait of the servant in 49:1-12 is at many points alluding back to the figure in the earlier messianic oracles. There is the link between birth language used in 7:14; 9:5[6] and 49:1. First, in each case the figure is either ‘called’ or ‘given’ for a specific purpose and that purpose will have an affect on the house of David or Israel more generally. Also, there is an important focus on names in each case. In 7:14 the child is to be called ‘Immanuel’, in 9:5[6] he is designated ‘Wonderful Counsellor…’, and in 49:1 the servant specifies that Yahweh had ‘named my name.’ In none of these cases is the name that is given assumed to be a proper name but a designation of what the figure will do.\(^101\) Second, the ‘establishing’ of the land (9:6[7]; 49:8c), the bringing of ‘light’ to those in

\(^{100}\) Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 342.
\(^{101}\) Even in 49:3 the name given to the servant is ‘Israel’.
‘darkness’ (9:1[2]; 49:6b, 9a), and the increase of ‘joy’ that is seen in the wider contexts of both the messianic and servant oracles (9:2[3]; 49:13) demonstrates a unity of purpose. Third, both figures are given an active role for their ‘mouths’ (as a ‘rod’, 11:4c and as a ‘sharp sword’, 49:2a), they are called to ‘recover the remnant’ and ‘bring back the preserved’ of Israel (11:11a, 16b; 49:5b, 6), nations and kings will come to both figures to ‘inquire’ or ‘bow down’ (11:10; 49:7b; cf. 52:15) in connection with the promise of Isa. 2:2-4 (cf. 2:3c; 42:4c), and the return and regathering of the nation in a new exodus will take place across a ‘highway’ established by Yahweh (11:16a; 49:11). The context of the servant’s work is presented as the outworking of the promise of regathering ‘from the coastlands of the sea’ (11:11; 49:1) and ‘from the four corners of the earth’ (11:12) because he will bring the people back ‘from afar…from the north…and from the west’ (49:12). As mentioned above, in both the contexts of the messianic figure and the servant this return is to take place across a ‘highway’, something also promised in the great restoration oracles in 35:8 and 40:3. That the coming of the servant is the culmination of all these ‘highway’ promises is strengthen by the language of the geological restructuring of mountains and roads in both 40:4 and 49:11. If these connections were simply on the linguistic level it need not indicate a direct connection between the messianic figure of the earlier chapters and the servant. However, when these connections are added to those already outlined in the first servant song - of which the second is the clear continuation - and the thematic and contextual parallels are also taken into account, the reader is drawn to the conclusion that the fuller development of the themes outlined in the earlier oracles are found here in the servant songs.

As mentioned above, in relation to the work of Block, Isa. 49 prepares the reader for an unexpected turn in the fortunes of the servant, something that will come to prominence in the third and fourth songs. Not everyone will understand or accept the work of the servant to bring back the nation (cf. 42:18-20) and therefore the reader is told that the servant will be ‘one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation’ (49:7a). This theme will be amplified in the following servant songs and will be seen to be a part of Yahweh’s plan to restore his people.
The Third Servant Song (Isa. 50:4-11)

That Isa. 50:1-11 is a continuous unit of thought, owing to the repeated use of questions (יִדְבַּג לא יִדְבַּג) followed by answers (יָסִיר לא יָסִיר), has been noted by others. The third servant song begins with another negative portrayal of God’s people who are described as having been ‘sold for your inquities, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away’ (50:1). The people are again seen to be in rebellion against Yahweh and there is no man willing to answer his call, so he will be the one to bring his people deliverance (50:2). However, in verse 4 a figure is introduced who will answer Yahweh’s call, one whose ear is awakened ‘to listen as a disciple’ (50:4). In verse 5 the servant is again seen to be completely different from the people (cf. 48:18) when it says for the second time that Yahweh ‘opened my ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.’ It has been suggested that a deliberate contrast between the disobedient people (49:14-50:3) and the obedient servant (50:4-11) is being presented. Here is a servant, much like the messianic figure of the earlier chapters, who is undivided in his allegiance to Yahweh and ready to do what no one in Israel was willing or able to do (49:3; cf. 39:8). This servant is connected to the preceding portrait of the one who thought he may have ‘spent my strength for nothing and vanity’ (49:4) and who was ‘despised and abhorred’ (49:7a) because he faces ‘humiliation and spitting’ as the people ‘strike’ him and ‘pluck out his beard’ (50:6). Much like the servant in 42:4 who would ‘not grow faint or be discouraged,’ this servant knows ‘I am not disgraced…I will not be ashamed’ (50:7). Like the servant in 49:4 who is sure ‘my right is with Yahweh, and my recompense with my God’ the servant here believes ‘he who vindicates me is near’ (50:8a) and ‘the Lord Yahweh helps me’ (50:9a). This emphasis on the dependence of the servant upon the work and help of Yahweh also comes across strongly in each of the

103 Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 398. For a similar parallel construction see, Goldingay, Isaiah, 289.
104 This connection has also been noted by Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 381.
105 Others have noted the strong connections between the servant in Isa. 49 and 50 in this regard. See, M. Gignilliat, ‘Who is Isaiah’s Servant? Narrative Identity and Theological Potentiality,’ SJT 61 (2008) 125-136 (133); Abernethy, The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom, 143.
early messianic oracles (cf. 7:14; 9:6[7]; 11:1-4). There is here, in 50:7-9, the employment of legal language as the servant appears to stand trial before the people but is confident that he will be vindicated by Yahweh. Unlike the people, against whom the prophet has been continually bringing a legal dispute (or covenant lawsuit) from the prosecutor Yahweh, the servant will be vindicated. In the following song his vindicated or righteous status will be the means by which the people are made righteous (53:11). Just as 42:1 opened with a call for the people to ‘behold’ the servant (cf. 52:13) so three times in verses 9-11 of Isa. 50 the people are called to ‘behold’ the servant and what he is doing. At this point when the servant’s suffering is beginning to take the stage as the central theme, the people are called to ‘behold’ to ‘look’ at what Yahweh is doing through his servant. It is an indication that the people need to pay attention to how Yahweh is going to fulfil his earlier plans through this figure in a way that was unexpected by his blind people.

The connections between this servant and the portraits of the servant in the first and second songs are clearly seen, even if the intensity of opposition from the people to his mission has increased. However, the explicit parallels with the earlier messianic oracles are not as clear as those in the previous two songs. Some indication of relationship is seen in the continued theme of calling out those ‘walking in darkness’ to come to the ‘light’ (9:1[2]; 50:10b, 11b; cf. 2:5). There is also the further development of receiving instruction (11:2-4; 50:4-5) and ‘mouth’ imagery that ties these figures together (11:4b; 50:4a; cf. 49:2a). Nevertheless, the affinities are not direct enough to draw an unambiguous line between the two. The connections are rather developed through the flow of the whole message that the book has been unfolding and how those who could not ‘see’ or ‘perceive’ have now turned against Yahweh’s chosen servant. That some of the people will begin to see Yahweh’s plan and the purpose of his servant’s suffering will became evident in the fourth song.

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106 For the importance of the title ‘Lord Yahweh’ and its fourfold repetition in this song, see, Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah 40-66, 323; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 380.
108 This will become explicit in Isa. 52:15.
109 For the connection between 50:10b, chapter 9 and the eschatological promise of 2:5 see, Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 386.
The Fourth Servant Song (Isa. 52:13-53:12)

The fourth servant song acts as the crescendo of many themes that have been building throughout the book. Here is a figure who is intertextually tied to certain motifs established in the earlier messianic oracles. Here also, the theme of suffering that began to appear in the first two songs, and was seen more clearly in the third, is presented in at an unprecedented level in the fourth servant song. It also becomes evident that it is through the suffering of the servant that the long-promised salvation of Yahweh would come to fulfilment. This is not just the fulfilment of the salvation that came to the fore in chapter 40ff but also ties together the threads of a greater salvation - than deliverance from the nations - that was presented in Isa. 1-39.

Chapter 52 begins with a promise of restoration for God’s people who are represented by Zion/Jerusalem. The context in 52:1-12 draws on and develops material found throughout the book. There is the promise of release from bondage and captivity (52:2; cf. 14:1-2; 42:7; 49:9), new exodus themes (52:4, 11-12), the redemption and return of the people accompanied by joyful singing (52:8-9; cf. 35:10), salvation accomplished by the arm of Yahweh (52:10; cf. 30:30; 40:10), and the removal of the unholy and unclean (52:11; 35:8). The context brings into sharp focus the ‘good news’ of salvation and restoration (52:7) that has been building from the earliest pages of the book (cf. 2:2-4). The promised salvation had been filtered through the mighty Davidic figure who would establish justice and righteous (9:6[7]; 11:3-5), but how this would be accomplished was beyond the comprehension of the people (6:9-10). It would not be accomplished by self-exaltation (39:2-4, 8) but through humility and suffering (52:13-53:12).

The fourth servant song beings with the familiar call for the people to ‘Behold’ something important (52:13; cf. 7:14; 42:1; 49:12; 50:9). What the readers of this oracle are being told to ‘behold’ - that is ‘to see’ - is the servant himself, as was the case with the servant in the first song (42:1). The second song took up the other and connected theme of ‘hearing’, as the coastlands were called by the servant to ‘Listen to me’ (49:1). The hardening oracle of 6:9-10 had rendered the people who had put their trust in idols, blind and deaf – just like their idols (2:7-8, 20; cf. Psa. 115:5-8). When the prophet spoke of Yahweh bringing salvation through a Davidic figure it appeared as if that figure was on the immediate horizon and the most likely
candidate was Hezekiah. When he failed to demonstrate humility and dependence upon Yahweh at the visit of the Babylonians, he opened the door for the exile of future generations (39:7). Therefore, it meant that the promised Davidic figure had still not arrived. However, in 42:1 and 52:13 the people are being told to ‘see’ the true agent of Yahweh’s plan foretold in former times. He is described as one who will ‘act wisely’ or as one who ‘shall prosper/succeed.’ The verb שָׁבַע is most often translated as ‘act wisely’ when it is found in a wisdom context.\(^\text{110}\) Barré argues for the translation ‘will be wise’ because he recognises other wisdom language in the song such as, ‘they will understand’ (52:15) and ‘by his knowledge’ (53:11).\(^\text{111}\) If he is correct this would indicate a thematic parallel with the messianic figure in 11:2 who will be endowed with the Spirit of ‘wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.’ However, it is likely that ‘shall prosper/succeed’ is the more accurate translation\(^\text{112}\) owing to the nature of the song, and makes sense in light of the following clauses where the servant is spoken of as ‘high and lifted up’ and ‘exalted’ (52:13b). The terminology of יִשְׁתַּנְשָׁה (‘high and lifted up’) is used only of Yahweh elsewhere in the book (6:1; 57:15) and demonstrates a close connection between the work of the servant as the agent in bringing salvation and Yahweh whose arm is behind that salvation (52:10). This dependence on Yahweh to accomplish his work has already been noted in reference to the second and third songs as well as each of the early messianic oracles. Coupled with the call for the people to ‘see’ at the beginning of the verse, the connection with Yahweh’s ‘high and lofty’ status draws the reader’s attention back to the hardening oracle of chapter 6 and suggests that what is about to be said of the servant in the rest of the song will be the undoing of this hardening for those who will ‘see’ and ‘hear’ (53:1). As Goldingay and Payne state, ‘Given where the revelation came (in this humiliated servant), it is not surprising that the people failed to see it.’\(^\text{113}\) However, it is not just the faithful remnant of Israel that will see and hear but kings and many nations will also understand Yahweh’s plan ‘for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall understand’ (52:15). The international nature of the servant’s work has already

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\(^{110}\) Terence E. Fretheim, הַאַלְפָּה יִשְׁתַּנְשָׁה, NIDOTTE, 1243; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 435.


\(^{112}\) See, Fretheim, הַאַלְפָּה יִשְׁתַּנְשָׁה, NIDOTTE, 1243.

\(^{113}\) Goldingay and Payne, Isaiah 40-55 Volume I, 298.
been seen in 42:1b, 6c and 49:6c and was also clearly seen in the messianic oracles as well (11:4, 10). This drawing of the nations to Yahweh through the ‘root of Jesse’ (11:10) and the servant (52:15) is once again seen to be the outworking of the glorious promise of 2:2-4, which had close parallels with the each of the previous servant songs.

The exaltation of the servant in the opening verses of the fourth song is surprising in light of the opposition to his work that was already spoken of in the previous songs (49:7a; 50:6) and in light of the intervening mention of his ‘marred’ appearance and what is said of him in the rest of the song. However, the previous songs had spoken of his courage (42:4) and vindication (49:4; 50:8a), which in the fourth song becomes his exaltation in the midst of suffering. The ‘high and lifted up’ and ‘exalted’ status of the servant is given to him by Yahweh because of his willingness to suffer humility, something that is the antithesis of the people. In 2:11 Yahweh declares that the ‘haughty looks of man shall be brought low; and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled.’ This charge against those who are ‘proud’, ‘lifted up’, and ‘lofty’ in their own eyes is repeated multiple times throughout 2:12-17 (and the throughout the book), is directly connected with the people’s idolatry (2:18-22), and was the occasion for the giving of the hardening oracle in 6:9-10. The evident pride of Hezekiah in 39:2-8 (cf. 2 Chron. 32:25) demonstrated that he suffered, for a time, with the same condition as the people. This is in marked contrast to the servant who is a willing and innocent recipient of the chastisment and suffering that belonged to the people (53:4-13). The people are called to ‘see’ how Yahweh is procuring their salvation through the work of the servant but will they see and listen? The question is asked in 53:1, ‘Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord [cf. 52:10] been revealed? As Smith states, ‘Many did not understand the mysterious work of the Servant until God revealed it to them (53:1); thus what was happening spiritually needed divine interpretation.’

In light of the above, the question needs to be asked as to whether or not this servant is intended to be the embodiment of the Davidic messianic figure of the earlier chapters? There are a number of reasons to believe this to be case. Although the ‘peace’ of the messianic figure in 9:6[7] is seen to be governmental in nature, it is

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114 Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 439.
also seen to be comprehensive because, of its increase ‘there will be no end.’ Such comprehensive peace, which must include peace with Yahweh, is seen to be acquired by the suffering of the servant (53:5). It was the calling of the royal figure to establish and uphold the kingdom in ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ (9:6c[7c]). However, the kingdom cannot be established in righteousness unless the people themselves are righteous. This is what the servant (the ‘righteous one’) achieves when he ‘makes many to be accounted righteous’ (53:11b) through his sacrifice. In both contexts it is the ‘zeal’ and ‘purpose’ of Yahweh that means these things can be accomplished (9:6d[7d]; 53:10c). The glorious reign in justice and righteousness of the Davidic figure in Isa. 9 is further connected with the servant through the surrounding context of that earlier oracle. Isa. 9:7[8]-10:4 demonstrates that the blind and deaf people of Israel believe that they will be able to rebuild the nation in their own strength. Because of this, Yahweh’s arm will be outstretched against Israel and his anger against them ‘is not turned away’ (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). After an interlude in which Yahweh promises to bring down the arrogance of their immediate enemy (Assyria - 10:5-34), the promised ‘shoot’ and ‘root of Jesse’ is introduced as one who will bring restoration after devastation. This issued in the song of praise in Isa. 12 which begins with the promise, ‘You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O Yahweh, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me”’ (12:1). The persistent anger against the people in the earlier chapters has been turned away and the reason is found in 12:2, ‘Behold, God is my salvation…he has become my salvation.’ That what is describe in chapter 12 is connected with the work of the figure in Isa. 11 is evident from its literary location. However, Isa. 11 does not use the language of יְשׁוּשׁוּ (‘salvation’) even if it pictures the outcome of it. Salvation language is picked up in the servant songs (49:6) and comes to the fore in 52:13-53:12. It was noted above that Isa. 52 begins with the good news of the promise of ‘salvation’ (52:7) for a people ‘sold for nothing’ who would be ‘redeemed without money’ (52:3). As in 12:2-3, where the salvation is a result of Yahweh’s action which brings the response of joy and praise, so in 52:9-10 these features are also clearly

115 Hägglund notes that the phrase could also be translated, ‘the righteous one, my servant, will show himself righteous before the many.’ Even if this translation is to be preferred (contrary to most English translations and commentaries) it would be speaking of the vindication of the servant, whose sacrifice is clearly for the sake of ‘the many’ and, therefore, what is true of him is true of them also. See, Fredrik Hägglund, Isaiah 53 in the Light of Homecoming After Exile, Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 2. Reihe 31 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 73.
evident. The question that has remained throughout has been how will Yahweh’s arm bring redemption and salvation, or to express it in the terms of 53:1, ‘…to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed.’ Isa. 53:2-12 is the answer to that question and its not simply coincidental that verse 2 begins to answer that question by employing imagery that is parallels, or even derives from, Isa. 11.116

In Isa. 11 the figure is referred to as a ‘shoot’ that will ‘come forth’ from the ‘stump’ of Jesse and as a ‘branch’ that will ‘bear fruit’. He is also referred to as the ‘root’ of Jesse (11:1, 10a). The servant is said to have ‘grown up’ like a ‘young plant’ and like a ‘root’ out of ‘dry ground’ (53:2a). Both contexts speak with horticultural language, employing the same term (אַלּוֹן) to describe this figure. Block highlights how other passages from the prophets associate horticultural language with a royal and Davidic figure.117 The use of ‘stump’ and ‘dry ground’ also speaks of coming forth and growing up against the background of desolation. As Gentry points out, ‘The figurative language in which the Davidic king and the kingdom are portrayed as a majestic tree cut down (Isa. 6:13) and the reference to the shoot and root in Isa. 53:2 clearly connect this text with the vision of the future king who is the shoot and root of Jesse in 11:1, 10.’118 That the intention in presenting the servant in this language is to mark him out as the true embodiment of the earlier messianic figure over against the presentation of Hezekiah is noted by Gentry elsewhere. In relation to 53:2 he states, ‘…the picture of the root from dry ground directly recalls Isa 11:1, the passage that predicts not just a descendant of David, but a new David, not only someone better than bad king Ahaz, but also someone far greater than good king Hezekiah.’119

The earlier picture of this humble figure was of one who would be endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh to bring justice and equity, not only to Israel but also to the


117 Block, ‘My Servant David,’ 41. He mentions Jeremiah’s ‘righteous branch’ (Jer. 23:5-6) and Ezekiel’s ‘sprig’ from the descendants of David (Ezek. 17:22). See also, Gentry, ‘The Atonement in Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12),’ 32, 44.

118 Peter J. Gentry, ‘Rethinking the “Sure Mercies of David” in Isaiah 55:3,’ WTJ 69 (2007) 279-304 (293); see also, Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 121.

nations, and usher in a harmony not known since the creation (11:1-16). Here in 53:2ff., the means of accomplishing the former is established in the suffering and sacrifice of the servant. An objection may be raised at this point to seeing a king offering himself up as a willing sacrifice for his people. However, such a concept is neither foreign to the ANE nor the biblical text. A parallel can be drawn to David’s actions in 2 Sam. 24:17. After commanding a census against the express command of Yahweh and facing the consequences of pestilence and death for many in Israel, David prays, ‘Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father’s house.’ The contrast with the suffering servant is seen in the innocence of the servant (53:9) and the guilt of the people (53:4-6), but David’s willingness to have Yahweh’s hand against himself (cf. 53:10) and his household, and the description of the people as ‘sheep’ (53:6) connects thematically to the fourth song. If the servant is the literary fulfilment of the ‘root of Jesse’, and is therefore a new David, then the reader would expect him to be even greater than his ancestor. Also, if Ps. 22 is indeed a ‘Psalm of David’ and recounts his experience, then there is a clear account of the king’s innocent suffering that had many points of contact with the servant songs. This suffering in the place of the people is something the servant does in a representative role as ‘Israel’ (49:3), and therefore it is highly unlikely that the servant should be associated with the prophet, even if he does demonstrate some prophetic functions. Further to this, the prophet includes himself among those who need the work of the servant, saying, ‘...we esteemed him not’ (53:3), ‘...he bore our griefs...carried our sorrows...we esteemed him stricken’ (53:4), ‘...he was wounded for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities’, ‘...brought us peace...we are healed’ (53:5), ‘All we...have gone astray; we have turned...the iniquity of us all’

121 Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 121. He sites similar instances of a new David figure in Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; Hos. 3:5. See also, Gentry, ‘The Atonement in Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12),’ 32.
122 Ps. 22:1/Isa. 53:10; Ps. 22:6/Isa. 53:3; Ps. 22:9-10/Isa. 49:1; Ps. 22:16; Isa. 53:5.
123 Even those who do not see the servant as co-terminus with the prophet still acknowledge some prophetic features to the servants work. See, Hugenberger, ‘The Servant of the LORD in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah,” 111-114; Block, ‘My Servant David,” 26-32.
Again, it is through this substitution and the servant offering himself as a לְטַנָּה (*guilt offering* – 53:10) sacrifice (cf. Lev. 5:14-26) that he will ‘make many to be accounted righteous’ (53:11). The hope of righteousness that accompanied the promise of the Davidic king in 9:6[7] and 11:4-5 was not to be found in Hezekiah but in the servant whose humility brings a blessing not only to Israel but to the nations as well. The servant’s sacrifice is also the answer to how the people, languishing under the covenant lawsuit, could be vindicated. Much of the language throughout the fourth song is legal language, especially the employment of words like לְטַנָּה (*transgression*) which speaks of breaking the law of God. So many of the threads from the first part of Isaiah are brought together into sharp focus in the work of the servant in 52:13-53:13. The people who were on trial for their sin and idolatry (Isa. 1-5), sentenced to be conformed to their blind and deaf idols (6:9-12; 42:18-20), unable to recognise Yahweh’s agent of deliverance (Isa. 7, 9, 11), are now able to see and understand (52:15; 53:4-6) be accounted righteous (53:11) and have their sin removed (52:12c). Through the ‘chastisement that brought [secures] peace’ (53:5), a ‘covenant of [that secures] peace’ (54:10) will be established with the people. That covenant will be everlasting and established on the ‘faithful acts of loyal love by David’ (55:3). As Kaiser expresses it, ‘What the servant of the Lord has provided for and accomplished by his great act of suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is now offered in 55:1-13.’

Finally, Hugenburger and Block note two other features that point in the direction of a royal/Davidic referent for the servant. 1) The reference to the response of kings (52:14-15) and the promise of victory (52:12-13; cf. 53:12), and 2) the notice of a rich burial, which suits a royal person (53:9). These indicate that the reader is still dealing with a Davidic figure as they had been in the earlier portions of the book.

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125 See, Eugene Carpenter/Michael A. Grisanti, *NIDOTTE*, 706-710.
127 As render by, Gentry, ‘Rethinking the “Sure Mercies of David” in Isaiah 55:3,’ 285.
Taken together, these many references to royal/Davidic attributes and the multiple affinities with the earlier messianic oracles present the reader with the concept that, the role Hezekiah failed to embody, is undertaken by the servant of the four songs.

**The Benefits of the Servant’s work (Isa. 54-55)**

Isa. 54 and 55 describe the benefits and blessings that flow from the work of the servant, which reached its peak with his humble sacrifice for Israel and the nations (52:13-53:12). Because of this deliverer, the once barren people can break forth into singing (54:1), enlarge the place of their tent (54:2), spread abroad (54:3a), and their offspring (ֶֽֽיָֽהִּֽיִֽ) will possess the nations (54:3b). Isa. 53:10 had said that the servant would ‘see his offspring (ָֽיִֽיִֽ).’ The servant, as Israel (49:3), has reconstituted the people and will lead them into the promises given to Abraham (offspring, land, and the inheritance of nations – Gen. 15:4-5, 7; 17:4-8). Isa. 54 picks up the promises of Israel’s restoration that surrounded the second servant song. The desolate places will become too narrow to contain their offspring (49:19-20; 54:2-3) and the barren one (49:21; 54:1) will ask ‘Who has borne me these [children]’ (49:21), speaking of the nations that will come to Yahweh’s signal (49:22; cf. 11:10, 12), even kings (49:23; 52:15). The need for a more expansive land prepares the reader for the greater eschatological promises of ‘new heavens and a new earth’ (65:17), which are described in terms already expressed in relation to the shoot of Jesse (65:25; 11:6-9). That this promised eschatological hope is tied to the work of the servant is seen in Wardlaw’s comment, ‘…Isaiah understood redemption as the process moving toward new creation through the ministry of the ideal Servant.’\(^\text{130}\) The people will no longer be confounded or ashamed (54:4) for the servant already bore their shame and humiliation (53:3-5) and will beautify the people (61:3). They will know the everlasting love of Yahweh that will not be removed (54:8b, 10b). That this covenant is given to the people through the servant is evident in 49:8 and confirmed to be an everlasting covenant - the ‘faithful acts of loyal love by David’ (55:3).

The meaning of דֶּֽֽיָֽֽהִּֽיִֽ in 55:3 has been an issue of debate for some time. The phrase can be expressed as an objective genitive, ‘the steadfast, sure love for

David,’ or a subjective genitive, ‘the lovingkindness of David.’ How one interprets the meaning of this phrase will depend on a number of factors, not least the interpreter’s broader approach to understanding the meaning of the surrounding context. The danger, apparent in some works, is that the verse and context are not seen as mutually self-interpreting. That is, if one is determined to find evidence for a democratization of the promises made to David, and a transfer of these to Israel, the objective genitive rendering must be sought. However, if the promises to David are to be found in the coming of a new Davidic deliverer – as was the case in the early chapters of the book – then a subjective genitive is consistent with this approach but the objective rendering is also compatible. Both renderings are possible and although the objective genitive is more often preferred, I would argue that the subjective genitive is the more consistent in light of use elsewhere and to the overall thought of the preceding servant songs and the book as a whole. It will not be possible to look at every detail of the interpretation of 55:3 but I would offer the following observations. The first point to make is that the idea of a democratization of the promises made to David is inconsistent with what has already been revealed in Isaiah. In the early chapters of the book there is a consistent hope for an individual ruler and deliverer to come forth from the house of David (9:5-6[6-7]; 11:1-4, 10-12; 16:5; 32:1) and this is commensurate with the teaching of many of the prophets. It is through this king that the benefits of the covenant will come to Israel and the nations

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133 This is seen in the otherwise excellent work of Williamson whose appeals to ‘radical innovation,’ ‘potentiality,’ and linguistic arguments contrary to the evidence is not equal to his usual exacting standards. See, Williamson, ‘The Sure Mercies of David’: Subjective or Objective Genitive?, 31-49 & Variations on a Theme, 116-131, and Gentry’s critique of his position in Gentry, ‘Rethinking the “Sure Mercies of David” in Isaiah 55:3,’ 279-282.

134 This is the case with both Kaiser and Motyer who argue for the coming of a Davidic leader to establish the earlier promises of the book but who opt for the objective genitive approach. See, Kaiser, Jr., ‘The Unfailing Kindnesses Promised to David: Isaiah 55:3,’ 91-98; Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 453-454

135 See, Jer. 23:5; 30:9; 33:15, 17, 21; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5; Zec. 3:8; 6:12. These verses are highlighted in Block, ‘My Servant David,’ 41-42; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 501.
Even from the objective genitive reading it must be noted that because the promises to David were said to be certain and unfailing (2 Sam. 7:15; Ps. 89:37) and given specifically to the house of David, they cannot simply be transferred to the people. Second, even though Williamson objects to the idea that 55:3 should be understood as giving the meaning ‘make a covenant with someone else [individual] which will be of benefit to you [the people],’ this type of action is seen in multiple instances in the Old Testament – the covenants made with Noah and Abraham have a beneficial impact on all nations – and this thought concept is inherent in the Davidic covenant’s ‘charter for mankind’ (2 Sam. 7:19). Also, Motyer, who takes the objective rendering, sees the making of ‘the everlasting covenant with you (pl.)’ (55:3b) expressing the idea that it is made ‘for’ the benefit or ‘in favour of’ the recipients. Third, the parallel linguistic evidence for how to render significantly favours the subjective rendering. Caquot, Beuken, and Gentry have all demonstrated that the regular way to construe the bound phrase is to see David as ‘agent’ or ‘subject’. They point out that of the eighteen occurrences of the plural, only two are considered objective and of the 228 occurrences of the singular, it is possible to read on six as objective. This brings Gentry to conclude, ‘Linguistic usage demands, then, that the first notion to enter the mind of the native reader is to construe the free member as subject.’ Finally, even if Williamson and others are correct in seeing the phrase as pointing toward God’s acts of covenant faithfulness to David, it begs the question – what acts of faithfulness are in mind? Reading Isaiah holistically one must draw the conclusion that God’s faithfulness to his covenant with David and his household is portrayed as coming to fruition through the promise of a future Davidic deliver (Isa. 1-39) and is enacted through the work of the servant (Isa. 40-55). The same meaning is given in a more direct manner through the subjective rendering.

137 Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 118. Emphasis added.
139 See, Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 454; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 501.
141 Gentry, ‘Rethinking the “Sure Mercies of David” in Isaiah 55:3,’ 281.
which is to be preferred for the reasons highlighted above and because of its greater consistency with a holistic reading of the book.

In light of the above, the reader understands that the servant’s work has made available an abundance of fine fare that can be bought without money (55:1-2; cf. 12:3), as the ‘many’ share in the spoils of his victory (53:12a) owing to the willingness of the servant to be numbered with the transgressors and to bear their sins (53:12b). However, the people need to ‘listen’, ‘incline their ears’ and ‘hear’ that their souls may live (55:2b-3). This hearing is tied to the everlasting covenant and sure mercies of David and therefore Yahweh’s word already spoken will be vindicated, it shall not return to him empty but shall accomplish that which he purposed (55:11). As Smith suggests, ‘The audience will be able to partake of God’s blessings only if they make the effort to listen to what God says and come to him. The old ways of being stubborn with closed ears and blind eyes (cf. 6:9-10) must be a thing of the past.’

Gentry draws a similar conclusion from this understanding of 55:3, one that comes close to the overall proposal of this thesis. He states,

‘No description better fits the role of the Future King in Isa 1-39 and the role of the Servant of the Lord in Isa 40-66 in the implementing of Yahweh’s Kingship…the future David fulfils the role of obedient son in the framework of the Davidic Covenant…in both the section concerning bad King Ahaz (7-9) and the section concerning good King Hezekiah (36-39) the history of the monarchy shows that we are still waiting desperately for an obedient Davidic son.’

In sum, the benefits that come as a direct result of the work of the servant in the preceding songs demonstrates that, what Hezekiah failed to be as Davidic ruler, the servant embodied in his humble dependence on Yahweh. Below, one final appearance of the hoped for Davidic deliverer is explored in light of what has gone before.

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142 Sawyer believes that the meaning of this drinking imagery (55:1) can be found in Isaiah’s earlier reference to drawing water from the wells of salvation (12:3).

143 Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 497.

144 Gentry, ‘Rethinking the “Sure Mercies of David” in Isaiah 55:3,’ 297.
The Fifth Servant Song (Isa. 61:1-11)

Chapter 61 begins with the portrayal of one who is anointed by Yahweh with the special blessing of the spirit (61:1). This figure is to proclaim the good news (cf. 52:7) of liberty and the year of Yahweh’s favour that will beautify even the lowliest of his people (61:2-11). The identity of the one spoken of in 61:1-7 is contested. Is this the prophet endowed with the spirit to proclaim the good news of Yahweh’s salvation or the corporate body of faithful Israelites? The latter of these does not fit the wider context. Israel is pictured as the offspring of Yahweh, blessed by being the recipients of this good news (61:9-11), decked in the garb of the bride prepared for her wedding (61:10), and through Israel the righteousness and praise of Yahweh will be brought to the nations. It would not make sense that Israel would proclaim this good news to themselves in such a manner. It is possible that the prophet is in view, but there is nothing in Isaiah to suggest this referent is to be preferred. The best fit for this oracle is the same messianic/servant figure of the earlier chapters (cf. 11:1; 42:1b). That is because, similar to the surrounding context of Isa. 61, the shoot of Jesse (Isa. 11:2-4) and the servant (Isa. 42:1) are both endowed with the Spirit. As Stromberg writes, ‘By recalling the servant of 42, Isaiah 61 may have wanted to give the speaker a royal role...Isaiah 42:1 is probably based on the royal figure of 11:1, which says, ‘the Spirit of the LORD will rest upon him [the Davidic king].’ They are also called to bring about justice to those who are on the margins of society. The Spirit endowed figure of

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145 This position is found in, Williamson, Variations on a Theme, 179; Goldingay, Isaiah, 345-346.
146 Beuken sees the figure here as representing ‘the righteous seed’ (individual or corporate) who ‘puts on the features of the Servant’, though is not the Servant himself. See, W. A. M. Beuken, ‘The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah ‘The Servant of YHWH’’, JSOT 47 (1990) 67-87 (71). For more on this identification see, Beuken, ‘Servant and Herald of Good Tidings. Isaiah Ch. 61 as an interpretation of Isaiah Ch. 40-55,’ 411-442. Childs follows Beuken’s interpretation in, Childs, Isaiah, 502-503. For a more straightforward reading of the figure as the community of faithful Israel see, Conrad, Reading Isaiah, 147. A vast number of scholars’ opinions have been surveyed in R. Heskett, Messianism within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah (London: T&T Clark, 2007) 225-238.
147 This is in fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, making sense of the reiteration of the promise of an everlasting covenant made with the people (associated with the work of the servant in Isa. 55:3).
149 Stromberg, ‘An Inner-Isaianic Reading of Isaiah 61:1-3,’ 264.
Isa. 11 works for the poor and meek (11:4a), the servant of Isa. 42 will not break the bruised reed or quench the faintly burning wick (42:3) and bring out the prisoner (42:7; cf. 49:9a), and the Spirit anointed figure of Isa. 61 will help the poor, broken-hearted and the prisoner. Each is said to bring a similar outcome – righteousness, justice or liberty. As well as these points of contact, there are other parallels that can be drawn between these figures. They are called by the Lord Yahweh (61:1; 50:4-5, 7), given the task to proclaim (61:1; 42:1; 49:2; 50:4), give to the people the status of righteousness (61:3; 53:11), make the nations subservient (61:5-6; 49:7), establish Yahweh’s covenant (61:8; 42:6c; 49:8; cf. 55:3), will be clothed in righteousness (61:10b; 11:5), ‘opens eyes’ (61:1; 9:2; 53:11), and are described in terms (bridegroom – 61:11c) reserved for Yahweh (62:5b) as was the case with the messianic figure and the servant (9:5[6]; 10:21 and 52:13; 6:1; 57:15).

The blessing, brought to Israel by this figure, in verses 4-11 exceeds ‘the physical reconstruction of Zion’ as the people shall be called ‘priests of Yahweh’, eat the wealth of the nations (61:6), and are pictured as a lavish garden (61:11). These images go beyond the bounds of the contemporary situation and will transition into the eschatological imagery – anticipated in Isa. 11:10ff. – that brings the book to a close (Isa. 65-66).

Conclusion

In Isa. 1-39 Hezekiah became a living expression of the hope that the people had of an anointed ruler who would deliver the people and bring lasting peace. His actions at the end of that section of the book of Isaiah demonstrated that he was not the one the people should look to, because, though he had acted in many faithful ways, he became like the people by turning his ear from the words of Yahweh. In Isa. 40-66 the hopes of the earlier chapters are now vested in a servant figure who would be associated with both Yahweh and the people and who would faithfully fulfil the plan that Yahweh had prepared and proclaimed in times past. In reading the book of Isaiah holistically and theologically these two dynamics come to the fore.

150 As highlighted by Sawyer, Isaiah, 189.
151 Many of these parallels are noted in Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 500-505; Motyer, Isaiah, 426-428; Goldingay, Isaiah, 345-349; Smith, Isaiah 40-66, 633-644.
Chapter VII. – Summary and Findings

Chapter I presented a rationale for a holistic and literary reading. Here the legitimacy of a synchronic reading of the text was established. Edgar Conrad’s work was highlighted for the way he understood the smaller sub-sections of the book – particularly the royal narratives – against the overall themes of the book as a whole. Although intertextual examination of language and theological themes have formed an important part of many previous studies, with the exception of Conrad’s work, it has not been fully utilized to describe the overall picture of the message and intent of Isaiah as a whole. Most studies stop short of a consistent application of the intertextual parallels found in Isaiah, applying these findings to the meaning of sub-units rather than to the purpose of the overall message. The present thesis has tried to address some of the weaknesses of Conrad’s conclusions.

Chapter II developed the concept of a hardening hermeneutic for the final form of Isaiah that was used as a tool to further enhance the holistic reading of the book. The hardening passage (Isa. 6) and its value to a synchronic reading had been previously traced in the works of Beale, Glasov and Uhlig, but none of these studies examined its hermeneutical value in the manner presented in this thesis. That the concepts of ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’, ‘blindness’ and ‘deafness’, are central to every division of the book of Isaiah is without question and is a clear indication of its unity. However, the application of these motifs in connection with the presentation of the messianic figure, Hezekiah, and the servant, has not been considered before.

This chapter also highlighted the importance of the Davidic covenant as a unifying theological motif. This is something that has not received the sustained study that its importance to the holistic interpretation of Isaiah requires. Not only was the Davidic covenant seen to be important to the earlier chapters of the book that focus on the messianic figure but also the servant songs and their surrounding contexts. Most focus has been placed on the Mosaic covenant as a grid for theological reference in Isaiah but this thesis should stimulate more reflection on the equally important David covenant for a holistic interpretation. It was demonstrated that the expectation attached to the coming figure in the early oracles was clearly a Davidean figure and so the promises required a fulfilment in one from or identified with that house. The reader is led by the presentation of the messianic figure to find the embodiment of
such a figure within the rest of the book. That he is presented as an individual indicates that an individual will complete the expectation. However, the hardening hermeneutic of Isa. 6 made possible an understanding of the ambiguity with regard to the Davidic referent and how this functioned rhetorically.

The examination of the messianic oracles of Isa. 7, 9, 11 demonstrated that an intentional intertextual connection in the final form of the book is being drawn with the person of Hezekiah. Previous studies that have highlighted these connections have drawn them on the basis that Hezekiah was associated only with an early form of these oracles and say little about the purpose of such a connection. In this regard Hezekiah is then seen to be simply one redactional stage no more clearly defined than a Josianic redaction of a later period. However, this thesis proposed the concept that the connections are deliberate and drawn as a means of setting Hezekiah up to be a failing hope in regard to the promises that are attached to the messianic figure. This was not a failure due to dissonance, as highlighted in Carroll’s work on failed prophecy, but a failure in relation to the hardening hermeneutic and the need to introduce a figure beyond the immediate horizon. The eschatological elements of the early messianic oracles progress in intensity as each new oracle is given in the book and therefore calls for a greater fulfilment than can be given in the immediate or near future contexts. The reason given for this development was to make clear that the greatest enemy presented in the book required a greater deliverance than could be given in any socio-political context. Such a reading of Hezekiah and the royal narratives against the hardening hermeneutic, the Davidic covenant, and the wider themes of theological development are without precedent in other studies.

Chapter III focused specific attention on the intertextual continuities and discontinuities of the royal narratives to demonstrate both an intentional recapitulation of type-scenes and Hezekiah’s relationship to the messianic oracles, as well as indicating where the narratives showed a need for a further context of development that would satisfy the anticipation of an even more faithful king. Ackroyd, Seitz, and Conrad have undertaken intertextual studies of these narratives in the past but not in such a systematic manner as presented in the thesis. Neither Ackroyd nor Seitz gave sufficient attention to the discontinuity between the presentation of the messianic figure and Hezekiah in relation to Isa. 39. Conrad rightly sees the need for another king beyond Hezekiah in a further type-scene in the subsequent chapters but wrongly
transfers this role to the ‘royal’ community, something not suggested by the text of Isa. 1-39. This thesis has addressed that short falling in chapter VI.

Chapter IV examined the material that acts as bridge between the royal narratives – Isa. 13-35 – to show how certain themes and theological motifs are carried forward into the subsequent chapters of the book. Although there have been studies that have looked at unifying themes within this large body of material, and some that have examined aspects of these chapters with relation to the Hezekiah narratives, no study has covered the entirety of this material in regard to both. The themes of ‘trust’ and dependency on Yahweh are integral to these chapters as well as to the Hezekiah narratives. Developments in eschatological motifs are also evident in these chapters and this demonstrates the expanding of ideas that were already building in the earlier messianic oracles. This thesis has proposed a way to hold together these two elements that have too often been seen to be in tension. Owing to the dual perspective created by the hardening hermeneutic, the reader understands that the both the connections with the Hezekiah narratives and the discontinuities are heading toward the same goal.

Chapter V addressed the Hezekiah narratives themselves. Beyond the already discussed connections with the earlier parts of the book, this chapter sought to give a different perspective on the structure and function of the Hezekiah narratives. Previous studies had almost exclusively focused attention on the structure on issues of chronology, setting, and their relation to the same narratives in 2 Kings. The most common assumption has been that the peculiar chronological structure of the Hezekiah narratives is due to a movement from the Assyrian to the Babylonian contexts. This thesis has proposed the idea that the structure of the narratives owes more to the presentation of Hezekiah himself than to the setting, while not denying this shift in context. Owing to the often assumed unilateral idealization of the person of Hezekiah in these narratives, insufficient attention has been paid to the placing of Isa. 39 at the end of the narratives dealing with this king. An argument was made against unilateral idealization and for the idea that Hezekiah is presented in an extremely negative light in the final chapter of this material. The reason for the structuring of the material in this way was to present the need for a more faithful figure to embody the hope of the earlier messianic oracles associated with Hezekiah
that he failed to attain to. I am unaware of any study that has presented this thesis in such a sustained manner before.

Chapter VI introduced the literary fulfilment for the earlier messianic oracles in relation to the presentation of the servant in the servant songs. The thesis has demonstrated how a rereading of the earlier material, after the revelation of Hezekiah's failure to meet the messianic expectations, gives the book a holistic driving theme of expectation that is met only when the intention of these oracles coalesce around the servant. The connection between the earlier messianic oracles and the servant songs has been strengthened through viewing them within the wider concern of the main axis of the thesis. A number of scholars have drawn these connections between the messianic figure and the servant before. However, this has never been done through the lens of the hardening hermeneutic and the theological and literary motifs associated with the Davidic covenant and the need for an individual to deal with the major concern of the meta-narrative; the problem of the people’s sin and idolatry. It was necessary to demonstrate that the failure of Hezekiah to meet the messianic expectations was fulfilled in a Davidic figure within the second half of the book and many arguments have sustained the thesis that such a figure is clearly seen in the servant of the songs.

Areas to Stimulate Further Study

This thesis should stimulate further study in the following areas of research:

- The literary concept of intentional failure of characters within biblical narrative contexts. Some work has already been done on the characters of Saul and David in 1 Samuel, but a wider study of the persistence of this theme would be beneficial.

- The use of the hardening hermeneutic as it appears in other biblical texts such as the Psalms, and the themes of blindness and deafness as directed toward the presentation of narrative characters. Evans, Beale, and Glasov have examined this theme in the context of reception history and biblical theology, but further work could be done in regard to the relationship between the narrative world and the reader.

- A rereading of material, not only to find possible redactional layers, but as a means of understanding the holistic literary and theological intentions of other books is open to further inquiry. The concept of a narrative ‘reveal’ that is popular within other
works of literature has not received the sustained attention it deserves within biblical research.

- The holistic value of reading promise and fulfilment, not only across canonical lines, but also within a single book – e.g. literary fulfilment of earlier motifs within the same work (messianic to servant figure) - would give further impetus to the work already begun on the reading of books as unified presentations.

- Greater attention to synchronic understandings of the structure of biblical narratives. The majority of studies concentrate attention on a diachronic understanding of structural questions when a synchronic reading – dealing with internal literary and theological concerns – may give a different or better understanding of structural issues. Though structural concerns may well be understood to be diachronic by nature, synchronic aspects of a given text can still suggest an alternative reason for the final presentation of the material.
APPENDIX – Intertextual Continuities

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:1</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin</td>
<td>The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack</td>
<td>Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it.</td>
<td>the highway to the Fuller’s Field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2
When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

Figure 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:3</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>נָאָםְךָ יְהוָה אָלִילֶךָ שֵׁם</td>
<td>מְלֵךְ שֶׁנֶּשֶׁב בְּאֶשֶּׁר-עַל-שֵׁם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לֹֽא-רָאַֽהְךָ אֶלְּעַלָּה אֶלְּעַלָּה</td>
<td>בַּחֲנֵי חַלְכִּי בָּעָלָה בַּעָלָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בָּשַׁם אֶל-כָּפֵּה הַשֵּׁלָה הַשֵּׁלָה</td>
<td>בְּלַעֲמָה אֶל-כָּפֵּה הַשֵּׁלָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְעַל-כָּפֵּה הַשֵּׁלָה שֶׁרֶם כֶּפֶם</td>
<td>בֵּינֵי יָמָה אֶל-כָּפֵּה שֶׁרֶם כֶּפֶם</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field.

The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field.

Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:3</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:6, 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>נָאָםְךָ יְהוָה אָלִילֶךָ שֵׁם</td>
<td>מְלֵךְ שֶׁנֶּשֶׁב בְּאֶשֶּׁר-עַל-שֵׁם</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

243
Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field,

Isaiah said to them, ‘Say to your master, “Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me.

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying: ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:4-9</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:6-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and say to him. Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint…</td>
<td>Isaiah said to them, ‘Say to your master, “Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therefore thus says the LORD God:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It shall not stand,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and it shall not come to pass…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you do not stand firm in faith,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you shall not stand at all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:

In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

But you refused and said, ‘No! We will flee upon horses’— therefore you shall flee!

and, ‘We will ride upon swift steeds’— therefore your pursuers shall be swift!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:10-16</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:30-32; 38:7-8, 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| נֹּאֵז קְּדוֹשׁ הַיָּמָה יַעֲבֹר אֶלָּא אָנָה לַאֲם רֹאָי | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יַעֲבֹר אֶלָּא אָנָה לַאֲם רֹאָי | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
| יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת | יִשְׁמֶיהָ יְהֹוָה אֶל רֹאָי אֲבֹת ]אֲבֹת |}
| נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ | נִפְלֵא לַאֵל בִּשְׁמוֹ יְהֹוָה הַיָּמָה כִּפְרֵחַ |}
Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

‘And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards; for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

‘This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: See, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.’ So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.
Hezekiah also had said, ‘What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?’

Figure 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:14-25 (19-25)</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>נִלְחָה הַבָּעָרָם שַׁלְחָה שֶׁ֨חַת בַּגְּלָלָּתָּה&lt;br&gt;וְיָמַּכָּרוּ בְּכָלָּתָּהּ בִּבְלָלָּתָּהּ</td>
<td>נִלְחָהּ עַלָּהּ שָׁמַרְתָּ&lt;br&gt;וְיָשְׁמוֹתָּהּ בְּכָלָּתָּהּ שָׁמַרְתָּהּ:&lt;br&gt;וָֽ֖יָקָ֑בְּהַּ כִּהְגָּהָּ אֲפֶלָּהּ בַּגְּלָלָּתָּהּ&lt;br&gt;וְהָֽ֖שְׁכְּרַתָּהּ בְּכָלָּתָּהּ שָׁחְבַּתָּהּ: אֶֽ֖פֶר אֶחָֽ֗דָּהּ נָֽחְשֶׁר הָֽ֖רְגָּלָּתָּהּ&lt;br&gt;וָֽ֖יֶּֽהָּ נָֽחְשֶׁר הָֽ֖רְגָּלָּתָּהּ:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes, and on all the pastures.

On that day the LORD will shave with a razor hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well.

On that day one will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, and will eat curds because of the abundance of milk that they give; for everyone that is left in the

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.
land shall eat curds and honey.

On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. With bow and arrows one will go there, for all the land will be briers and thorns; and as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

Figure 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 7:13</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>נֶאֶמֶר שָׁמַעְתָּם לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
<td>לְקָטַעְתָּן לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נָסָמְךָ לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
<td>נָסָמְךָ לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נִמְסָאָה לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
<td>נִמְסָאָה לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
<td>לִשְׁמֹאֲלָה שָׁמַעְתָּם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נֶאֶמֶר</td>
<td>נֶאֶמֶר</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?

For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.’
For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.’

On that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes, and on all the pastures.

On that day the LORD will shave with a razor hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well.

Days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord. Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’

Figure 11

Isaiah 8:6-8

Isaiah 36:1-2

Figure 11
Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah; therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 8:9</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:18-20; 37:11-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sollen שופט בן חנהו לארד הארץ</td>
<td>sollen שופט בן חנהו לארד הארץ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עלים שופט בן חנהו לארד הארץ</td>
<td>עלים שופט בן חנהו לארד הארץ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וכל דברי תהלים יא</td>
<td>וכל דברי תהלים יא</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וכל דברי תהלים יב</td>
<td>وكل דברי תהלים יב</td>
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<tr>
<td>וכל דברי תהלים יג</td>
<td>وكل דברי תהלים יג</td>
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<td>וכל דברי תהלים יד</td>
<td>وكل דברי תהלים יד</td>
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Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed;
listen, all you far countries;
gird yourselves and be dismayed;
gird yourselves and be dismayed!

Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the gods of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?”

See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 8:10a</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:14-18; 37:10</th>
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<tbody>
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Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught; speak a word, but it will not stand,

Thus says the king: “Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: “Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the gods saved his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?”
of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Figure 14

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<th>Isaiah 8:10b</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:10</th>
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<td>כִּי עָפָן אָלָה</td>
<td>כִּי עָפָן אָלָה</td>
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<tr>
<td>לְאֹחֵר יָמִים</td>
<td>לְאֹחֵר יָמִים</td>
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<tr>
<td>לָמָּה אֲנִי ?לָמָּה אֲנִי</td>
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<tr>
<td>לְאִמָּה אֲנִי</td>
<td>לְאִמָּה אֲנִי</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for God is with us. Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.'
### Figure 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 9:6</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לֹוֶ֣מַהְנַתְּךָ֣ וַתִּהְלַ֖קְתָּ הַלֹּ֣וֶ֑שָׁהְתָּו֖וֹן</td>
<td>לֹוֶ֣מַהְנַתְּךָ֣ וַתִּהְלַ֖קְתָּ הַלֹּ֣וֶ֑שָׁהְתָּו֖וֹן</td>
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<tr>
<td>יָרְדֵּ֣ה בִּֽקְרָ֗א</td>
<td>יָרְדֵּ֣ה בִּֽקְרָ֗א</td>
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<td>לֹוֶ֣מַהְנַתְּךָ֣ וַתִּהְלַ֖קְתָּ הַלֹּ֣וֶ֑שָׁהְתָּו֖וֹן</td>
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<tr>
<td>חַֽעַתְּרָהְתָּ חֲנָֽאָהְתָּ עִמָּהְתָּוֹן</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

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### Figure 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 10:5-7</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יהוּדְאָה שַׁעֲרֵי חֵרְבָּה שִׁבֹּרֵי</td>
<td>הַשַּׁעֲרֵי שַׁעֲרֵי חֵרְבָּה לָּלֹוַשִׁי</td>
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For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.’
Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—
the club in their hands is my fury!

Against a godless nation I send him,
and against the people of my wrath I command him,
to take spoil and seize plunder,
and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

But this is not what he intends,
nor does he have this in mind;
but it is in his heart to destroy,
and to cut off nations not a few.

Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 10:8-11; 13-14</th>
<th>Isaiah 36:18-20; 37:10-13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>כתובות ו satışים</strong></td>
<td><strong>כתובות ו מכירות</strong></td>
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<td>כל אתרrias יאמnah שכרות��ויות ק纳米</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
For he says:

‘Are not my commanders all kings?

Is not Calno like Carchemish?

Is not Hamath like Arpad?

Is not Samaria like Damascus?

As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols

whose images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols

what I have done to Samaria and her images?’

Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the gods of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?”’

‘Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that
For he says:

‘By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples,

and have plundered their treasures;

like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones.

My hand has found, like a nest,

the wealth of the peoples;

and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,

so I have gathered all the earth;

and there was none that moved a wing,

or opened its mouth, or chirped.’

Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered?

Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?’

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 10:15-19</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:22-29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יֹהֵעָלָה בֹּקֶר נֶחֱלָה לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל בָּוָא</td>
<td>יֵהָעָלָה בֹּקֶר נֶחֱלָה לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל בָּוָא</td>
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<tr>
<td>אֵחָה לָמִיסֶה לָקֶרֶנֶל לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל</td>
<td>אֵחָה לָמִיסֶה לָקֶרֶנֶל לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>קֶרֶנֶלְוֵה שַׁגְּמֶה לֶאָשְׁרְמָה לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל</td>
<td>קֶרֶנֶלְוֵה שַׁגְּמֶה לֶאָשְׁרְמָה לָכֶן לִשְׁחֵפֶל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>רָאָשֶׁה נֵגֵשֶה הָשָׁר רֵאְשָלְם</td>
<td>רָאָשֶׁה נֵגֵשֶה הָשָׁר רֵאְשָלְם</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shall the axe vaunt itself over the one who wields it, or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it?

As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up, or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood!

Therefore the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts, will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. The glory of his forest and his fruitful land the LORD will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when an invalid wastes away. The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: She despises you, she scorns you—virgin daughter Zion; she tosses her head—behind your back, daughter Jerusalem. ‘Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and haughtily lifted your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, “With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. I dug wells and drank waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.”

‘Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of
ruins, while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded; they have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.

‘I know your rising up and your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

Figure 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 10:24-27</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:29-38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לֶאָל כִּֽהְֽוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵדֶעְתָּה</td>
<td>נַעֲשֵׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשָּׂרַיִל בָּרוּךְ הַיָּמִים</td>
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<tr>
<td>בָּשָׂם מְפֻלָּה הַמַּמָּחֵה בָּשָׂם מְפֻלָּה</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>בְּכֵן מִלְּכָּהּ הָעָם בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל</td>
<td>בְּכֵן מִלְּכָּהּ הָעָם בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אָמַר הֶבְךָ:</td>
<td>אָמַר הֶבְךָ:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כִּפְרֵי כֹּל שְׁמִי בָּהָיָה בֶּלֶדֶת</td>
<td>אָפָא לְעָלָם בַּשָּׂם</td>
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<td>נשׁוֹלָהּ נְשׁוֹלָהּ בָּשָׂם בָּשָׂם</td>
<td>נשׁוֹלָהּ נְשׁוֹלָהּ בָּשָׂם בָּשָׂם</td>
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כאמただし פוני נ来る ומעני העולהו:

על-のですが הארץ עקדך ב-Gברון
וינחל אנחיה והנה זמר עיבל
ונעל שפלעה והנה מעלי עניאדה והנה
של חסד-השינה:

🍗 נפטרה כלמה מצה-הרוחות: נפשו
הששראות שם לאפות עשה
כתיי לעיניי: כי נביישלבה הכס שאולית
HashCode מהתרח עתנש ירה
ענאה ונשחתה: מקלחקה וכתוב קבלה ירה

 לפנינו יפה, ינק טמאת והנה
ללא יראה אנלא-הנמשך הכס וראית
יושם מזד-ברקם השן
ולא-רשפיה עגילה[--]ה
בעבר ירא-אם כי וישב
ואול-הננייה развитה לא יבאו
נאמ Territory:

ננעתה על-הנים מגאות ליאשה
לחתמה, והם עזורה עשתו:
נופא מלך-יווחה ושם שבלה
כי ее פ_rgbaייווה המקרא בפל념
אשכר כאון גאים השפיכו קבלת אלול
Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: O my people, who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they beat you with a rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in a very little while my indignation will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. The Lord of hosts will wield a whip against them, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb; his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. On that day his burden will be removed from your shoulder, and his yoke will be destroyed from your neck.

Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

‘And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards; for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the
Lord of hosts will do this.

‘Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege-ramp against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.’

Then the angel of the Lord set out and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. As he was worshipping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

Figure 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 10:33-34</th>
<th>Isaiah 37:24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>הָעָלֵה הַכָּאָר לַמֶּרֶם</td>
<td>אֲדֹנִי הָלָּמָּה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Look, the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts, will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the tallest trees will be cut down, and the lofty will be brought low. He will hack down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall.

By your servants you have mocked the LORD, and you have said, “With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest.

Figure 21

Isaiah 11:2-3

Isaiah 37:1-4, 14-20
בי"ת אפשטיין-
כ)}>טא汚れיז, אליעזר בע"ה
יד- üret י"ע בראחא-
םי"ע ה"ע
הנה כ- המ-
יתע"ע-"ע
ט-ט-
א"ע: י"ע
אֶלֶף אַשְמֵנַל י"ע בְּרַדּא ז"ל
"ר"ו בְּרַדּא בָּשָׂם בְּלֵשׁוֹנַו פָּרוּץ
לֶאָלִיְתֵא בְּלֵשׁוֹנַו בי"ע
מצֵלֵדְוִי שְׁאֵלוֹ בְּלֵשׁוֹנַו בְּלֵשׁוֹנַו
נְשִׂיאְתָן הָעָלִיְתֵא בְּלֵשׁוֹנַו מְשִׁשַּׁה
סְגָלֵנָה: י"ע
נְסֵקָנוֹת הָעָלִיְתֵא וְלֶשׁוֹנַו
סְגָלֵנָה י"ע קְנֵי-י"ע וְלֶשׁוֹנַו:
נְסֵקָנוֹת, הָעָלִיְתֵא א"ל-י"ע וְלֶשׁוֹנַו:
וָירָה י"ע אַנְטַלְגֵל י"ע זוּכָל, וְלֶשׁוֹנַו:
סְגָלֵנָה י"ע קְנֵי-י"ע הָעָלִיְתֵא לֶשׁוֹנַו לְרָקָה.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear.

When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They said to him, ‘Thus says..."
Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.’

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: ‘O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the
kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 22</th>
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<tr>
<th>Isaiah 11:5</th>
<th>Isaiah 38:3</th>
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<td>הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה הָעָה</td>
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<tr>
<td>Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.</td>
<td>‘Remember now, O Lord, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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