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Hon, Lenny Kwok-Ming. "Seeing the Book of Isaiah through the Lens of Isaiah 6: A Theological Study of the Tensions Between the Holy One and Israel in a Canonical Approach." M. Div., Tyndale University College & Seminary, 2019.

Seeing the Book of Isaiah through the Lens of Isaiah 6:
A Theological Study of the Tensions between the Holy One and Israel in a
Canonical Approach

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Divinity awarded by Tyndale University College & Seminary

May 2019

Toronto, Canada

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview of Interpretative Approaches, Purpose and Methodology of the Study

In *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*,¹ Childs traces different models of interpretation that theologians and scholars down through the ages from the first century to the last few decades have strived to understand the book of Isaiah. The essence of his study is that many lenses exist for reading the book: people over the centuries have read the book through these lenses in order to come to an understanding of it.² On this matter, Brueggemann divides the models of interpretation broadly into three categories: a pre-critical or traditional approach, a historical-critical or intellectual approach, and a canonical-critical or literary approach.³ In this study, I have adopted the third approach that begins with exegeting the text of Isaiah 6 “as a literary-canonical marker,”⁴ and then I use this marker as a point of reference to form a holistic view of the entire book of sixty-six chapters. Thus, I coined the title of this thesis “Seeing the Book

¹ Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004).

² A Christological, allegorical, eschatological, historical, or literal reading of the book of Isaiah is each an example of some of the lenses in the broad sense. The merits and pitfalls of these readings, as exemplified by specific approaches of different theologians and scholars, are discussed by Childs in the book.

³ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. By literary-canonical marker, Brueggemann means that in conjunction with Isaiah 40, another marker of the same sort, “6:1-10 (11-12) and 40:1-11 are taken as parallel declarations whereby the large themes of judgment and promise that permeate the book of Isaiah are rooted in visions of heavenly decision making” (*ibid.*). However, as far as my exegetical analysis goes in the next chapter of this thesis, Isaiah 6 (vv. 1-13) already offers the theme of promise, subtly in terms of a remnant, without diverting to Isaiah 40.

of Isaiah through the Lens of Isaiah 6.”⁵ As Brueggemann writes, “A canonical approach is not a return to a traditional approach. [It] seeks to understand the final form of the complex text as an integral statement offered by the shapers of the book.”⁶ He goes on to say that it “draws upon historical-critical gains but moves beyond them toward theological interpretation.”⁷ It is this perspective that I have embraced in the work of my thesis.

In this introductory chapter, I will first give an overview of contemporary approaches on the interpretation of the book of Isaiah in section 1. In section 2, I will explain the purpose of my study and the methodology that I will use to conduct it. This is followed by section 3 where I will put forth my main claim which is central to the arguments of this thesis, and I will outline an organizational structure which I will use to support this claim.

1.1 An Overview of Contemporary Approaches on Interpreting the Book of Isaiah

In a dictionary entry for the book of Isaiah, Schultz retraces concisely the historical development on the interpretation of the book from both the Jewish and Christian communities in the early centuries through the medieval era of the Roman Catholic Church and the Enlightenment until our recent postmodern

⁵ The lens is intrinsically undergirded by YHWH’s holiness from the prophet’s visionary experience in Isaiah 6, which will be discussed in my exegetical analysis in section 2.3 of this thesis.

⁶ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

times.⁸ His introduction to the topic serves as a great preview before one delves into *The Struggle of Childs*.⁹ In this section, instead of focusing on the history of the interpretative approaches which we can find in the works of Schultz and Childs,¹⁰ I will only talk about the models of interpretations as represented by different contemporary scholars who have written critical commentaries on Isaiah. Their interpretative approaches, nevertheless, reflect a range of characteristics from traditional-conservative to historical-critical and canonical-critical, as identified by Brueggemann's categorization above.

First, we start with the traditional-conservative approach. Perhaps a most prominent trait that characterizes this approach is the traditional recognition that the eighth-century B.C.E. prophet Isaiah is the sole author of the book.¹¹ Contemporary commentators like John N. Oswalt, J. Alec Motyer, and Barry G. Webb are among those who hold this conservative view.¹² They ascribe authority

⁸ Richard L. Schultz, "Isaiah, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 336-38.

⁹ "The Struggle of Childs" refers to Childs' book, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*.

¹⁰ See also Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 3-5.

¹¹ The traditional recognition stands on the ground that "[Isaiah 1:1] implies that the whole book of Isaiah is a single prophecy, described as a 'vision' seen by the prophet during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries [Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018], 9). In the Jewish tradition, Isaiah's vision can be compared to that of Abraham (ibid., 9-10). To the Christians, the writers of the four Gospels and the books of Acts and Romans explicitly acknowledge their references to the book of Isaiah as the words of the prophet twenty-two times. Overall, there are a total of over four hundred quotations, paraphrases, or allusions to the book of Isaiah in the New Testament, estimated according to the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament as pointed out by Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah*, 5.

¹² See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 25; Alec J. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 25; Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 37.

of the sixty-six chapters of the book to Isaiah's own prophecy. Some of them are more open than the others to the idea that minor editorial or redactional changes were made to the text as we have received it in its final form.¹³ All these commentators, however, have no problem to speak of a unity of the book from an interpretative standpoint as it is under the pen of one author. To this end, Motyer sees the book as "a huge mosaic in which totally pre-exilic material is made to serve pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic and eschatological purposes."¹⁴ Webb credits the unity to "the overall movement from Jerusalem to new Jerusalem and from fallen creation to new creation"¹⁵ as the book progresses under a contemporary backdrop of Assyria in the prophet's lifetime in chapters 1-39 and a futuristic backdrop of Babylon from his prophetic vision in 40-66.¹⁶ As for Oswalt, he speaks of a unity of thought in the book from interpreting it as a whole, and it is "only in [this] wholeness that the grandeur of the book's message can be seen."¹⁷ Another trait of a traditional approach on interpreting the book of Isaiah by Christian commentators is to connect its prophecies to their fulfillment in the New Testament. Plenty of examples can be found in the commentaries of Oswalt, Motyer, and Webb. A case in point is 61:1-3, the first half of which is quoted in Luke 4:18-19 when Jesus read it in a synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed that

¹³ In this regard, Webb seems to be more open than Oswalt, and Oswalt than Motyer in this order. See, for the comparison, Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 33-36; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 26; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 30-31.

¹⁴ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 31.

¹⁵ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 30.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 23. See also *ibid.*, 25, where he refers to this unity of thought as "the theological and ideological unity of the book." Despite holding firm to the view of single authorship, Oswalt sees the book address to three different historical settings, namely pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic, in chapters 1-39, 40-55, and 56-66 respectively (*ibid.*, 4). The latter two settings are, of course, credited to Isaiah's prophetic vision.

this word had been fulfilled before the people there. These three commentators all connect the two passages together in their interpretation, acknowledging the importance of this fulfillment in the New Testament.¹⁸

In recognition of different historical settings in the book of Isaiah, namely pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic, proponents of historical-criticism coined the names First Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Third Isaiah for chapters 1-39, 40-55, and 56-66 respectively as they were written in that chronological order.¹⁹ Naturally, what is critical in this view is the implication that only First Isaiah could possibly be written by the prophet of Jerusalem in the pre-exilic period; the other two *Isaiahs* were written by separate authors at later dates. Subsequent development on this hypothesis in the quest for historical sources inevitably led to a fragmentation of the book of Isaiah into a collection of texts for discrete interpretation without regard to the book's unity.²⁰ The trend has, however, reversed since 1970s when scholars in the historical-critical camp began to pay attention to intertextual connections and thematic continuities across many

¹⁸ See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 563; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 499; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 235.

¹⁹ This tripartite division was first proposed by Bernhard Duhm in his commentary *Das Buch Jesaja* in 1892. His division "has been a major influence on the study of the book ever since" (Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001], 1). The names, First, Second, and Third Isaiah, are so widely used that even those who are not advocates of the historical-critical approach may use them generally to refer to the three parts of the book. The differences in historical context and tone of voice between chapters 1-39 and 40-66 have long been observed by early theologians before Duhm. For example, Thomas Aquinas "designates Isa. 40-66 as the 'second part' of the book, which he characterizes as Israel's consolation" (Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah*, 158). While there have been many proponents of Duhm's tripartite division, there are recently critics of this view, who call into question his separation of Isa. 40-66 as unwarranted. On the last note, see, for example, Richard L. Schultz, "How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter?" in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C Miguélez and Dennis L Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 154.

²⁰ See Christopher B. Hays' remark on this issue in "The Book of Isaiah in Contemporary Research," *Religion Compass* 5, no. 10 (2011): 549.

different parts of the book, features that they previously failed to appreciate or notice.²¹ Because of this change, many contemporary commentators of Isaiah now in this camp also advocate a unity in the book owing to a process of redaction, although their views on that process may greatly vary.²² Among them, Joseph Blenkinsopp's commentary on Isaiah asserts that the composition of the book started with a basic substratum as dated to the eighth-century B.C.E. and grew as materials were added from new experiences and reinterpretation of earlier ones over the three distinct historical periods of First, Second, and Third Isaiah. His methodology includes historical-critical and redactional tools to sift through the literary layers in the book in order to analyze intertextuality and theological connections within each part of the book and across them as it grew.²³ John Goldingay frames the messages of the book of Isaiah in terms of YHWH's visions to the *prophets*, who are perceived as four human voices in the book: Ambassador (the historical Isaiah), Disciple, Poet, and Preacher. The ambassador, poet, and preacher represent the voices behind the First, Second, and Third Isaiah respectively, whereas the disciple or disciples are the ones who structure the book and put it together.²⁴ Another representative is John D. W. Watts whose

²¹ See Schultz, "How Many Isaiahs," 153.

²² See *ibid.*, 165. Although their views on a redactional unity go off at a tangent from the conservatives' unity of authorship, the latter's arguments "based on common themes and vocabulary have now in large part been taken over and pressed into service as arguments for a redactional unity in the book," as noted by Dillard and Longman (*ibid.*). For a discussion of the formation of the book towards redaction criticism, refer to H. G. M. Williamson, "Recent Issues in the Study of Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 21-37.

²³ See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 83-92.

²⁴ John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 16-22.

commentary on Isaiah takes on a combination of literary, historical, and redactional analyses. Central to his interpretative work is the rendering of the book as a literary drama consisting of a prologue followed by six acts and an epilogue with the grand title “the Vision of Isaiah.” The drama is played against an Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian backdrop as the plot unfolds, and the characters are: YHWH (protagonist), the implied author-prophet (speaking and spoken about), Israel (antagonist), choral speaker and groups addressed (“people,” “we, us, our,” “you”).²⁵

As for the canonical-critical approach on the interpretation of Isaiah, its primary concern is with the shape of the text, as is received in its final form in the canon, which gives rise to the book’s theological and literary unity. It puts aside critical questions about the history of the Isaianic text that engendered its final form as secondary issues. As Rendtorff sees it, “the essential difference [...] is the priority of the interest in each case: whether concern is directed primarily to an analysis of the text and the reconstruction of its earlier stages [...], or whether the main interest is directed to the interpretation of the text as it now stands, in awareness of its possibly complex prehistory.”²⁶ Examples of commentators in the canonical-critical camp will help illuminate this approach. A key figure is Brevard S. Childs. His commentary on Isaiah develops an interpretative approach

²⁵ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), lxxxii-xcix. Besides, I should point out that one commentator who is prominent in the field of historical and redactional criticism of Isaiah is H. G. M. Williamson. The only reason that I do not discuss him in this section is that his monumental commentary on Isaiah has covered only chapters 1-12 as of the writing of this thesis, which renders me difficult to speak of his commentary on the entire book of sixty-six chapters.

²⁶ Rolf Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book,” in *Canon and Theology*, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 171.

in an exegetical form on the entire scope of the sixty-six chapters of the book.²⁷ The exegesis plays into his conviction that the literary and theological richness of the Isaianic text can only be fully understood by taking into account the unity of the whole prophetic witness, originated from the prophet Isaiah but diversified as the corpus grew.²⁸ To this end, he draws on intertextual connections and allusions purportedly inserted by a multilayer-redactional process in his exegesis, and appropriates diverse theological and literary messages from these layers as a coherent witness in his exposition. Another commentator of interest is Walter Brueggemann. His perspective of the canonical-critical approach has already been stated at the beginning of this introduction, so will not be repeated here. Instead, there are few details worth noting about Brueggemann's interpretation on Isaiah, as pointed out by Childs in his evaluation of Brueggemann's postmodern position.²⁹ First, there is a diversity of interpretations of the text, and none of these is final.³⁰ Second and consequential to the first, there are endless possibilities of hermeneutics on the text due to changing contexts of its readers

²⁷ See Childs, *Isaiah*, 1-5, on his characterization of the approach.

²⁸ Childs states that his theological reflection towards this approach is "to do justice both to the unity and diversity of the [Isaianic] corpus" (ibid., 4).

²⁹ For details of the discussion, see Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah*, 293-94. I will not go on to mention Childs' criticism of Brueggemann's position, which the reader can refer to ibid., 294-96.

³⁰ In Brueggemann's words, "No interpretive tradition is able to monopolize and close interpretation" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 6).

and their reception.³¹ Third, Brueggemann’s interpretation tries to avoid making connections to the New Testament.³²

1.2 The Purpose and Methodology of the Study

I have to confess that this study was first prompted by a sense of disunity in the text of Isaiah, at least my initial perception of it. The only thing that I could relate to its unity was the phrase “the Holy One of Isaiah” used throughout the book as an epithet for YHWH.³³ It, nonetheless, captured my attention and research interest to the book, so the journey began.

Scholars generally ascribe the prominence of this epithet in the book to the prophet’s visionary experience in Isaiah 6.³⁴ Undoubtedly, the holiness of YHWH is exalted in 6:1-7 in his vision. It is then followed by his commissioning to speak a message of doom to his fellow people Israel in 6:8-13. In fact, it is also YHWH’s holiness at work that brings about Israel’s judgment, for even when the people are repeatedly confronted by YHWH on the issues of moral uncleanness, they still do not budge. What is striking though is that Isaiah 6 ends with a message of hope in v. 13b, which declares “a seed of holiness is her stump” that will happen when judgment ends. Again, here we seem to sense that YHWH’s

³¹ Brueggemann’s characterization is that “the book of Isaiah is enormously generative and suggestive, and therefore it is open for being drawn into a variety of interpretive molds, among them that of Christian faith” (ibid., 5).

³² Brueggemann says that “Christians should not preempt the book of Isaiah” (ibid., 6) with their presuppositions from the New Testament.

³³ The epithet is used twenty-five times in the book of Isaiah. More about it will be discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis.

³⁴ For a discussion of the relationship between the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” and Isaiah 6, see section 3.1 of this thesis.

holiness is not only the cause of his action upon Israel, but also has to do with the purpose of this action. The prevalence of holiness in Isaiah 6 amounts to two tensions that I see at play between YHWH and Israel. The first is due to the conflict between YHWH's holiness and Israel's uncleanness. The second, consequential to the first, is the outcome between YHWH's judgment against Israel and her hope of deliverance which will come from no one but him alone. In order to explicate these tensions, a goal of my study is to conduct an exegesis on Isaiah 6 that has YHWH's holiness as a guiding motif for the analysis, and my theological reflection upon the exegesis is centered around a discussion of the tensions between YHWH and Israel.

The study of Isaiah 6 serves an intermediate goal of this inquiry. As scholars have observed, there are as many intertextual connections between Isaiah 6 and the rest of the book, which indicate that the prophet's vision plays a prominent role in the shaping of the corpus as a whole.³⁵ In addition, we see the eminence of YHWH's holiness which is evinced in Isaiah 6 and permeates the book through the epithet "the Holy One of Israel." This observation leads to another goal of my study which is to explore a unified message of the book from chapters 1 to 66 undergirded by the motif of holiness through the *lens* of Isaiah 6. By the lens, I mean that my understanding of Isaiah 6 through the exegesis and my theological reflection upon it will form the basis on which I will formulate a unified view to look at the book as a whole. As will be explained later in the

³⁵ For a discussion of the intertextual connections between Isaiah 6 and the rest of the book, see section 3.1 of this thesis.

discussion of its formation, the view encompasses a number of themes which are seen in Isaiah 6 and intrinsically related to YHWH's holiness; these themes are also predominant in the book, and intertextual connections between passages along these themes and Isaiah 6 are generally present. Through the lens that gives me a vantage point, I am capable of exploring a further goal of this inquiry. It is to explicate the tensions between YHWH and Israel in the book as a whole, as I have observed them in Isaiah 6. Moreover, not only do I see the tensions, but also I see that their occurrences are accompanied by an interlocking movement with an anticipation of their resolution as the book develops from beginning to end. As I conclude my study at the end, I will briefly look at what prompted me to engage in this inquiry at the beginning – the epithet “the Holy One of Israel.” From the vantage point of the lens and after examining the tensions and their resolution in the book, I will be in a better position to explore the significance and implication of this epithet as it is used throughout the book.

The above has outlined the goals of my study and the steps that I will take to accomplish them, but what is also important is the methodology that governs how I will approach the text of Isaiah. I have mentioned at the beginning of this introduction that I will take on a perspective of the canonical approach, and have already explained what this approach entails in comparison with the others. I will add a few more details of my stance here, which I hope will clarify my position and avoid any misunderstanding to my handling of the text. First, I see generally different historical backgrounds in the book corresponding to the division according to First, Second, and Third Isaiah, but my contact with a particular

historical context only goes as far as deemed necessary to clarify my theological interpretation of a text. Second, seeing the book as a unified literary work, I embrace a literary angle to look at the text. In particular, I engage intertextual connections and thematic continuities between different parts of the book from this angle. Third, seeing the book as a theological unity, my reading of the text is synchronic in the sense that my concern is: “What does the text (in all its complexity) mean in its given final shape?”³⁶

1.3 The Main Claim and Structure of the Thesis

The main claim which guides the development of arguments in this thesis operates around two tensions between YHWH and his covenantal people Israel. The tensions, as I have touched on above, can be observed in Isaiah 6 and throughout the book. I will present this claim as follows, which I will restate partly or fully from time to time as the thesis progresses: Two tensions can be observed in the strained relationship between YHWH and Israel. One arises from the conflict in character between YHWH’s holiness and Israel’s diametrical uncleanness, and the other, being consequential to the first, from the dilemma in outcome between YHWH’s judgment against Israel and her glimmer of hope resting on him alone. These tensions also permeate the book in an interlocking movement with their anticipated resolution, abrupt at times as the book develops

³⁶ Rolf Rendtorff, “The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity. Synchronic and Diachronic Reading,” in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 46. A diachronic reading will pose a quite different question: “In what stages did the text reach its final form?” (ibid.).

until the end. Yet through the development, YHWH's plan and his glorious purpose for Israel are resoundingly revealed.

The thesis is organized with the following structure. After this introductory chapter, I will begin the inquiry on Isaiah 6 in chapter 2. It is divided into four sections: section 1 has two annotated translations of Isaiah 6, one from the Masoretic Text and another from the Septuagint; section 2 discusses the form, setting and structure of Isaiah 6, which is followed by the exegetical analysis in section 3; section 4 contains a theological exposition of the tensions between YHWH and Israel in Isaiah 6. The scope of the inquiry is broadened to include the whole book in chapter 3. There are four sections in this chapter: section 1 reviews the different roles that Isaiah 6 plays in the shaping of the book from current scholarship; section 2 examines a method that I will formulate to view the book through the lens of Isaiah 6; section 3 discusses a thematic profile of the book that I will create using the method in section 2; section 4 is devoted to a theological exposition of the tensions between YHWH and Israel and their anticipated resolution in the book as observed through the thematic profile in section 3. The thesis is concluded in chapter 4 which includes a note on the implications of the study on the epithet "the Holy One of Israel." The implications will be discussed in two sections: one on the epithet as a relational designation, and the other on the epithet as a functional designation.

Chapter 2

A Tale of Two Reports and Their Tacit Tensions in Isaiah 6

Translations, Exegesis, and Theological Exposition

A seemingly strained relationship is apparent between YHWH and Israel in Isaiah 6. Two tensions can be observed in the relationship: one arises from the conflict in character between YHWH's holiness and Israel's diametrical uncleanness, and the other, being consequential to the first, from the dilemma in outcome between YHWH's judgment against Israel and her glimmer of hope still found in him. The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the tensions in Isaiah 6 through an exegetical analysis that draws on motifs and keywords of the text. It is structured in four sections. Section 1 provides a fresh translation of the Masoretic Text (MT) of Isaiah 6 with annotations, supplemented by an equally treated translation of the Septuagint (LXX) for comparison due to some critical textual variances between the Hebrew and the Greek. Section 2 presents the form, setting, and structure of the biblical material, followed by section 3, which comprises an exegetical analysis of the text. Finally, section 4 elaborates on the focus of my inquiry in this chapter, namely, a theological exposition of the tacit tensions between the Holy One and Israel in Isaiah 6.

2.1 Two Translations of Isaiah 6

2.1.1 From the Masoretic Text

6:1 In the year of the death of King Uzziah,¹ I saw² the Lord sitting upon a throne, lifted up on high,³ and the hem of his [robe]⁴ filling the palace.⁵ 2 Seraphim⁶ were standing above him,⁷ each with six wings.⁸ With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet,⁹ and with two he flew. 3 And one cried

¹ The exact year of King Uzziah's death is uncertain. Different dates are proposed by commentators though they are not far off. For examples, Walter Brueggemann cites the year of 742 BC in *Isaiah 1-39*, 58; J. J. M. Roberts, the year of 738 BC, in *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 91; Blenkinsopp, between 736-734 BC, in *Isaiah 1-39*, 224. Apparently, Uzziah' son Jotham took charge of rulership in a coregency with his father, after Uzziah had suffered from leprosy, until he died (cf. 2 Chron. 26:19-21).

² The waw-consecutive imperfect וַיֵּרְאֵה marks the first temporal sequence of the past-time narrative in Isaiah 6.

³ The two participial substantives in וְנִשָּׂא are taken as a hendiadys to express a single concept, in which case the first participle is used as a modifier for the second. See Ronald J. Williams, and John C. Beckman, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 29-30.

⁴ Besides Isaiah 6:1, the word שׂוּל occurs ten times elsewhere in the Old Testament, six of which refer to the hem of the high priest's robe in Exod. 28:33-34 and 39:24-26, the other four the skirt of woman dress (Jer. 13:22, 26; Lam. 1:9; Nah. 3:5); cf. Robert L. Alden, "שׂוּל," in vol. 4, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 65. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 94, disputes the common translation of this word as "train" for there is no evidence that robes had trains in the ancient Near East like the picture of king Jehu on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, whose robe appears to come down only to around the ankles.

⁵ I translated the word הַיְכָל as "palace" rather than "temple" because of my understanding towards interpreting the setting as in the court of heaven rather than at the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem.

⁶ In Num. 21:6-8 and Deut. 8:15, the word שֶׁרָפָיִם refers to a fiery, venomous, and flying snake that brought dread to the Israelites when they were in the wilderness after the Exodus. It also appears in Isaiah 14:29 and 30:6 where it means the same terrifying serpentine creature.

⁷ The prepositional phrase לְמַעַל לֵיָּהוָה clearly indicates that the seraphim were standing spatially above YHWH, even though this understanding would cause unease to some ancient translators like those of the Septuagint and the Targum.

⁸ The repetition שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם, which gives the sense of each, is missing in the Qumran text perhaps due to haplography; see Joseph R. Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll: A Literary Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970), 13.

⁹ As face (פָּנִים) and foot (רֶגֶל) are the top and bottom parts of the body, they may be used together to indicate that the whole body of the seraph was covered with his wings. Although רֶגֶל can be used as an euphemism and in some cases for genitalia (e.g. Judg. 3:24; Ruth 3:4, 7, 8), I do not think that this is the case unlike what Oswalt alludes to, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 179.

out to the other,¹⁰ and said, “Holy, Holy!¹¹ Holy¹² is YHWH of hosts. The fullness¹³ of all the earth is [filled with] his glory.”¹⁴ 4 The doorposts of the thresholds¹⁵ shook¹⁶ from the voice of the one crying out, and the house¹⁷ was filled with smoke. 5 I said,¹⁸ “Woe to me!¹⁹ For I am destroyed;²⁰ for a man of

¹⁰The phrase *הוּ אֵלֹהֵי-יְהוָה* is a repeated demonstrative that conveys a “reciprocal idea of mutual action [...] expressed [...] with appropriately paired words,” Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 55.

¹¹In terms of the accentuation in the MT, there are a conjunctive accent at the first *קְרוֹשׁ* and a disjunctive one at the second *קְרוֹשׁ*, so they are grouped together in my translation, separating the third *קְרוֹשׁ*.

¹²The threefold “holy”, or Trisagion, is an emphatic repetition indicating an extreme quantity or quality in Hebrew. Normally, a double repetition will suffice, e.g. *זָהָב זָהָב* (“pure gold,” 2 Kings 25:15) and *שְׁלוֹמִים שְׁלוֹמִים* (“perfect peace,” Isa. 26:13). As such, perhaps one should not be too surprised that a third “holy” is missing in the Qumran text whether it is by haplography or not; see Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll*, 13. The Trisagion should not be understood as superlative in grammar but emphatic in rhetoric; see Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 4. The rhetorical emphasis is pushed to the utmost forefront when a triple repetition is employed.

¹³The word *מְלֵא* is a noun and so translated as “fullness,” the state of being filled.

¹⁴Note the juxtaposition of YHWH’s transcendent holiness and his vast glory in the seraphim’s response.

¹⁵David J. A. Clines, ed., makes a distinction that *שַׁרְפָּת* is “threshold, viewed from the inside of a building (as against *מַתָּן* threshold, viewed from outside),” vol. VI of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 177. This helps clarify the spatial perspective of Isaiah and his closeness to the scene. He is an *insider*, not an *outsider*. However, the term *אֲמוֹת הַסַּפִּים* is “not attested elsewhere as an architectural term” for the general meaning of *אֲמָה* is “cubit, forearm” (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 223). Lack of a full understanding, it is commonly translated as “the doorposts, pivots, or foundation of the thresholds” in commentaries.

¹⁶The waw-consecutive imperfect *וַיִּנְעוּ* marks the second temporal sequence of the narrative.

¹⁷As the house (*הַבַּיִת*) refers to the palace (*הַהֵיכָל*) in v. 1, this leaves the readers to ponder how the hem of the YHWH’s robe is related to the smoke since both are said to be filling the place.

¹⁸The waw-consecutive imperfect *וַאֲמַר* marks the third temporal sequence of the narrative.

¹⁹There are two similar words for interjection in Hebrew, and they are often translated as “woe” in English. One is *אוי* as appeared in v. 5 and also 3:9, 11, and another *הוי*, used six times in chapter 5.

²⁰There are two schools of thought about the meaning of the verb *נִדְמַיתִי* though its Niphal stem is undisputed. One is “I am destroyed, ruined, cut off,” and another “I am silenced.” The difference is attributed to the multiple possibilities of the verb’s root. Smith discusses why he sides with Blenkinsopp in drawing the meaning from the root *דָּמָה*, “to destroy, ruin,” and disputes the choice of Wildberger and Watts from the alternate root *דָּמָה*, “to be silent.” Young adds to the mix the other possible roots *דָּמָה* (“to be silent”) and *דָּמָה* (“to be or to grow silent, dumb”) in his discussion of *נִדְמַיתִי*. I chose the expression “I am destroyed” in the translation which, I believe, is more in line with the distress evoked by the leading exclamation “woe.” For their respective discussions, see Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 191-92; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 223; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-*

unclean lips²¹ am I, and amidst a people of unclean lips²² am I dwelling; for it is the King, YHWH of hosts, that my eyes have seen.”²³ 6 One of the seraphim flew²⁴ to me, and in his hand was a glowing stone²⁵ that he took with a pair of tongs from upon the altar.²⁶ 7 He made [it] touch²⁷ my mouth,²⁸ and said, “Behold!²⁹ This has touched your lips, thus your iniquity³⁰ has departed,³¹ for

12, *A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 248-49; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 101-102; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: the English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 247-48.

²¹ *וְשֵׁפֶתַיִם* represents “vehicle of the word” as noted by Childs, *Isaiah*, 56.

²² Note the parallel between *וְשֵׁפֶתַיִם אֵינִי וְשֵׁפֶתַיִם אֵינִי* and *וְשֵׁפֶתַיִם אֵינִי*.

²³ As “no one may see [YHWH] and live” (Exod. 33:20), this adds to Isaiah’s woe that he would be destroyed, now that his eyes had seen YHWH of hosts.

²⁴ The waw-consecutive imperfect *וַיָּעֵף* marks the fourth temporal sequence of the narrative.

²⁵ I took Watts’ lead in translating *וַיָּעֵף* as a “(glowing) stone” for the same word is used in 2 Chron. 7:3, Est. 1:6, Ezek. 40:17, 18, and 42:3 to mean “pavement [made of smooth stone],” Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 102. A similar word *וַיָּעֵף* in 1 Kings 19:6 is used to refer to hot stones (or coals) for baking cake, but it is a masculine noun, unlike *וַיָּעֵף* which is feminine. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 250, thinks that it is a coal in accordance with Lev. 16:12, but the word used there is *וַיָּעֵף*.

²⁶ It is uncertain if *וַיָּעֵף* alludes to the incense altar or the altar of burnt offering. Many commentators link it to the incense altar because of its proximity to the setting inside the sanctuary of the temple (e.g. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 59, and Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 269), but Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 184, thinks that it is perhaps more fitting for it to be the altar of sacrifice since “there is no atonement apart from bloodshed.” However, Oswalt may have forgotten that the altar of incense can also provide the means of atonement (cf. Num. 16:46). Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 192, adds a third opinion “to view these as coals from under the throne of God, the same coals that Ezekiel saw in his second vision (Ezek. 10:2).” However, this may be a bit farfetched since the burning coals in Ezekiel’s vision are not associated with the altar but the cherubim, not to mention that it is quite a different scene from the one Isaiah sees.

²⁷ The waw-consecutive imperfect *וַיִּגַּע* marks the fifth temporal sequence of the narrative.

²⁸ From Isaiah’s perspective, he sees “the mouth of a prophet is an extension of the mouth of Yahweh,” F. García-López, “פֶּה,” in vol. XI, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 498; so does Jeremiah (Jer. 15:19).

²⁹ As an interjection to draw one’s attention, *וַיִּגַּע* without suffixes introduces asseveration to an imminent perspective; see Clines, vol. II of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 574.

³⁰ *וַיִּגַּע* is normally translated as “iniquity” for people’s crimes towards others. Once committed, as Koch notes, *וַיִּגַּע* becomes a self-destructive force within the perpetrator of the crime and gives him or her no peace; see K. Koch, “עוֹן,” in vol. X, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 551. Thus, “the Hebrew notion underlying *וַיִּגַּע* [...] allows no such distinction between transgression and punishment,” *ibid.*

³¹ Following Koch’s characterization of *וַיִּגַּע* as an active agent, I translated *וַיִּגַּע*, a verb of the Qal stem, with an active voice as “has departed,” instead of a passive rendition (e.g. “taken away”) in most translations.

your sin has been atoned for.”³² 8 I heard³³ the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”³⁴ I said, “Here I am!”³⁵ Send me.” 9 He said,³⁶ “Go and say to this people, ‘Hear continually,³⁷ but you will not understand! And see continually,³⁸ but you will not know!’ 10 Make the heart of this people fat!³⁹ And make its ears heavy! And make its eyes smeared!⁴⁰ Lest,⁴¹ it sees with its eyes and hears with its ears, and its heart understands;⁴² then it will turn back,⁴³ and there will be healing for it.”⁴⁴ 11 I said,⁴⁵ “Until when,⁴⁶ O

³² The basic meaning of the verb כָּפַר is “to cover;” see Clines, vol. IV of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 455. In Lang’s understanding of כָּפַר, this “covering” as an act of atonement for restoration is necessitated “when a positive or neutral relationship between two groups or parties is broken by a crime, transgression, or sin, [and] tension is produced” (B. Lang, “כָּפַר,” in vol. VII, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 292). The means of “covering” is referred to as כֹּפֶר, which means “ransom, redemption payment;” see Clines, vol. IV of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 457. The act of “covering,” כִּפְרִים, which occurs only as plural form in Priestly writings is always associated with sacrifices for the atonement of sins.

³³ The waw-consecutive imperfect וַאֲשַׁמַּע marks the sixth temporal sequence of the narrative.

³⁴ YHWH’s two questions are similar but contrastive: the first demands screening while the second invites volunteering. Screening is subject to YHWH’s own approval. Volunteering is on the behalf of YHWH’s governing body that renders the understanding of לְנוּ, “for us.”

³⁵ הִנֵּנִי is literally “behold, I!” Now the perspective has shifted from Isaiah’s atonement to his seeking of approval for commissioning.

³⁶ The waw-consecutive imperfect וַיֹּאמֶר marks the seventh temporal sequence of the narrative.

³⁷ The infinitive absolute שָׁמַע in שָׁמַעוּ שָׁמַעוּ can be understood as an intensifying adverb to emphasize the verb שָׁמַעוּ or to express ongoing or repeated action with it; see Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 85. Both understandings are applicable here for the people have indeed heard YHWH’s word, and many times, through Isaiah’s repeated proclamations.

³⁸ Ditto for רָאוּ רָאוּ.

³⁹ The Qumran text has הָשַׁם for the MT’s הִשְׁמֵן, and as such, applies the Hiphil meaning of שָׁמַם (“to stupefy”) to the heart. While this is possible, the MT reading goes more in line with הִכְבֵּד and הִשְׁע to describe the physical condition of body organs rather than psychological as הָשַׁם does; see Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll*, 13.

⁴⁰ The Hiphil imperatives הִשְׁמֵן (“make fat”), הִכְבֵּד (“make heavy”), and הִשְׁע (“make smeared”) compel a concerted effort for one purpose – render the respective organs, heart, ears and eyes, dull and unreceptive, thus making the senses of the people dysfunctional.

⁴¹ The conjunction כִּי is used to begin a negative purpose clause, thereby translated as “lest, or else, beware lest, in order not;” see Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 163.

⁴² Note the chiasmatic order of “heart/ears/eyes” and then “eyes/ears/heart” in v. 10.

⁴³ Note the change from the preceding imperatives to the waw-consecutive perfect in וַיִּשָּׂא (and וַיִּרְפָּא) that signifies a disjunction for indicating a future outcome, when the abilities of seeing, hearing, and understanding are not obstructed; see Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 76.

⁴⁴ Another way to translate, as most commentaries do, is to render וַיִּרְפָּא לוֹ in passive voice like “it will be healed.”

Lord?” And he said, “Surely until when⁴⁷ cities crash into ruins from no more inhabitant and houses from no more humankind,⁴⁸ and the land will be crashed into ruins,⁴⁹ a devastation.” 12 And the Lord⁵⁰ will send far away⁵¹ humankind, so the forsakenness in the midst of the earth will be great. 13 If there is still in her⁵² a tenth, it will be again⁵³ for burning,⁵⁴ like a terebinth⁵⁵ and like an oak⁵⁶ that in felling,⁵⁷ there is a stump with them.⁵⁸ A seed of holiness⁵⁹ is her stump.⁶⁰

⁴⁵ The waw-consecutive imperfect וַאֲמַר marks the eighth temporal sequence of the narrative.

⁴⁶ I prefer the literal translation of “until when” to “how long” that most commentaries adopt; nevertheless, both should convey the same meaning.

⁴⁷ Most commentaries simplify עַד אֲשֶׁר אֵם as “until.”

⁴⁸ Note the parallel between cities and houses and between inhabitant and humankind that acts as an emphatic repetition in reaffirming YHWH’s answer to Isaiah’s question. The essence in YHWH’s reply is not time but a reflection of the people’s obstinance, congruent with their inability to see, hear, and understand.

⁴⁹ Note that the Niphal form of שָׂעָה is applied to אֶדְמָה while the Qal form to עָרִים and בָּתִּים . This indicates that the land is inevitably drawn into devastation by the crashes of cities and houses.

⁵⁰ With the change of grammatical subject from 1st person in v. 11 to 3rd person in v. 12, I construe it as a signal indicating an end to YHWH’s reply in v. 11, and what begins in v. 12 is the narrator’s own elaboration. Some commentators (e.g. Blenkinsopp, Oswalt, and Watts) hold this position in their translation while others (e.g. Brevard, Brueggemann, and Roberts) do not.

⁵¹ Note the change from the preceding imperfect to the waw-consecutive perfect in וַיִּרְחַק (and וַיִּרְבֶּה) that marks a disjunction for signifying a future outcome as a result of the land’s devastation; see Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 76. In this way, v. 12 starts forming an explanation of v. 11b.

⁵² The “her” refers to “the earth” (הָאָרֶץ) in v. 12.

⁵³ In the verbal coordination $\text{וַיִּשְׂבֶּה וַיִּהְיֶה}$, the first verb וַיִּשְׂבֶּה functions as an adverb modifying the second verb וַיִּהְיֶה to mean “again;” see Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 91.

⁵⁴ The Piel stem of לְבַעַר is also used in Isa. 3:14 and 5:5 where the land of Israel, metaphorically described as YHWH’s vineyard (cf. 5:7), is destroyed by his people as if beasts grazed over a field or vineyard (Exod. 22:4, Hebrew). As Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 251, writes, “the grazing of a herd of small animals could mean the complete destruction of all the vegetation.” Moberly, however, insists that the verb should mean “for burning” on the basis of its allusion to purification, arguing that only “burning” but not “grazing” can legitimately convey this allusion; see R. W. L. Moberly, “‘Holy, Holy, Holy’: Isaiah’s Vision of God,” in *Holiness Past and Present*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2003), 134. I agree with Moberly that construing לְבַעַר as “for burning,” instead of “for gazing,” fits the context better. See also H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, The International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2018), 28, who believes the verb must be rendered as “for destruction,” his preference, or “for burning.”

⁵⁵ Zohary writes, “The terebinth’s biblical name, *elah*, like that of the oak (*allon*), stems from the Hebrew *el* (god) and is associated with might and sturdiness. These trees are among the most aged and widespread species, particularly in the Negev, Lower Galilee and the Dan Valley;”

2.1.2 From the Septuagint

6:1 And it happened in the year in which King Ozias died,⁶¹ I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the house was full of his glory.⁶² 2

see Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 110.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 108, “There are three oak species in the thickets and forests of the Holy Land; two of them, the common evergreen oak and the Tabor oak, are the most impressive in their stature, age and dominance. [...] They were associated with worship, offerings and other ritual and religious customs; furnished burial sites for the honored dead; and were undoubtedly used in everyday life for buildings, ship oars, and other utensils.”

⁵⁷ The word *בְּשִׁלַּח* in the MT is *משלכת* in the Qumran text; see Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll*, 14. Since *שִׁלַּח* is a hapax legomenon, its meaning is uncertain but alluded to “felling (of a tree)” in relation to *שָׁלַח*. Both the prepositions *בְּ* (MT) and *מִן* (Qumran) are temporal modifiers, meaning “in, when” and “after” respectively with reference to the “felling.”

⁵⁸ The noun *מִצְבֵּה*, which also appears with a third-person feminine suffix (*מִצְבֵּהָ*) in v. 13, looks very similar to its cognate *מִצְבֵּה* that means “pillar, memorial stone;” see Clines, vol. V of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 442-43. However, many Hebrew scholars tend to think of it as “stump of tree” in association with the mention of terebinth and oak in the same verse, including Clines and commentators like Blenkinsopp, Childs, Brueggemann, Oswalt, and Roberts. See Smith J. Gamberoni, “*מִצְבֵּה*,” in vol. VIII, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 486, who writes, “In Isa. 6:13 the terms [*מִצְבֵּה*] and [*מִצְבֵּהָ*] apparently have as little to do with [*מִצְבֵּה*] as do several other rare nominal constructions from the same base.” However, some scholars (e.g. Watts), apparently influenced by the Qumran text that has *במה* for the MT’s *בְּ*, support a reading that takes *מִצְבֵּה* to mean pillar or monument of *במה* (“high place”) and understands the terebinth or oak as a place for the practice of Asherah worship; see the Qumran text in Rosenbloom, *The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll*, 14. For a discussion of the textual variances between the MT and the Qumran and the challenges in comprehending v. 13, see, for instance, Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 187.

⁵⁹ The term *שָׂרַע קִדְשׁ* also appears in Ezra 9:2 as *שָׂרַע הַקִּדְשׁ*, which is the only other place of its occurrence in the Old Testament. Childs, *Isaiah*, 58, siding with Williamson, states that “v. 13 offers an analogy that must be seen as an editorial addition from this same postexilic period” that culminated in the understanding of this term by the Jewish community as in Ezra 9:2.

⁶⁰ The third-person feminine suffix of *מִצְבֵּהָ*, just as the one in *בְּ* at the beginning of v. 13, refers to *אֶרֶץ הָאָרֶץ* (“the earth”) at the end of v. 12; see Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 101.

⁶¹ *Οζίας* is the Hellenistic spelling of *עֲזַרְיָהוּ*, also known as *עֲזַרְיָה* or *Αζαρις* in Greek (“Azariah,” cf. 2 Kings 14:21; 2 Chron. 26:1). The Targum has “King Uziah was struck with it” where “it” refers to his leprosy; see Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, ed. Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher and Martin McNamara (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 14.

⁶² The avoidance of anthropomorphism in referencing YHWH’s hem is widely acknowledged by scholars (e.g. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 89, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 102) for this difference between the LXX and the MT, rather than a variance in the Hebrew text of the LXX translator. The similarity between *πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ* in v. 1 and *πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ* in v. 3, including even their word order, betrays not only a copy of v. 3 when the translator was in search of a substitute for his conundrum, but also his predilection of the word *δόξα* that “designates the effect of God’s presence,” Ronald L. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah as Translation and Interpretation: The Strategies of the Translator of the Septuagint of Isaiah* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 130. For a discussion of the translator’s usage of *δόξα*, see *ibid.*, 128-132. The Targum adopts the same avoidance of anthropomorphism in this verse, but deviates from

And seraphim stood round about him,⁶³ six wings with one and six wings with one,⁶⁴ and with two they covered the face, and with two they covered the feet, and with two they flew.⁶⁵ 3 And they cried out one to another, and they said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth.⁶⁶ All the earth is full of his glory.”⁶⁷ 4 And the lintel⁶⁸ of the door was lifted up from the voice which they cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said, “O wretched am I, for I am deeply pained,⁶⁹ for being a human and having unclean lips, in the midst of a people having unclean lips am I dwelling, and [it is] the King, the Lord of Sabaoth, [that] I have seen with my eyes!”⁷⁰ 6 And one of the seraphim was sent⁷¹ to me, and he

the LXX at three places: (1) It has “the prophet said” before “I saw;” (2) it reads “*the glory of the Lord;*” (3) the throne is said to be “in the heavens of the height,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14.

⁶³ The difference with the MT is likely due to the translator’s unwillingness in placing the seraphim above YHWH spatially, instead of a textual variance; see Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 89, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 102.

⁶⁴ I.e. six wings with each, as the Hebrews attests.

⁶⁵ The Targum changes the seraphim to “holy attendants” in order to avoid any risk of polytheism, and attributes the covering of the face to “that he might not see” and that of the feet to “that he might not be seen,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14.

⁶⁶ Σαβαωθ is the Greek transliteration of סַבְאוֹת. In Troxel’s reckoning, *LXX-Isaiah*, 170, “this translator resorts to transliteration when he considers a word a technical term or a proper noun.” For the Targum, each “holy” is followed by a different characterization, as in “holy in the heavens of the height, his sanctuary, holy upon the earth, the work of his might, holy in eternity,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14.

⁶⁷ From the house (v. 1) to the earth (v. 3), the Lord’s glory is everywhere. Note the similarity with v. 1 even in word order.

⁶⁸ The Greek understanding points to the beam above the door while the Hebrew alludes to the foundation below. This might explain why the LXX uses the same root ἐπαίρω (“to lift up”) in v. 4 as in v. 1, but the MT uses a different verb נָעַן (“to shake”) when referring to the foundation. It is uncertain if the employment of the same verb is due to a variance in the translator’s source text or his puzzlement over הַמָּזוֹז as an architectural term.

⁶⁹ The translator’s perception of κατανένυγμα (“I am deeply pained”), however he received it, seems to be more aligned with “I am destroyed/undone” than “I am silenced” from the previous discussion of נִדְמִיתִי. Seemingly even further removed, the Targum reads “I have sinned,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14.

⁷⁰ It looks as if the translator’s vocalization and accentuation of אִישׁ טְמֵא־שִׁפְתָיִם divides it into two separate terms: (being) a man and (having) unclean lips. Instead of following the Hebrew simile “unclean lips,” the Targum speaks plainly of “for I am a man liable to chastisement, and I dwell in the midst of people that are defiled with sins,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14. To avoid thinking of the Lord as visible, it reads “my eyes have seen *the glory of the Shekhinah* of the eternal king.” Shekinah refers to an aspect of God’s activity “in his availability in the cult,” *ibid.*, xvi.

had in the hand a coal,⁷² which he had taken from the altar with the tongs.⁷³ 7 And he touched my mouth, and he said, “Behold! This has touched your lips, and it will take away⁷⁴ your lawlessness,⁷⁵ and it will cleanse⁷⁶ your sins.”⁷⁷ 8 And I heard the voice of [the] Lord,⁷⁸ saying, “Whom will I send, and who will go to this people?”⁷⁹ And I said, “Behold! [Here] am I. Send me!” 9 And he said, “Go! And say to this people, ‘By hearing,⁸⁰ you will hear,⁸¹ but you will not understand, and you, those who are looking, will look,⁸² but you will not

⁷¹ The MT reads “one of the seraphim flew to me.” The change in the LXX is “apparently to avoid any implication that the seraph acted on his own initiative,” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 90.

⁷² The state “live” or “burning” of the coal seems implied because it has been taken from the altar. The same word for coal is used in Rom. 12:20 where it is qualified by an adjective as ἀνθρακας πυρὸς.

⁷³ Instead of a coal in his hand, the Targum speaks of a speech in the seraph’s mouth, “which he took before him whose Shekinah is upon the throne of glory in the heavens of the height, above the altar,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14. Note that the phrase “in the heavens of the height” is repeated thrice, once here and another in v. 1 both referring to the throne of glory, and the third in v. 3 to the sanctuary.

⁷⁴ Note that the verb ἀφελεῖ is in future tense, which perhaps bespeaks the translator’s understanding of it as a promissory action.

⁷⁵ In the LXX, the cause of the people’s ἠνομή is often understood as their turning away from the תורה, “Torah,” thus the word ἀνομία, “lawlessness,” as the translator’s preferred choice for עוון. In fact, “[e]specially expressive of this Jewish ‘Hellenistic theology’ is the identification of תורה so exclusively of νόμος that ‘in Psalms about fifteen expressions for wickedness and impiety are translated by ἀνομία,’ so that piety comes to be defined as living according to the νόμος,” Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 153.

⁷⁶ The future tense of the verb περικαθαριεῖ may indicate it as a promise.

⁷⁷ With a speech in lieu of a coal, the Targum speaks of “the words of my prophecy in your mouth” that cleanses the prophet, Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15.

⁷⁸ The Targum qualifies the voice as “the voice of the Memra of the Lord,” *ibid.* Memra is an aspect of God’s activity manifested “in his word of command,” *ibid.*, xvi.

⁷⁹ Presumably the translator replaced “for us” with “to this people,” “a doctrinal alteration to avoid God using the first person plural phrase,” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 90. The Targum continues in the theme of prophecy to speak of “whom shall I send to prophesy, and who will go to teach,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15.

⁸⁰ The dative Ακοῆ, “by hearing,” implies that it is achieved by a number of means like report, news, and preaching.

⁸¹ Ακοῆ ἀκούσετε is an instance of Cognate Dative that “while we have to search for this idiom in classical Greek, it thrusts itself upon us at every turn in the Greek of the LXX, owing to its aptness for rendering a mode of expression familiar in the original (Hebrew),” F. C. Conybeare, and St. George Stock, *A Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), section 61.

⁸² βλέποντες βλέψετε is an example of Intensive Participle whereby “we often find the participle used along with a finite form of the same verb, to convey the intensive force that is accomplished in Hebrew by the addition of the infinitive to the finite verb,” Conybeare, *A*

behold.⁸³ 10 For the heart of this people has grown fat, and with difficulty, they have heard by their ears, and they have closed their eyes,⁸⁴ lest they might behold with the eyes, and they might hear with the ears, and they might understand with the heart, and they might turn, then⁸⁵ I will heal them.”⁸⁶ 11 And I said, “Until when, O Lord?” And he said, “Until cities are made desolate from being not inhabited, and houses from not having humankind, and the earth will be left desolate.”⁸⁷ 12 And after these things,⁸⁸ God⁸⁹ will send far away the humankind, and those who have been left will be multiplied on the earth.⁹⁰ 13 Even still on it

Grammar of Septuagint Greek, section 81. Unlike Cognate Dative, it is not found in pure classical Greek.

⁸³ The Targum reads closely like the MT for this verse; see Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15.

⁸⁴ According to Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 90, “LXX eases the theological harshness of the passage by introducing a causal particle, changing the imperative to finite verbs, and making the people the subject of the action.” With regard to theological exegesis for a difficult text, I concur that “the LXX [...] is interpretation only insofar as a decision is made between various possibilities of understanding which are already inherent in the formulation of the Hebrew *Vorlage* and thus given to the translator,” Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 132.

⁸⁵ The verbs before the last καὶ in v. 10 are subjunctive, but the one after is future indicative. Though the latter can interplay as a subjunctive in some cases (see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 571), I tend to construe it as a predictable outcome by the work of the Lord, should they make the turn. Taking this as the translator’s perspective, I translate καὶ as “then.”

⁸⁶ Similar to making the people the subject of their own hardening, the translator also interprets the Lord as the one healing them for such subject is absent in the MT. For the Targum, this verse reads much like the MT except at the end where it speaks of “*it be forgiven them* [sic],” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15, instead of healing regardless of who does it. In this way, the Targum seems to equate forgiveness to healing (cf. Mark 4:12).

⁸⁷ Both Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 90, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 103, suggest that καταλειφθήσεται is a reading of רָשְׁפָה (“it will be left”) instead of the MT’s הִשָּׁפָה (“it will be crashed into ruins”).

⁸⁸ The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα, “after these things,” not found in the MT, is presumably an interpretive addition by the translator.

⁸⁹ This is the only place where ὁ θεός, “God,” is used instead of κύριος, “the Lord,” in Isaiah 6 of the LXX. It is also a signal by the translator that v. 12ff. is not part of the Lord’s speech in v. 11.

⁹⁰ For the final part of v. 12, the translator has apparently translated הַרְצִינָה, “the forsakenness,” as οἱ καταλειφθέντες, “those who have been left,” an interpretation that has radically changed the sense of judgment in the MT into a hope of salvation in the LXX. The term οἱ καταλειφθέντες also appears in 10:19 and 24:14 where it is used to represent the remnant of Israel, those who have turned to the Lord, after he has put them through fierce and devastating judgment. Perhaps, like the deviation in v. 12 from the MT, “[the translator’s] willingness to plug

is the tenth part, and again it will be for a plunder,⁹¹ like a terebinth and like an acorn when it might fall from its sheath.⁹²

2.2 Form, Setting, and Structure of Isaiah 6

The content of Isaiah 6, readily distinguishable from its surrounding materials, is a first-person narrative in form, spoken from the perspective of one doubtlessly perceived as the prophet Isaiah.⁹³ More precisely, it is a “narrative event” because “[its] tempo slows down enough for us to discriminate a particular scene; to have the illusion of the scene’s ‘presence’ as it unfolds; to be able to imagine the interaction of personages or sometimes personages and groups, together with the freight of motivations, ulterior aims, character traits, political, social, or religious constraints, moral and theological meanings, borne by their

in such words hints that he regarded the book to have recurrent themes that could be read into a context without explicit warrant from the Hebrew, without being untrue to the meaning of the book,” Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 289. In light of the broader context of Isaiah, “the themes of δόξα and salvation [...] were essential elements of the book that the translator appropriated as leitmotifs in his interpretation of the whole,” *ibid.* 132. For the Targum, this verse and the preceding one align closely with the MT; see Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15.

⁹¹ Instead of the figurative לְרָעָה, “for burning,” in the MT, the translator interpreted it plainly as εἰς προνομήν, “for a plunder.”

⁹² The LXX simply ends the picture of devastation in v. 13 with a presumably reinterpreted translation ὅταν ἐκπέσῃ ἀπὸ τῆς θήκῃς αὐτῆς, “when [a terebinth or an acorn] might fall from its sheath,” leaving out the “stump” in מִצֵּדָה בְּרֵךְ and its immediate follow-on וְרַע קָדָשׁ מִצֵּדָה. For the Targum, it reads closely like the MT for the beginning of this verse and retains the reference to “stump” and “holy seed” at the end as in “For the holy seed is their stump,” Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 15. In between, it tones down the metaphor of a tree falling and replaces it with the reading “which when their leaves drop off appear dried up, and even then they are green enough to retain from them the seed,” followed immediately by this innovative reference to the exiles, “So the exiles of Israel will be gathered and they will return to their land,” *ibid.* As Chilton notes, “This surprising development of the tree imagery balances the preceding threat, and confirms the post-70 perspective of the passage,” *ibid.*

⁹³ Isaiah is not introduced in person from chapters 1 through 5 other than in the superscriptions in 1:1 and 2:1. Chapter 5 is poetic oracular in form and chapter 7 third-person narrative.

speech, gestures, and acts.”⁹⁴ By this literary definition, the narrative event in Isaiah 6 poses the first challenge to us – its particular scene – before we investigate its purposes, characterizations, motivations or meanings.

The fact that Isaiah starts with the phrase וָאֶרְאָה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא (“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne”) clearly sets the narrative apart as a visionary event. With only minor variation, these words look much the same as the prophet Micaiah’s וָאֶרְאִיתִי אֶת־יְהוָה יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאוֹ (“I saw YHWH sitting upon his throne”) when he begins to retell his vision in 1 Kings 22:19-22, where YHWH is conversing with his attendants in the heavenly court about who will entice King Ahab. By this analogy, some commentators liken the scene of Isaiah 6 to that of 1 Kings 22:19-22, and ascribe it to YHWH’s throne room in heaven.⁹⁵ There are, however, a number of prominent elements in the text that point us to the temple in Jerusalem: (1) הַהֵיכָל (“the temple or palace,” v. 1), (2) אַמּוֹת הַסַּפִּיּוֹת (“the doorposts of the thresholds,” v. 4), (3) הַבַּיִת (“the house,” v. 4), and (4) הַמִּזְבֵּחַ (“the altar,” v. 6).⁹⁶ While either scenario is possible from their respective evidences and some scholars may even shrug off the argument as irrelevant for understanding the

⁹⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 79.

⁹⁵ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 105, states, “The setting in the Hall of the Heavenly Council is also a notable feature of these vision narratives and several other OT passages (1 Kgs. 22:17-23; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1-5);” Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 58, notes, “The account reports an activity in the throne room of heaven where the holy God sits.”

⁹⁶ For this reason, Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 92, does not hesitate to say, “To begin with, it is clear that the locus of this vision is in the temple.” Then he goes on to identify the seat of YHWH’s throne with the platform formed by the wings of the two giant cherubim found in the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs. 6:22-29, cf. Ezek. 10:1-2), whose span overshadows the ark (1 Kgs. 8:6-7) which is said to be the footstool of God (1 Chron. 28:2), *ibid.*, 93. Likewise, Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 139, believes the social setting of the vision takes place in the inner sanctuary of the Jerusalem temple where YHWH “sits enthroned upon the cherubim” (Ps. 99:1). He further surmises that “although the terminology differs, the seraphim appear to correspond to the winged cherubim that stand above the ark in the Holy of Holies,” *ibid.*

message of Isaiah 6,⁹⁷ I think the clue to a more definitive answer lies in the purpose of this vision which is, with no doubt, relevant to our reading of Isaiah 6 and the book as a whole.

A debate on the purpose revolves around whether Isaiah's vision constitutes his inaugural call to be a prophet or his commissioning for a task already as a prophet. The fact that this vision is found in chapter 6 of the book offers us no help for the question because we know with no certainty about the timing of Isaiah's prophecies in chapters 1-5 in relation to the event in chapter 6.⁹⁸ Commentators who disagree with it being an inaugural call narrative cite various reasons like: (1) Isaiah was not called but only given a choice to participate as a volunteer, unlike the legitimate call narratives of Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (cf. Exod. 3:1-4:17; Jer. 1:1-10; Ezek. 2:1-10) where they were persuaded through assurance;⁹⁹ (2) standing in YHWH's throne room attests that Isaiah was already a prophet, like Micaiah (cf. 1 Kings 22:13-23);¹⁰⁰ (3) the verb *šālaḥ* ("send") is never used for an initial call but only in subsequent commissioning thereafter.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ For instance, Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 176, decries that "attempts to prove that the vision took place in either the earthly temple or a heavenly one are generally of no consequence [...] the reality of the experience for Isaiah and the truths which it conveyed to him are of fundamental significance [...] how or where the experience occurred has little to do with those questions."

⁹⁸ For a discussion of hypotheses about why chapter 6 is placed at its current position in the book, see Childs, *Isaiah*, 42-44; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 135-36; Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 171-73.

⁹⁹ Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 174; see also Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 256-57.

¹⁰⁰ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 135.

¹⁰¹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 104. The line is, however, becoming blurry quickly when the initial call is immediately followed by commissioning for a specific task as in the cases of Gideon, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (cf. Judg. 6:14; Jer. 1:7; Ezek. 2:3). Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 257, makes the distinction that the word "send" is not used at first when God addresses them directly in their cases, but only after when detailing the specifics of their assignments. In the case of Isaiah's

Proponents who support it as a call narrative insist that Isaiah 6 consists of most, if not all, of the typical elements found in this kind of genre, albeit with deviations and modifications.¹⁰² Judging between the evidences from both sides, my take on the purpose is that Isaiah was already called to be a prophet before his theophany in Isaiah 6, and the vision culminates in his commissioning for the task described in vv. 9-10. This purpose has an implication to the setting of the scene.

Given that the narrative event in Isaiah 6 is not an inaugural call, the possibility that the scene actually took place in the heavenly realm is increased because a call of this kind should, by tradition, constitute word coming down from heaven to the prophet-in-waiting while the person remains in the earthly

vision, God's first spoken word is concerning whom to send for a specific task without even making Isaiah his direct addressee.

¹⁰² For example, Habel uses the call *Gattung* that he proposes in the article to divide Isaiah 6 into the following literary elements of a call narrative: the divine confrontation (vv. 1-2), the introductory word (vv. 3-7), the commission (vv. 8-10), the objection (v. 11a), and the reassurance (vv. 11-13); see N. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77, no. 3 (1965): 309-12. Despite missing the sign, which is the sixth element in his complete set, he insists that Isaiah 6 serves as an example of the same pattern that can be found in the call narratives of Gideon, Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel where all the elements exist. He acknowledges the parallel between 1 Kings 22:19-21 and Isaiah 6:1-8 and construes the former as a new literary paradigm imitated by the latter, but he ignores the fact that Micaiah was already a prophet when he stood in the heavenly court. Although his pattern fits well with legitimate call narratives, its assignment to Isaiah 6 is questionable upon critical examination. The introductory word is not spoken by YHWH to the prophet-in-waiting as is the case in the other call narratives above. As such, the so-called introductory word in vv. 3-7 can hardly be seen as a call but more likely a continuation of the divine confrontation that results in Isaiah's dreadful response and penitence in v. 5 followed by YHWH's offer of purification in vv. 6-7. Regarding the commissioning and the objection, both are uncontentious elements in the argument regardless of where the purpose of the narrative sits. However, I would deem Habel's claim for the reassurance element in vv. 11-13 going off on a tangent when it is compared with his analyses in the other cases where we see his argument, as supported by the texts, is based on YHWH's personal touch and commitment to the prophets ("I will be with you," Judg. 6:16; "I will be with your mouth," Exod. 4:12; "I am with you to deliver you," Jer. 1:8; three times of "be not afraid," Ezek. 2:6). Such personal encouragement is completely lacking in vv. 11-13, and the claim that Habel makes is merely based on a glimmer of hope found amidst harsh judgment in the passage. As readily seen, it is not of the same nature as the reassurance elements for other claims.

realm, as seen in the well-known call narratives of the Old Testament.¹⁰³ As already pointed out, a literary description on par with the setting of Micaiah's vision also raises up the stakes that Isaiah's event should not happen in the temple. Another compelling reason that works as a counterargument to the earthly temple has to do with Isaiah's role. Nowhere is Isaiah attested as a high priest or even a priest per se in the Scriptures, but the vision seemingly sets him right before YHWH inside the Holy of Holies, which is accessible to the high priest only once a year.¹⁰⁴ Barring any psychological or hallucinatory explanations for the account, the odds are that the event did not take place in the temple. In reality, no instructive details are given on how Isaiah saw his vision, but the Scriptural witness clearly points us to a heavenly scene where Isaiah was standing before YHWH's throne in his court. The allusion to the familiar elements of the temple is not a coincidence but a recurring testimony that the temple represents YHWH's sanctuary among his people, "the place where heavenly and earthly meet, and where a prophet might be experienced to see through the earthly scene to its

¹⁰³ Here I borrow Habel's call pattern loosely and confine the introductory word to be an address directly spoken by YHWH or his messenger to the person who is being called to be a prophet. Among the examples are: (1) YHWH said to Abram presumably at Haran (Gen. 12:1, cf. 11:32) (2) God called to Moses out of the bush (Exod. 3:4); (3) the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon under the terebinth at Ophrah; (4) YHWH called Samuel at the temple (1 Sam. 2:4); (5) the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah while he was presumably in the field (Jer. 1:4, cf. 1:11); (6) the word of YHWH came to Ezekiel in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal (Ezek. 1:3). While the list is by no means exhaustive, it illustrates YHWH's condescension from the heavenly realm to the earth in order to reach out to his candidate.

¹⁰⁴ It is interesting to see the oxymoron in Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 140, where he writes, "Only the high priest is allowed to appear before YHWH in the Holy of Holies with the appropriate offerings," after he has unequivocally claimed that the social setting of Isaiah 6 is in the Holy of Holies. Then he goes on to say "there is no indication that Isaiah filled a priestly role, but his presence at the temple during the Yom Kippur ceremonies appears to be the most likely setting for his vision." If Isaiah was not the high priest, how could he be present inside the Holy of Holies? It is another story if what Isaiah saw was not real, but Sweeney makes no indication to that at all.

heavenly counterpart.”¹⁰⁵ It is this heavenly counterpart that I believe is the credible setting of the scene, alluded to by the Targumic tradition with the first of the threefold “holy” in v. 3, which reads, “holy in the heavens of the height [is] his sanctuary.”¹⁰⁶

Regarding the structure of Isaiah 6, there is no doubt that a clear demarcation exists, separating it into two main parts, vv. 1-7 and vv. 8-13, as a result of what Isaiah “saw” (הָאֵרָאָה in v. 1) and what he “heard” (וַיִּשְׁמָע in v. 8) in YHWH’s throne room.¹⁰⁷ At a granular level, the demarcation can be further refined syntactically into these units of verses: 1-3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9-10, 11-13, if I follow the *wayyiqtol* form found typically in past-time narrative.¹⁰⁸ While this syntactical structure helps us understand the temporal sequence of the account in Isaiah 6, there are other elements in its literary structure that capture deeper and more intricate semantic meanings in the text, but such opinions vary depending on one’s perspective.¹⁰⁹ To this end, a chiastic form that I have observed in Isaiah 6 is found useful for organizing the text semantically as follows:¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ N. L. A. Tidwell, “אָרָאָה (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah’s Fourth Vision,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94, no. 3 (1975): 345.

¹⁰⁶ Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ In this manner, Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 170-91, calls these two parts *Vision* and *Commission* whereas Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 246-78, *Theophany* and *Commission*.

¹⁰⁸ For a glimpse of some of the voluminous literature about the *wayyiqtol* form (i.e. waw-consecutive imperfect), refer to Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 75. Within the *wayyiqtol* units in vv. 9-10 and vv. 11-13, we also see the *weqatal* form (i.e. waw-consecutive perfect) for few actions which have no completion in view, namely וַיִּשְׁמָע and וַיִּרְאֶה in v. 10, וַיִּרְאֶה in v. 12, and וַיִּשְׁמָע and וַיִּרְאֶה in v. 13.

¹⁰⁹ For example, using a combination of “[the text’s] syntactical structure, which is determined by the verbs that govern each section, the shifts in subject that take place from section to section, and the sequence of speeches that appear in each section,” Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 132, identifies the structure of Isaiah 6 with this division of verses: 1-2, 3-4, 5, 6-7, 8, 9-10, 11-13. The only concern I have with Sweeney’s approach is that it tends to be ad-hoc based on whichever rule(s) he feels like picking when he finds the need to create a new unit. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*

Isaiah 6:1-13 – A Tale of Two Reports

The *Seeing* Report (vv. 1-7)

- King Uzziah's death in view of YHWH's holiness (v. 1)
- Seraphim's action due to YHWH's holiness (v. 2)
- Seraphim's cry over YHWH's holiness (v. 3)
- The glory of YHWH's holiness (v. 4)
- Isaiah's cry over his uncleanness (v. 5)
- Seraph's action due to Isaiah's uncleanness (v. 6)
- Isaiah's atonement in view of his uncleanness (v. 7)

The *Hearing* Report (vv. 8-13)

- YHWH's call for a messenger of his mission (v. 8a)
- Isaiah's self-nomination for YHWH's mission (v. 8b)
- What Isaiah is to do – YHWH's message for Israel (v. 9)
- Why Isaiah is to do it – YHWH's message for Isaiah (v. 10)
- Isaiah's agonizing protest for YHWH's mission (v. 11a)
- YHWH's indefinite timetable for the mission (vv. 11b-13)
 - until the land is totally desolate with no inhabitants (v. 11b)
 - whereby the remnant is sent away from the land (v. 12)
 - after which the land will sprout a new growth of Israel (v. 13)

The above structure forms the basis of my exegetical analysis and exposition, to which I will turn in the next sections.

Revised, 103, puts forth a structure as 1-4, 5-7, 8-10, 11, 12-13 without even citing the rationale behind.

¹¹⁰ In his discourse on the structure of Isaiah 6, Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 37, states that “the chapter’s two main parts (vv. 1-7 and vv. 8-13) are thus clearly demarcated, each is further subdivided to give the whole something an *abb’a’* structure, the two central parts (*b* and *b’*) each being characterized by the use of narrative tenses with the outer layers tending to be more descriptive.” However, he provides no further detail about the boundary where each constituent in this *abb’a’* structure lies, but only an impression of a structure formed by the use of the two leading verbs in the chapter, רָאָה (“see”) and שָׁמַע (“hear”), and the word אָמַר (“I said”), which I do not see as chiasmic. Perhaps, it is why he follows quickly with this disclaimer in the same paragraph: “While I have no intention of claiming that this is all completely neat and tidy as if it were simply mechanical, it still gives the impression of a careful composition in which each main part is carefully integrated,” *ibid*.

2.3 An Exegetical Analysis of Isaiah 6

The chapter opens with the year of King Uzziah's death in v. 1a. While it functions as a chronological marker for Isaiah's vision, its mention is nonetheless reminiscent of Uzziah's wrongs: his prideful and presumptuous attempt to burn incense on the incense altar in the מקדש ("Holy Place") of the temple, which caused him to become an unclean leper to the day of his death.¹¹¹ The judgment on his infringement of YHWH's holiness is a vivid reminder of the dire consequence if the Israelites, kings not exempted, do not take heed of the instruction in Leviticus 10:10 "to make a distinction between the holiness (קדש) and the commonness (הל) and between the unclean (טמא) and the clean (טהור)."¹¹²

¹¹¹ Cf. 2 Chron. 26:16-23. The role of priesthood belongs only to Aaron's descendants who are responsible for ministering in the Holy Place (Exod. 28:1, 43). When one is afflicted with leprosy, the person becomes unclean, and must be isolated from others and live alone (Lev. 13). Uzziah's physical uncleanness rendered him unlawful to enter the temple again to his death. The Targum makes this point explicit in v. 1a that reads like "in the year that King Uzziah was struck with it (leprosy)," Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum*, 14.

¹¹² To abide by the instruction in Lev. 10:10, they ought to follow the law (תורה) prescribed in the Pentateuch. Conceptually, the nominal קדש ("holiness") ascribes a state of pristine and lofty quality to God's quintessence, a quality belonged to him only; see Jackie A Naudé, "קדש," in vol. 3, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 879. Anything that God claims for himself will also be elevated to the sphere of holiness. This election separates what belong to God from what remain in the sphere of הל ("commonness," as opposed to קדש). To be holy is, therefore, to be set apart by God and him alone, and to be devoted to him and have a share of his holiness; see Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170, no. 680 (2013): 416. On the other hand, to be טהור ("clean or pure") or טמא ("unclean or impure") is largely a volition of individual Israelite to live in conformance with the תורה though some causes of uncleanness are inevitable, like biological impurities or inadvertent sins, and purification laws are put in place for countermeasure; see H. Ringgren, "טהור; טהרה; טהר," in vol. V, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 287-96, and G. André, and H. Ringgren, "טמא; טמאה; טמא," in vol. V, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 330-42. When YHWH called the Israelites out of Egypt, he made a covenant at Mount Sinai with them as מְמַלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ ("a kingdom of priests and a nation of the Holy One," Exod. 19:6). In so doing, he claimed Israel to be his own – a holy people. There are, however, a spectrum of graded holiness among the people in accordance with the roles they play at the temple, which is the מִשְׁכָּן, YHWH's dwelling place. The order is, namely, the high priest (who serves in the Holy of Holies), the priests (who serve in the Holy Place), the Levites (who assist the priests in various duties), and all other Israelites (who conduct no cultic duties); see Philip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 89-148. In King

Witnessing YHWH's presence on the royal throne in his palace, Isaiah is bewildered beyond words, uttering "the hem of [his] robe filling the palace" (v. 1b), which both the Septuagint and the Targum understand as an immense glory radiating from YHWH's presence. The appearance of the seraphim and the description of their self-concealing posture in v. 2 portray, by allusion, another picture of YHWH's holiness. In other texts (Num. 21:6-8; Deut. 8:15; Isa. 14:29; 30:6), the word *שרָפִיִּם*, "seraph," means a flying serpentine creature of fiery and venomous nature that people dread. Yet in Isaiah 6, they function as YHWH's servants, called "holy attendants" in the Targum, who minister before his throne. The amalgam of the ferocious yet attentive image of the seraphim immediately presents an unapproachable boundary between YHWH and human beings, setting his transcendence beyond our reach. For this reason, Brueggemann writes, "This earthly intruder into the heavenly scene observes the seraphim, the heavenly winged servants of Yahweh in rapt attentiveness, utterly devoted to Yahweh, fluttering around the Holy One, honoring him and covering him in order to guard and enhance Yahweh's holiness."¹¹³

The reminiscence in v. 1, then the allusion in v. 2, develops into a climactic exaltation of YHWH's holiness in v. 3 through the seraphim's Trisagion, a rare emphatic rhetoric in the MT where we see no similar threefold

Uzziah's case, his usurping of the priestly role by entering a forbidden space and performing a duty strictly limited to the priests is a clear violation of YHWH's elect boundary, a blatant contempt of his holiness not belonged even to the king. The passage in 2 Chron. 26 attributes it to his pride that drove him to act so presumptuously and brought upon himself YHWH's judgment.

¹¹³ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 58.

repetition except in three other places (Jer. 7:4; 22:29; Ezek. 21:27).¹¹⁴ This emphatic attribution is tied to the epithet *יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת*, “YHWH of hosts,” which, as Wildberger notes, “is found no fewer than fifty-six times in the first part of the book of Isaiah [...] that he is very much aware of the way in which he uses it and that it has special theological importance for him.”¹¹⁵ This importance in v. 3, I believe, lies in the heavenly context of the scene where YHWH, sitting on his royal throne (v. 1), is the commander of “all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will” (Ps. 103:21, ESV), as exemplified by the seraphim, his holy attendants (v. 2).¹¹⁶ Their cries proclaim YHWH’s holiness, which is also manifested by his glory all over the earth, far beyond what is limitedly perceived by Isaiah in v. 1. Standing inside the palace, Isaiah feels immensely the weight of YHWH’s glory in v. 4 which shakes not only the foundation of the house’s structure but also permeates its whole space like smoke or the hem, both apparently used to designate the splendor of YHWH’s presence, hence *כְּבוֹדוֹ*, “his glory.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Some commentators, e.g. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 249, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 102, also attribute the threefold “holy” to a liturgical style, like the triple repetition *קְדוֹשׁ הַקְדוֹשׁ* (v. 3), *קְדוֹשׁ הַקְדוֹשׁ הַקְדוֹשׁ* (v. 5), and *קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה* (v. 9) in Ps. 99.

¹¹⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 29.

¹¹⁶ My view is at odds with Zobel’s, who believes that “the passage, however, does not make such a statement [of YHWH being the king of the heavenly hosts] at all. Rather, Yahweh is the lord and king of his people and as such chastises Israel and prepare for judgment. The *צְבָאוֹת* title seems to be associated more with Yahweh’s ‘transcendent omnipotence and exaltedness’ or with ‘the fullness of Yhwh’s power’,” H.-J. Zobel, “צְבָאוֹת,” in vol. XII, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 230. While I do not disagree with Zobel’s last statement regarding YHWH’s transcendence, I believe such exaltedness and power are exhibited through YHWH’s heavenly hosts as the passage has presented all along in Isaiah 6. After all, the heavenly hosts are explicitly mentioned, standing in YHWH’s throne room (cf. 1 Kings 22:19).

¹¹⁷ Also in Goldingay’s reckoning, *Isaiah*, 59, “Isaiah sees Yahweh awesome in royal honor and splendor (see, e.g., Ps. 97). That glory is the outward manifestation of Yahweh’s being holy.” Clearly YHWH’s glory, rooted in his holiness, is another strand that threads through what Isaiah saw in chapter 6. It also goes beyond throughout the book in regard to the use of the word *כְּבוֹד*. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 108, has this remark: “[It] is a word that indicates weight [...] It usually describes God’s glory, and it plays an important role in Isaiah indicating God’s presence

Such outward manifestation of YHWH's holiness, as seen and felt by Isaiah, evokes one duly reaction from this earthly intruder in v. 5 – he is doomed. For before the almighty divine King,¹¹⁸ he realizes what are demanded from him and his fellow Israelites as YHWH's holy people. Yet, in reality, what they have got to offer is nothing but *אִמְטָא שֶׁפִּי*, “unclean lips,” a unique cultic characterization of their sins which blend with words from their mouths, concomitantly reflect the impurities in their hearts, and consequentially corrupt their moral behaviour.¹¹⁹ The conflict between YHWH and his people, as emphasized here in cultic terms, is thus rooted in the profanation of his holiness by their uncleanness which trivializes and defies what he requires of them. Seeing the plight, Isaiah cannot help but cry out “Woe to me.” His doomsday

and his commanding appearance (3:8; 4:5; 6:3; 11:19; 24:3; 35:2; 40:5; 42:8, 12; 43:7; 48:11; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 58:8; 59:19; 60:1, 2).” There are other uses of this word in the book. “Isa. 1:4 speaks of the weight of iniquity or guilt. It may speak of honor or riches as in Isa. 10:6; 61:6; and 66:11, 12,” *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ Attributing YHWH as the King is rare in the book of Isaiah, happening only one more time in 33:22 (*יְהוָה מַלְכֵנוּ*, “YHWH is our King”). Moberly, “Isaiah’s Vision,” 125, believes that “whether or not the opening reference to king Uzziah means that the divine kingship is being situated in relation (presumably of contrast) to human kingship, is unclear [...] What is clear is the royal nature of the divine vision,” which I have attested as being in a heavenly setting.

¹¹⁹ As noted by Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 64, the combination of *אִמְטָא* and *אִמְטָא שֶׁפִּי* occurs only in v. 5, but its meaning is not difficult to construe when *אִמְטָא שֶׁפִּי*, “lips,” is understood as the organ of speech in light of the hypocrisy of their *lips* denounced by YHWH in 29:13. Their hypocrisy has already been told as early as in 1:11-17 whereby they are devoted to YHWH only in ritual appearance at most, and their moral behaviour bespeaks the opposite that they are inconsistent and insincere. A case in point is Ahaz’s seemingly godly reply in 7:12 to cover up the worldly plan in his heart. Thus, the unclean lips ultimately points to the uncleanness of their moral behaviour, rather than their ritual conformance. Yet the bigger issue with hypocrisy is that it underlines a deliberate act of sinning by the perpetrator who tries even to whitewash the iniquities already known to him or her, as if nothing were wronged by them, ignoring and thereby forgoing any possible help from YHWH that has been prescribed for them and the nation as a whole in the Torah. On the contrary, Isaiah 59:21 looks forward to a time when Israel will repent of her sins and be clothed with clean lips – YHWH’s words in her mouth and his Spirit upon her – consistency and sincerity inside out.

exclamation for himself forms a contrastive parallel with the seraphim's exaltation "Holy, Holy, Holy" to YHWH of hosts in v. 3.¹²⁰

Although such an ironic emphasis on the "unclean lips" of YHWH's *holy* people is understandable, Isaiah's singling himself out in the same rank is not quite so. In an attempt to explain it away, Roberts suggests the idea that "while [his lips] remain unclean, Isaiah cannot take up the prophetic task" that is opened up to him.¹²¹ Brueggemann views it as Isaiah's solidarity with the people, "standing within that community, condemned along with all the others."¹²² There is also an old Jewish tradition which understands נְדַמְיָתִי in v. 5 as "I am silenced," and exegetes it as Isaiah's silence to Uzziah's presumptuous wrongs in 2 Chronicles 26:16-23,¹²³ which may, in turn, lead to the Targum's rendition of "I have sinned" in this verse.¹²⁴ Though we have no idea of Isaiah's exact motive, one thing I can ascertain – he is not a hypocrite. Although exalted as one who has been granted access to the heavenly court, Isaiah is honest and forthright to admit that he is not different from his compatriots in nature. Perhaps the way that the

¹²⁰ Prior to chapter 6, the interjection אָוִי appears twice in 3:9 (אָוִי לְנִפְשָׁם), "woe to the persons who have recompensed themselves with evil") and 3:11 (אָוִי לְרָשָׁע), "woe to the wicked"), whereas another interjection הִוִּי, also often translated as "woe" in English, is used six times in chapter 5, each listing an evil deed of the people. The triple אָוִי (3:9, 11; 6:5) lamented by Isaiah to the people and himself, in this way, craftily mirrors the threefold וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינֵם exalted by the seraphim to YHWH, and constitutes a most suitable response when sinful people stand before the judgment throne of the Holy One. The third לִי אָוִי, "woe to me," in v. 5 is then followed by three מִי for the reasons of the אָוִי.

¹²¹ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 99. Along a similar thought process with the function of the lips, Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 226, sees "he laments that his unclean lips make it impossible for him to participate in the seraphic liturgy."

¹²² Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 59. Likewise, Childs, *Isaiah*, 56, indicates that Isaiah's focus is not on himself; "rather, Isaiah shares the selfsame sickness as all of his people, both lost and corrupt." For Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 59, "he is identifying the pollution of his lips with Judah's." Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 192, attributes this to "Isaiah's pastoral heart."

¹²³ This Jewish tradition was already known to Jerome in his commentary; see Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 23.

¹²⁴ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 102.

LXX renders $\alpha\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma \omega\acute{\nu}\nu$ $\psi\iota\gamma$ as $\alpha\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma \omega\acute{\nu}\nu$, “being a human,” prior to $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\alpha\rho\tau\alpha \chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\lambda\eta \acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu$, “and having unclean lips,”¹²⁵ is indicative of the contagion of sin that Isaiah, being a human, is not immune to.¹²⁶

The seraph’s action is striking in vv. 6-7. In fast approaching Isaiah, he has flown off from his normal perimeter of duty in v. 2. Surely as Isaiah knows, the seraph is coming to get him in order to purge the uncleanness which is absolutely incongruous with the heavenly court; so his life would hardly be spared (cf. Lev. 15:31; 22:4-9).¹²⁷ Had the seraph come with a sword, Isaiah’s woe would have been his last word, yet he has come with a glowing stone taken from the altar in his hand.¹²⁸ The text provides no detail of the altar, leaving us room to construe which one it may allude to in the earthly temple.¹²⁹ If Uzziah’s death in v. 1 is any hint, and if his uncleanness of leprosy caused by his presumptuous act from attempting to burn incense on the altar of incense offers any clue,¹³⁰ then we

¹²⁵ Though likely, we do not know for sure if the source text of the LXX translator is the same as the MT here.

¹²⁶ I am not saying that Isaiah has deliberately committed sins of “unclean lips,” but at the very least, he knows full well that he is not exempt from committing them inadvertently or unknowingly (cf. Isa. 64:6; Ps. 19:12).

¹²⁷ Perhaps Isaiah believes that his sentencing to death is already a case closed in v. 5. As Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 108, remarks, “It is astonishing enough that he has been allowed to see ‘the King, YHWH of hosts,’ and still be alive. Hebrew tradition held that to be impossible (Exod. 24:10).”

¹²⁸ Conventional thinking induces that “the coal was too hot to touch even for a [seraph], and thus the phrase ‘in his hand’ means that the [seraph] was carrying the coal not in his bare hand but in the tongs he held in his hand,” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100.

¹²⁹ Both the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering may provide the means of making atonement for the people (cf. Lev. 9:7; Num. 16:46).

¹³⁰ Pride is cited as the reason of Uzziah’s presumptuous act in 2 Chronicles 26:16. At any rate, if he had thought superficially that what he put into the altar of incense would matter in whatever he wanted to accomplish, he was gravely wrong. The reality is, as demonstrated to Isaiah in chapter 6, only what is taken from it matters. Such prideful thinking is, however, amply reflected in Isa. 1:10-15 and 29:13 where Isaiah condemns the superficial worship of the people, who think that they can bribe YHWH into not seeing and not hearing their iniquities, so as to indulge in their hypocrisy and self-deception.

see the opposite happening to Isaiah in v. 7. His unclean lips caused by the iniquities in which he got caught up with the people have departed from him,¹³¹ after he was touched by the glowing stone, and the sin that threatened his life has been atoned for.¹³² YHWH has healed Isaiah, and now he is a man of *clean* lips. As such, the touch with the glowing stone has understandably imprinted a mark in Isaiah's prophetic life that forever reminds him of speaking faithfully, sincerely, and consistently for the Holy One.

The next section in vv. 8-13 changes from what Isaiah sees to what he hears. YHWH, proceeding with his business in the heavenly court, begins to

¹³¹ Uncleanness can be distinguished between ritual and moral in the Torah. When the Scripture uses only the word טָמֵא in the context of a purification, it refers to the atonement for ritual uncleanness, i.e. physical or biological impurity. If the word פְּוֹן also appears in the context, it refers to the atonement for moral uncleanness, i.e. moral impurity or iniquity. See Jacob Milgrom, "Rationale for Cultic Law: The Case of Impurity," *Semeia* 45 (1989): 107. In v. 7, the word פְּוֹן clearly identifies the "unclean lips" in v. 5 as moral impurities.

¹³² Commentators generally agree that the glowing stone or live coal was instrumental in the purification of Isaiah's sin, but how it had come about engenders different interpretations. Hurowitz likens it to the Mesopotamian mouth-washing ritual that prepares an emissary for public speaking in special mission; see Victor Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 60 (1989): 39-89. But it has received little attention, and some reject it as far-fetched and out of place, like Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 69, and Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 185. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 71, believes that "the focus here has to be on the effect (the purification of sin), not the process" because nothing is mentioned about the pain on Isaiah's mouth touched with a burning substance. Childs, *Isaiah*, 56, agrees and remarks that "the focus throughout is not on the spiritual experience of the prophet" but on the removal of his sin. On the other hand, some commentators think that the pain is not only implied but warranted. For examples, Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100, contends, "The implication [of the hot coal] is that Isaiah's cleansing was painful, that his sin was burned out," and Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 59, "The application of live coals to the person of the human speaker is a dangerous, painful, perhaps cultic enterprise (cf. Jer. 1:9)." In view of the leprous uncleanness that had afflicted King Uzziah, we understand that the purification in Lev. 14 was never applied to him because the disease had not departed from him to the day he died. In other words, he never received YHWH's healing that is the prerequisite for a leper to participate in the purification ritual, which is concluded with the remark וְכִפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְטָהַר ("the priest has atoned for him and he is clean," Lev. 14:20). Similar language is used at the end of v. 7 where we find the chiasmic structure וְכִפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְטָהַר ("your iniquity has departed and your sin has been atoned for"). By analogy, we may infer that Isaiah had already recovered from his pseudo-physical "unclean lips" before he gained the right to participate in this distinct ritual of purification, at the end of which the seraph also pronounced the atonement of sin. Thus we see that Isaiah was deemed acceptable in the sight of YHWH before the purification, and the purpose of the glowing stone was not, as Roberts has mystified, that "his sin was burned out."

converse with his attendants. Unlike Micaiah's vision in 1 Kings 22:19-22 where these attendants are known as כָּל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם ("all the host of heaven", v. 19), we can only infer their presence in the conversation from the prepositional pronoun לָנוּ ("for us") in v. 8a.¹³³ Now YHWH is selecting a messenger from all in the throne room for a mission, and immediately Isaiah volunteers in v. 8b. To say that Isaiah responds because he has overheard YHWH's request is an understatement that dismisses the connection between the *seeing* report in vv. 1-7 and the *hearing* report so far.¹³⁴ Isaiah, who has been admitted to the throne room of heaven and whose holy standing as YHWH's mouthpiece has been restored, should be counted as among the intended audience at the very least. Thus, he has become "another means of executing heaven's decisions on earth and a transmitter of messages between earth and heaven."¹³⁵ Furthermore, his self-nomination might have been driven by his personal experience with the seraph, who was sent to purify his unclean lips, and succeeded. By the same token, he wanted to do to his people of unclean lips what the seraph did, and naturally hoped to succeed too.¹³⁶ The reality is, however, "Isaiah did not know the nature of the mission God had

¹³³ Perhaps their presence in the throne room is also implied from v. 3 and v. 5 whereby the seraphim and Isaiah address YHWH by the epithet יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת ("YHWH of hosts") respectively, attesting to the majestic scene visibly present in the background. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 60, asserts that the "us" is a plural denoting the government of YHWH, and this is perhaps what the LXX translation intends to avoid that gives "the impression that God was speaking with other beings around his throne," Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 270.

¹³⁴ There are commentators who think that Isaiah just overheard, e.g. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 108; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 54.

¹³⁵ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 60.

¹³⁶ Instead of bringing a glowing stone from the altar, it would be appropriate for Isaiah to bring YHWH's word to the people. This is what the Targum understands as the means of purification in Isaiah's own experience in v. 6 ("in [the attendant's] mouth there was a speech which he took before him whose Shekhinah is upon the throne of glory in the heavens of the height") and what YHWH wants his messenger to do in v. 8 ("Whom shall I send to prophesy, and who will go to teach?"); see Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 14-15.

designed for his emissary, the length of the responsibility, where this person must go, the content of the message, or the difficulty of the task that must be accomplished.”¹³⁷

As soon as Isaiah has finished saying *שְׁלַחֵנִי*, “send me,” the reality of the mission, now his own, begins to sink in. YHWH’s commissioning statement in vv. 9-10 includes two complementary messages, one for *this* people – Israel – the people of unclean lips in v. 5, and another for Isaiah himself.¹³⁸ The first message in v. 9b constitutes the content of what Isaiah is to deliver to Israel. However, as we see nowhere that Isaiah ever made such verbatim delivery in the book, we should understand it as YHWH’s characterization of how Israel will receive Isaiah’s prophecy in general.¹³⁹ The second message in v. 10 explains why YHWH wants Isaiah to go and speak to Israel. As far as the MT is concerned in v.

¹³⁷ Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 194. While Smith takes Isaiah’s ignorance of the mission as his boldness in stepping up to YHWH’s call and humbly submitting to do whatever YHWH leads him, I think his assessment may be overrated in the sense that Isaiah has hoped for a positive result from the mission in v. 8, only to be disappointed once YHWH discloses the detail of it in vv. 9-10.

¹³⁸ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 108, notes that *לְעַם הַזֶּה*, “to this people,” “picks up the reference in 1:3; 2:6; 3:12, 15; 5:13, 25. It will be continued exactly in 8:6 and 11. The references appear without exception to refer to Israel.” I wonder how he could have missed the local reference, *עַמֵּי טֹמְאֵי שֵׁפָתַיִם*, “a people of unclean lips,” in v. 5 that points to the same target among whom Isaiah dwells (cf. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 194). Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 73, narrows it down further and proposes that “it refers to the people of Judah as a whole, not to a group within the community or to the inhabitants of the northern kingdom.” The generality of the term *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, “Israel,” holds for an identification of YHWH’s covenantal people without regard to political boundary in the book of Isaiah. Geopolitically, of course, Judah constitutes the prophet Isaiah’s immediate context of reference to *this* people, and becomes the only reference after the northern kingdom has fallen.

¹³⁹ As Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 75, says, “the words spoken by God as the message to be conveyed [...] in fact reveal more about God’s character, intention, and purpose than about what Isaiah was expected literally to pronounce.” Similar observation is also noted by Moberly, “Isaiah’s Vision,” 133, who writes, “the specific words that YHWH tells Isaiah to speak are nowhere spoken by him, and the form which Isaiah’s message does take could not be predicted on the basis of 6.9-10.”

10a, YHWH has decided to harden the senses of the people.¹⁴⁰ Yet, the LXX disputes such claim and construes it as the people's own initiative to harden themselves. Watts, in agreement with Wildberger's prior work, writes, "[He] is right in saying that this is not a one-sided action. That Israel's heart is 'hard' and that YHWH has made it so must be spoken in dialectical balance."¹⁴¹ In other words, both commentators claim that each of the two parties has an active role in the making.

By my reckoning, the full force behind vv. 9-10 can be better comprehended if we arrange the two messages in a chiasmic structure as follows:

- (A) Hear continually... not understand... see continually... not know!
 (B) Make the heart of this people fat!
 (C) And make its ears heavy!
 (D) And make its eyes smeared!
 (E) Lest,
 (D') it sees with its eyes
 (C') and hears with its ears,
 (B') and its heart understands,
 (A') then it will turn back, and there will be healing for it.

As known, the BCDED'C'B' substructure is well-balanced in reverse order with regard to "heart," "ears," and "eyes" at the pivotal preposition "lest."¹⁴² Preceding it is the clause A which, I propose, is a diagnosis of Israel's disease that picks up on the two keywords, "see" and "hear," in the chapter. Seeing and hearing should

¹⁴⁰ Cf. 29:9-10. A clear precedence is YHWH's hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exod. 7-11. There Pharaoh is the ruler of a foreign nation who oppresses YHWH's people, but here YHWH is hardening the heart of his own people.

¹⁴¹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 109; see also Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 272-73. Despite the fact that YHWH is said to be the one hardening Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), the Scripture also mentions that Pharaoh hardens his own heart (Exod. 8:15, 32; 9:34).

¹⁴² For a discussion of the wider meanings of the verbs הִשְׁמַן, הִקְבֵּד, and הִשְׁעַר in the context of the command for hardening in v. 10a, see Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 76-79.

naturally lead to understanding and knowing in the heart, as Isaiah has demonstrated in vv. 1-7, but there is not even a hint of it in the people although they have seen and heard repeatedly from YHWH. The cause of this chronic disease is first attributed to YHWH's hardening of their hearts and then to his obstruction to their senses in BCD.¹⁴³ While D'C'B' continues to signify that YHWH wills them not to see, to hear, or to understand, we must also read behind the lines for what is unspoken, in light of the pivotal וְיִפְּחֶה ("lest, for fear that") at the center E.¹⁴⁴ In quiescence, this conjunction is purposeful in hinting that YHWH has not taken away the functioning of these organs altogether although it has been greatly diminished. Corresponding to the diagnostic statement in A, A' offers a faint of hope that there will be healing (forgiveness) for Israel's disease (sin) when the people turn back to him (repent).¹⁴⁵ The clause A' is an allusion, though a remote one, to what Isaiah has experienced in vv. 5-7, his repentance followed by his sin being forgiven. The change of grammatical tense from the preceding imperfects in D'C'B' to the waw-consecutive perfect in A' also attests to a sense

¹⁴³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 272, notes that the heart comes first in the command for hardening because it is "in the most important position, more important than either ear or eye," and it is also "the 'residence' of that insight and understanding which is identified as missing in v. 9b." This meaning of the heart, as used in the book of Isaiah, corresponds completely to the wisdom literature (cf. Prov. 2:10; 14:33; 16:23; Ps. 90:12; 95:8).

¹⁴⁴ Some commentators have focused on only the negativity of the words led by the conjunction וְיִפְּחֶה, and thus missed the hint of hope offered there (cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 273).

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 79, believes that the clause (A') is a later addition to the command for hardening as a "mitigating comment on the harsh words preceding." While I have no intention to argue for or against his position, I find few issues with his arguments: (1) I do not think that it "stands outside the careful structure of vv. 9-10 up to this point," as my proposition of the A-A' relation has shown; (2) the comment that the sentiment expressed in A' "empties the question ('how long?') of all its force" is unwarranted, for YHWH never says that his hardening is going to last forever, so Isaiah has every right and intention to ask the question in v. 11a regardless of the appearance of A'; (3) the argument that "it enables us to construe the expression לְרַפָּא in a natural manner" is not an indication of addendum but a connection to A which can be seen as a diagnosis of the disease,

of certainty to this future outcome.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Isaiah knows that Israel, unlike him, is far from the point of turning as long as hardening is in full force.

To say the least, Isaiah's question עַד־מַתַּי ("until when?") betrays his uneasiness in v. 11a towards YHWH's mission, one that he promptly volunteered just a moment ago in v. 8b. Yet, to suggest that his question does not seek an answer about length of time but only voices a complaint to YHWH is unduly an overstatement, for YHWH indeed provides him an indirect answer in v. 11b.¹⁴⁷ Guided by the psalmists over the use of עַד־מַתַּי, we can see a similarity in Isaiah.¹⁴⁸ It grieves him to learn that YHWH's word has lost the cleansing power upon the hearts of this stubborn people. In his role as YHWH's messenger, he is further agonized over the inverse effect of his teaching – instigating more rebellions against YHWH rather than turning them back to him.¹⁴⁹ Striking as it is, YHWH's answer in v. 11b most likely aggravates Isaiah's pain even more. Being vague and equivocal, the answer is not measurable in time but simply discernible through the senses. With reference to YHWH's call for a messenger of his mission in v. 8a, here we are given a timetable of when the mission will end in v. 11b-13. In terms of Isaiah's question of duration, v. 11b signifies a point at

¹⁴⁶ See my notes in the MT translation.

¹⁴⁷ Though I understand that the question עַד־מַתַּי is not a request for information, I believe the overtones of Brueggemann's words, *Isaiah 1-39*, 61, are too strong when he writes, "The question does not want an answer about length of suffering, but it suggests that God is unfair or inattentive, and that the speaker (prophet, Judah, Jerusalem) deserves something better from God."

¹⁴⁸ The phrase עַד־מַתַּי often appears in Psalms, e.g. Ps. 6:3; 74:10; 80:4; 90:13. There this exclamation is shared by the psalmists, who reflect a sentiment like the one expressed in Isa. 6:11, when they are in agony longing for YHWH to resolve their plight. Note that Ps. 13:2-3 (Hebrew) has a similar exclamation repeated four times in these two verses, but it is of different wording (עַד־אֵימָה).

¹⁴⁹ Other expressions that commentators use to describe Isaiah's sentiment on עַד־מַתַּי are: (1) "plea for mercy," Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 61; (2) "lament," Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 273; (3) "dismay," Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 83; Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 196.

which the messenger's task of hardening will no longer be needed, so to speak, when the people will turn and be healed. Ironically, what Israel cannot hear and see from YHWH (v. 9b), they will eventually know and understand from their own devastating situation (v. 11b).

There is no doubt that v. 11b portrays an exceedingly harsh and appalling picture of YHWH's judgment against Israel for her obstinance in sins, engendered by her "unclean lips" in this chapter. However, reading this judgment back into vv. 9b-10 as the only purpose for the command of hardening may bear an unwarranted burden to our understanding.¹⁵⁰ As judgment is not an end in itself in YHWH's purpose,¹⁵¹ we can also find other connections between hardening and the desolation in v. 11b. For one thing, the picture in v. 11b renders that everything Israel may depend on for her security – cities, houses, and affluence – has dissipated. If a complete removal of these things will bring an end to her

¹⁵⁰ I am not disputing the causality between hardening and judgment, but the presumption that "Isaiah's task is defined as hardening the people's hearts so that judgment can be carried out, [...] thereby explaining Israel's and Judah's suffering as a result of YHWH's judgment," Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 140. Isaiah's task, as I consider for a prophet, is always defined as the messenger of YHWH's word. As I mentioned before, the fact that Israel's heart is hard should not be understood as an one-sided action by YHWH or by her own initiative. While hardening is the cause of a purifying judgment, it is not justified to say that hardening is for the sake of judgment as if that accounted for the whole purpose. Perhaps an analogy will help the explanation: A man has lost his job because of a drinking problem; hardening in drinking takes its toll on his career as a judgment. However, the deeper issue is that he has suffered from depression after falling prey to adultery that has since broken his family. As it is clear, a sheer measure to stop him from drinking is not going to solve the problem. But what if his job now lost stands as an alarming call to wake him up from slumber, so that he is willing to repent and face his marital crisis by begging his wife for forgiveness? To be fair, Sweeney also mentions that in the larger context of chapters 5-12, the harsh judgment legitimized by the message in chapter 6 eventually leads to the restoration in chapters 10-12. But my point is that judgment is not the prime objective of hardening in chapter 6 but its inevitable side effect, a point that Sweeney misses but only sees from the entire book.

¹⁵¹ To use Sweeney's words again, it is the rehabilitation, as seen in chapters 10-12, that defines "the purpose of YHWH's harsh decree of unavoidable judgment by presenting the purge that will result in [...] the restoration of Israel and Judah. Indeed, such a role underlies not only chapter 6 but the entire book as well, with its pattern of judgment and subsequent restoration for Israel as a testimony to YHWH's universal rule," *ibid.* 141.

hardening, conversely, it bespeaks that the presence of them constitutes the cause of her hardening. That is, the harder she builds up her own means of security, the harder her heart will become, and so will the final crushing blow to her.¹⁵² There is, however, a paradox in v. 11b: cities without inhabitants and houses without people; with everyone gone, where will there be turning and healing for Israel? In this light, v. 12 functions as an elaboration for explaining what will come about to the people in v. 11b.¹⁵³ With a change of subject from first person to third and altering the tense from imperfect to waw-consecutive perfect, the MT is indicative of a future event that YHWH will send the people far away, thus inexorably causing vast forsakenness to the land,¹⁵⁴ whereas the LXX makes a positive spin on *הַעֲזֹבֶנָה*, “the forsakenness,” by interpreting it as a remnant who is left after the

¹⁵² We can look at Israel’s false sense of security from different angles (e.g. material wealth, 3:16-23; political alliance, 2:6-8; religious hypocrisy, 1:12-15); all elevate their self-pride, seduce them to sin, and thus provoke YHWH’s wrath upon them as they are hardened not to see or hear YHWH’s word. The crushing blow that comes upon them has “the form [of a catastrophe involving war] has points of contact with 5:9, where it is said that ‘many houses’ would be laid waste (on this, cf. also 1:7),” Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 274. “The two conclusions that may be certainly drawn from the verse (v. 11) as a whole are that the judgment will be exercised in the land and that (unlike at 1.7) it will affect the population (*יִשְׁבֵּי* and *אֲדָמָה*) as much as the environment,” Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 84.

¹⁵³ Because of its literary change from preceding verses and its explanatory nature, many commentators hold the opinion that vv. 12-13, as it stands now, is not in the original narrative but a later addition or modification although there are no consensus of the exact portion added or modified, and when or how this took place. Among them: Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 275, believes, “vv. 12, 13a, b α , 13b β are not from Isaiah, and the gloss in v. 13b β (its last three words) is a conscious attempt to make a correction, a protest against an exegesis which seeks to characterize Isaiah as one who is to proclaim the absolute end of Israel.” Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 84, has a twist that “[v. 12] bears all the hallmarks of being a *Fortschreibung*, added to widen the scope of judgment to include exile,” but reserves “that v. 13 (minus its last three words) is better construed as the direct and original continuation of v. 11.” On the other hand, Childs, *Isaiah*, 58, suggests that only the concluding colon of these last three words “is an excellent example of a textual extension or *Fortschreibung* [...] not merely an ‘optimistic’ gloss stemming from an editor’s wishful thinking [...] rather] a response to the coercion of the prophetic text on late scribal transmitters of the tradition.” I will not contend with which position I want to defend, but hold onto the explanatory nature of vv. 12-13 in my exegesis.

¹⁵⁴ See my textual notes in the MT translation.

devastating blow and subsequently reading that the remnant will be multiplied on the earth.¹⁵⁵

The explanatory notes continue in v. 13 where we find further divergence between the MT and the LXX.¹⁵⁶ That YHWH has firmly decreed to remove all the people is reinforced by the notion of “burning” (MT) or “plunder” (LXX) on even the one-tenth still left.¹⁵⁷ Without being spoken, we can sense the grave consequence that many more people will fall along with the ruins of their cities and houses.¹⁵⁸ The gloomy picture created in v. 11b and enhanced thus far is concluded with a botanical analogy that conveys both a connotation of judgment and one of hope.¹⁵⁹ Like a tall and revered tree she once was, Israel’s destruction

¹⁵⁵ See my textual notes in the LXX translation.

¹⁵⁶ The most noticeable difference is the absence of the concluding line *וְרַע קֹדֶשׁ מִצְבָּתָהּ*, “a holiness seed [is] her stump,” in the LXX. Admittedly, it makes the ray of hope offered by the explanatory section (vv. 12-13) less convincing if we discount the reading of the MT because of this textual uncertainty; see my textual notes in the MT and LXX translations. To shrug off the difference in the LXX, Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 198, remarks, “It is best to prefer the Masoretic reading (not [...] the Old Greek) and conclude that a message of hope is included, though it is a very small ray of hope.” However, the argument which I will put forth is that the absence of the line does not eliminate the hope inherent in v. 13 of the LXX, not to mention that it has already included “those who have been left will be multiplied on the earth” in v. 12.

¹⁵⁷ As some commentators believe (e.g. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 141; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 274), the *עֶשְׂרִיתָהּ*, “one-tenth,” is an allusion to the southern kingdom of Judah in comparison to its portion with the northern kingdom of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 11:8; 2 Sam. 19:44, Hebrew; 1 Kings 11:31). Others (e.g. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 101; Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 86) simply take it as a conventional way to describe the severity of the decimation (cf. Amos 5:3). While there is a strong possibility that the “one-tenth” refers to the remaining Judah in light of the imminent fall of the northern kingdom, I think a general description is warranted for our understanding of the verse without insisting any specific reference.

¹⁵⁸ The casualties of war is implied by the picture as their land is invaded by foreigners (cf. 1:7).

¹⁵⁹ It will be hard to argue that hope remains for a felled tree with only a stump left and on top of that: (1) “the pasturing animals which grazed would complete the destruction by nibbling all new growth down to the bare ground,” Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 275, or (2) “what is left over is dead and useless,” Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 86, as motivated by Isaiah’s choice of words that he seems to use *גִּזַּע* in 11:1 and *מִצְבַּת* in 6:13 “to draw a distinction in his thinking between stumps which can sprout again and those which cannot,” *ibid.*, 87. My argument is that (1) the whole botanical analogy is a parallel comparison to the burning (or grazing in Wildberger’s understanding) of the one-tenth, and as such, the stump corresponds to what is left after burning

– the judgment – is as bleak as such a tree felled. Regarding her hope, the MT and the LXX both portray a glimmer of it, though each from a different angle on the felled tree. While the MT points to the imagery of a stump that remains on the ground, the LXX leaves the reader to imagine what may be implicated from a tree falling from its sheath as it ends the hearing report abruptly there.¹⁶⁰ The MT, nevertheless, has one last note: “A seed of holiness is [the land’s] stump,” apparently postulating a positive connotation to the stump in the tree analogy.¹⁶¹ Within the context of vv. 11-13 where we see YHWH’s answer to Isaiah’s question and the explanatory notes, the “seed of holiness” finds no better point of reference than those whom YHWH will send far away – the remnant.¹⁶² Like a

(or grazing) is completed, not that the stump would be left for burning (or grazing); this separation is attested by the strong disjunctive accent *atnach* under לְרֵעֶךָ in the MT, and (2) מִצֵּבֶת, “the part which stands [...] is] a shoot from a root, which sprouts once again after a tree has been felled [...] is a symbol of the indestructible life force; see Job 14:7-9,” Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 275; thus he argues for the possibility of rehabilitation, but only reverses himself later when he mixes grazing into the tree imagery. Williamson’s textual analysis, *Isaiah 6-12*, 27-32, holds that the stump is analogous to what is left after burning but not what will be burnt again, unlike Wildberger’s thinking. Of course, Williamson also insists that the stump will already be too bare to support a regrowth, again different from Wildberger. Therefore, though both scholars try to prove the same premise, the approach of each is conflicting with the other’s. Subject to interpretation, I believe that a faint of hope cannot be snuffed out from the stump in v. 13 even without the last three words (וְרֵעֶךָ קִדְשׁ מִצֵּבֶתָהּ), as illustrated by the contradictory attempts of Wildberger and Williamson.

¹⁶⁰ Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 187, suggests that since וְרֵעֶךָ קִדְשׁ מִצֵּבֶתָהּ in the MT is a possible gloss, the easy reading in the LXX, as it stands now, “removes the occasion for the supposed gloss in the MT, because it contains no reference to ‘stump,’ which would provoke the gloss.”

¹⁶¹ Whether this last note is a later addition or not is outside the scope of my defense for this discussion. But of course, the fact that it is in the canonical reading of the MT adds a ray of hope to vv. 11-13 although some commentators feel that its presence is awkward and incompatible with what precedes it; see my counterargument to Wildberger and Williamson above. The only point I want to add is that the stump is neither dead nor useless as the last three words uphold when we read vv. 11-13 as a whole, instead of breaking the verses apart for historical-criticism. Like Moberly, “Isaiah’s Vision,” 135, remarks, v. 13b “expresses a note of hope, an interpretation at least as old as the Targum, and ubiquitous among modern commentators,” despite the sign that it may be faint in Isaiah 6.

¹⁶² Although the term וְרֵעֶךָ קִדְשׁ is unique with a second occurrence in Ezra 9:2 only, its meaning is clear with no disputes among commentators, for Israel is called גּוֹי קְדוֹשׁ, “a nation of the Holy One” in Exod. 19:6 and a people holy to YHWH in other places (cf. Lev. 19:2; Deut. 7:6). As Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 275, states, “The expression ‘seed of holiness’ is certainly

stump which has indestructible life in it, the remnant will once again sprout and grow in the land when hardening and judgment are past.¹⁶³ Thus, when they turn back to YHWH, a sign of healing will be evidential from rehabilitation of their land, a point alluded to at the end of YHWH's mission statement for Isaiah in vv. 9-10.

2.4 A Theological Exposition of the Tensions between the Holy One and Israel in Isaiah 6

It is not a coincidence that Isaiah 6 is placed at its current location in the canonical book.¹⁶⁴ What precedes it presents the harsh indictment that Isaiah declares to a sinful Israel and the dreadful judgment that she will bring upon herself. After the judgment, as these early chapters indicate, there will be a glorious hope of restoration for Zion and her inhabitants.¹⁶⁵ The key of this reversal lies upon a purgative and purposive process of purification.¹⁶⁶ As Moberly writes,

unique but, with other vocabulary and in different circumstances, the 'idea of a remnant' is already incorporated into the call narrative." A prominent example cogent with Wildberger's remark is Isa. 4:3 ("he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy," ESV).

¹⁶³ There is no mention of a return of the remnants in this passage. It is only implicated by a new life that will be able to grow from the seed of holiness in the future, at the place where the stump once stood bare.

¹⁶⁴ Two pertinent issues are: (1) Why is the call of Isaiah in this commissioning experience located at its current place, and not at the beginning of the book? (2) How does this chapter fit in the current structure of the book, particularly with its immediate chapters before and after? Many commentators approach these two issues from the *Memoir* hypothesis as a starting point, whether they agree with it or not. Different opinions can be found as in: Childs, *Isaiah*, 42-44; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 135-36; Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 171-73.

¹⁶⁵ Zion is synonymous to Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah.

¹⁶⁶ Gammie states that "The holiness of God for Isaiah is not simply punitive or retributive but above all purposive and purgative;" see John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 89.

Chapter 1, an apparent summary of much of Isaiah's message, at the outset depicts YHWH as the Holy One of Israel (קדוש ישׂראל, 1.4), and concludes with the divine purification of a corrupt city (Zion) so as to restore justice and righteousness (1.21-7, מִשְׁפָּט, צְדָקָה, are the obvious key words) – with also a warning of fire that will not be quenched for those who are unresponsive [...] Chapter 2 to 4, mostly oracles addressed to a corrupt Judah and Jerusalem, are framed by pictures of Jerusalem as it is meant to be [...] Thus a process of purification in which the imagery of burning features prominently, and which is directed to the ends of justice, righteousness and holiness is a fundamental concern of these early chapters. Chapter 5 initially indicts Israel as a whole in the song of vineyard [...] The continuing indictment utilizes once more the key word-pair of justice and righteousness, this time as a quasi-definitional explication of the holiness of YHWH (5.16). The subsequent oracles of judgment speak of divine anger but not of purification [...] Against this forbidding backdrop Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 is now set.¹⁶⁷

In chapter 6, there is first a shift of focus from Israel to Isaiah when he is taken up to YHWH's heavenly throne room. If the restricted access to the Holy of Holies – only once a year by the high priest and only after an elaborate purification ritual for himself – is any hint to us,¹⁶⁸ we must feel the immense tension of incongruity that Isaiah, this earthly intruder, is facing even before his cry of woe in v. 5. While the chiasmic structure of the *seeing* report in vv. 1-7 is instrumental in highlighting a tension between YHWH's holiness and Isaiah's uncleanness, it is apt to see that this merely functions as a shadow of the same yet much deeper issue between the Holy One and Israel. Similarly, although there is a resolution prescribed for Isaiah, it is again only a far cry from what Israel will experience in the end. Then comes a dilemma in the *hearing* report in vv. 8-13, consequential to the tension between holiness and uncleanness in the *seeing* report. There we see a foregone conclusion of judgment that the Holy One has

¹⁶⁷ Moberly, "Isaiah's Vision," 123-24.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Lev. 16.

destined to destroy Israel, coupled with hardening of her heart that stands at odds with any restoration that Isaiah has expected for her. Paradoxically, a glimmer of hope exists in the commentary section of the dialogue in vv. 11-13, which bespeaks a tension that lingers on between the devastating effect of judgment against an unclean Israel and a redemptive hope for a holy Israel to come through the judgment. This section will focus on exploring these tensions in the two reports in greater detail, taking an expository angle from their respective chiasmic structures as outlined before.

One trait conspicuous with the holiness of YHWH in Isaiah 6 is his glory.¹⁶⁹ It is alluded to in v. 1, and reaches a symphonic climax like a crescendo in v. 4 through an orchestration of seraphic events designed to evoke the majestic splendor of his presence. As the divine is invisible, so is the ineffability of his holiness. Yet his כְּבוֹד, “glory,” evinces a distinct and transcendent quality which wholly belongs to קְדוֹשׁ, “the Holy One,” whereby his presence instills a solemn sense of dread, unapproachability, energy, mystery, and fascination in Isaiah, amplified through a trembling foundation from the seraphim’s cries and an enigmatic filling of smoke in the house in v. 4.¹⁷⁰ Still, glory is not simply an

¹⁶⁹ The word “glory” (כְּבוֹד) is seen in v. 3, used in parallel with קְדוֹשׁ, “holy,” in the MT. Its Greek counterpart δόξα, however, appears in both v. 1 and v. 3 in the LXX, which is said “to be the term the [LXX] translator used to denote the effect of the divine ‘on those who experience God’s presence,’ much as δόξα can denote humans’ ‘outward appearance, usually with a sense of being something worth seeing,’ [...] especially evident in Isaiah 6,” Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 129.

¹⁷⁰ As Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, 5, quotes from Rudolph Otto’s work *The Idea of the Holy*, there are five terms in Latin (given in parentheses below) that “help capture and mnemonically record the ineffability of the holy:” (1) awfulness, dread, and wrath (*tremendum*); (2) majesty and unapproachability (*maiestas*); (3) energy, vitality, and movement (*energicum*); (4) mystery (*mysterium*); (5) fascination (*fascinans*).” Here I borrow these terms which I find all fitting for the numinous experience in v. 4. Besides, both the trembling and the smoke are reminders to Israel of the glorious presence of the Holy One among them at Mount Sinai. As

abstract correlative trait of the divine holiness. It can also be seen palpably from the creation in their response to divine transcendence, as tangibly impressed on Isaiah in the heavenly realm when he sees what the seraphim exemplify with their speech and deeds towards the Holy One. On this side of the earthly realm though, the reality is bleak for the existence of incongruences between the Holy One and Israel are astoundingly evidential: “their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence” (3:8, ESV).

To this end, Isaiah remarkably characterizes their iniquities, his and his fellow Israelites, as “unclean lips” in v. 5, but that does not mean his indictment is on their speech only. For what comes out of one’s lips reflects the thought of one’s heart;¹⁷¹ describing their lips as unclean is tantamount to saying that their hearts are evil towards the Holy One, and so are the deeds governed by their hearts. In this light, the conflicts between the Holy One and Israel are inevitable because she fails to abide by a “clean heart” required of her, and turns herself into an antagonist of the Holy One.¹⁷² As the seraphim cry out “Holy, Holy! Holy is

Longman notes, “Perhaps the most dramatic occurrence of the cloud of glory is on Mount Sinai when God gave the law to Moses,” and “the cloud appears to emanate from the smoke produced by a volcano, where the smoke is accompanied by fire and goes up from the mountain like ‘the smoke of a kiln’ (Ex. 19:18), and the trembling of the mountain suggests earthquakes;” see Tremper Longman III, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament,” in *The Glory of God: Theology in Community*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 53.

¹⁷¹ I cannot help but think of what Jesus says in Matt. 15:18; Luke 6:45. His sayings reflect the tradition of the proverbial wisdom that the heart is the command center of one’s life (cf. Prov. 4:23; 27:19).

¹⁷² As טָמֵא שְׂפָתַיִם, “unclean lips,” is a hapax legomenon in v.5, so is לֵב טָהוֹר, “clean heart,” which is found in Psalm 51:10 only, where David asks God to create in him a clean heart after the despicable sin he has committed with Bathsheba. (Neither “clean lips” nor “unclean heart” are found in the Old Testament.) According to Lev. 10:10, the holy and the common are antonym of each other, like the clean and the unclean, but the antagonist of the holy is the unclean; see Jacob Milgrom, “Holy, Holiness, OT קְדוּשָׁה,” in vol. 2, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the*

YHWH of hosts” in v. 3, their accompanying actions in v. 2 denote their total submission to him in reverent fear. On the other hand, although Israel performs fervently all the religious duties prescribed, the Holy One still has this rebuke for her in chapter 1: “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil” (1:16, ESV). Therefore, it is clearly not the lack of ritual purification but that of moral correction which makes their lips unclean; the more they practice the rituals with no regard to the morals just turn them into hypocrites and, even worse, deceivers of themselves guided by “cords of falsehood” (5:18, ESV).¹⁷³

Unlike Isaiah, who responds swiftly with a heartfelt dismay of “woe to me” when he sees his unclean self being so far removed from the holy, Israel continues to linger in hypocrisy and deception out of volition. This inexorably

Bible D-H, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 855. Strictly speaking, the sphere of the common is comprised of objects clean and unclean, whereas that of the holy is comprised of only the clean that has been made holy. In the priestly concept, when a holy object comes into contact with a clean one, the former will move the latter into the sphere of holiness, thereby sanctifying the clean. Conversely, an unclean object will defile a clean one, profaning what used to be holy by making it unclean. The holy and the unclean are dynamic in nature, each competing for the clean so as to make them their own. The common and the clean are static, having no power to affect others. See Naudé, “שָׁדָשׁ,” 881. In this way, what comes out of the “unclean lips” not only defile the persons themselves but also those who listen to them instead of the Holy One.

¹⁷³ Unlike the ritual or biological uncleanness which is “permitted,” moral uncleanness is simply “prohibited” in the Torah. As such, there are no ritual purifications prescribed for offenders of moral sins if they are committed deliberately. As a matter of fact, those who have committed bloodshed, cursing of parents, sexual immorality, and idolatry are explicitly given the death penalty (e.g. Lev. 17:4; 20:1-21) in order to deter such kind of crimes from happening; similarly it is the idea of the just penalty of “eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth” in Deut. 19:21. Only in certain minor cases (e.g. Lev. 6:1-7; 19:20-22) where a person realizes his or her sin and repents, there are guilt offerings for reparation. Therefore, pouring lavish sacrifices on the altar (cf. Isa. 1:11) helps nothing at all for the matter of cleansing the moral sins of Israel if they continue to allow the offenders of these crimes to go unpunished in a fair manner. For a discussion of ritual impurities vs. moral impurities, see Milgrom, “Rationale for Cultic Law,” 103; equivalently, David P. Wright, “Unclean and Clean (OT),” in vol. 6, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 730, distinguishes them as permitted and prohibited impurities.

heightens her tension with the Holy One, despite his rhetorical persuasion inviting them to return and repent (cf. 1:18-20). Admonition to Israel on the point of returning to cleanness, that is, aligning their pattern of worship in harmony with their way of life, has been a weighty focus in the Prophets, from the Former Prophets to the Latter Prophets.¹⁷⁴ In particular, Isaiah's indictment of Israel is keyed on an archetype of their moral degradation – depravity of *צדק*, “justice,” and *יִשְׁרָאֵל*, “righteousness” – that leads to horrid consequences: bloodshed of the innocent and outcry of the oppressed (cf. 5:7).¹⁷⁵ As righteousness is the linguistic partner of justice, they are two sides of the same coin.¹⁷⁶ When justice – what must be preserved and upheld in society according to the Torah – is absent, so is righteousness, the right way of life for Israel, “the mold in which God wants history (of Israel) to be shaped.”¹⁷⁷ Being his holy people, Israel is required to be

¹⁷⁴ The point to note is that what the prophets demand of Israel is not moral cleanness to the detriment of ritual cleanness, for both are required for Israel to be holy as YHWH, their God, is holy (Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:26). The prophets have not steered away from the priestly tradition even though their emphasis is always on what Israel is depleted of – the moral – that, as a result, skews their perception of YHWH to liken him to the gods around them in other nations. As Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, 71-2, writes, “The prophets of Israel were heirs of the priesthood and cultus – and not least in their conceptions of holiness. This was so from the beginning on down to the great prophets of the eighth century and to the exile. [...] For the prophets the holiness of God did not require the cleanness of ritual first and foremost – but it did require cleanness (both moral and ritual).”

¹⁷⁵ In Isaiah 1-33, both righteousness and justice, appearing almost as a word pair, are used to stand for morally correct behaviour that the rebellious Israel are deprived of (cf. 1:21; 5:16; 16:5; 28:17; 32:1; 33:5).

¹⁷⁶ Gray opens the first chapter of his book with Isa. 1:16-17 followed by this noteworthy remark: “A consensus exists that ‘the concern for justice pervades the entire Old Testament.’ [...] Justice’s most regular linguistic partner, righteousness, is described as ‘the mold in which God wants history to be shaped;’” see Mark Gray, *Rhetoric and Social Justice in Isaiah* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006), 19.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Besides, Rendtorff notes, “in the book of Isaiah we find two different concepts of *יִשְׁרָאֵל*. The one, dominant in chaps. 1-39, relates *יִשְׁרָאֵל* to *צדק*, thereby emphasizing the righteousness which has to be kept and done. The other, specific to chaps. 40-55, speaks of God’s own *יִשְׁרָאֵל*, whose coming is announced and whose character will be *יְשׁוּעָה*, salvation;” see Rolf, Rendtorff, “Isaiah 56:1 as a Key to the Formation of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Canon and Theology*, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 183. Our concern, as related to a corrupt Israel, is her lack of the first *יִשְׁרָאֵל*.

morally clean by upholding justice in their community where YHWH dwells in their midst (cf. 1:17). However, when judges and rulers fail to do so in court and public square where they exert partiality to their favorites, the rich and the powerful, their judgment perverts justice and ruins righteousness (cf. Lev. 19:15). Their moral uncleanness not only defiles their own holiness and that of their accomplices, but also profanes those who are either attracted to follow their crooked path willfully or coerced to silence their conscience.¹⁷⁸ Such defilement, if it is perpetuated, trickles down the governing order from the king at the top, and eventually pollutes every fabric of life in society when no one has an appetite for justice but rather for exploitation of others in selfish gain (cf. 1:23; 10:1-2).¹⁷⁹ Ultimately, the poor and the weak in such social order become the voiceless victims, like the “fatherless” and the “widow” (cf. 1:23), in a society where good is called evil, and evil good (cf. 5:20).

Then the seraphim enter the focus of our chiasmic trajectory in v. 2 and v. 6. As terrifying and lethal creatures in other passages,¹⁸⁰ it is remarkable that they are portrayed as the Holy One’s submissive servants here. For one thing, as mentioned previously, they set apart an unapproachable boundary that symbolizes YHWH’s holiness. Furthermore, they are agents of YHWH’s will, and in this case, one of the seraphim brings a glowing stone from the altar to a penitent Isaiah

¹⁷⁸ As noted above, the unclean is the antagonist of the holy, defiling the clean whom they come in contact on their way.

¹⁷⁹ In his discourse on 1:23, Gray, *Rhetoric and Social Justice*, 165, states, “[In 1:23], it is expressly the rulers (אֲנֹכְחֵי [literally, ‘your princes’]) who, in a litany of corruption contributing to an overall context of social injustice, are charged with failing to defend (אֲנֹכְחֵי) the cause of the fatherless [...], the widow’s (אֲנֹכְחֵי) case does not even come before the authorities: there is thus a gulf between what is enjoined and what the rulers do.”

¹⁸⁰ Num. 21:6, 8; Deut. 8:15; Isa. 14:29; 30:6.

for purging his uncleanness. This task is reminiscent of the priest offering a sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering for purifying a person who has recovered from a physical impurity or has realized a guilt from an *inadvertent* sin and repented of it.¹⁸¹ If Isaiah's measure of purification is indicative of what the Holy One sees fit for cleansing his "unclean lips," we must note that it happens after Isaiah has been healed from this pseudo-physical disease, like a leper healed from the skin disease. More precisely, the healing for Isaiah happens because his penitence has averred a change of heart that the Holy One now deems his moral sin as *inadvertent*. Needless to say, this kind of ritual purification, no matter how often Israel performs routinely, is not the measure of resolution that the Holy One wills for her "unclean lips" simply because her heart has not changed. If the desperate tension between the Holy One and an unrepentant Israel ultimately needs to call for a drastic measure of purification, perhaps the seraphim will take on a different role this time – one that is conforming to their staggering nature of terror and death. Nonetheless, the bottom line is the same: purge the uncleanness.

¹⁸¹ Due to the natural or biological causes of physical impurities, they will all occur uncontrollably. The priests are responsible for examining and judging this kind of impurities that happen among the people and also for conducting purification rituals for those who have recovered from them as seen in Lev. 12:6-8 for childbirth; 14:1-32 for skin disease; 15:13-30 for various body discharges. As for purifications in the category of unintentional sins, the rectification procedures cover uncleanness incurred as a result of negligence, unawareness, but not out of complete deliberation, like "an inadvertent delay of purification, a Nazirite's or priest's unintentional pollution from prohibited corpses, an inadvertent sin, and unintentional homicide. Also included here is impurity remaining from deliberate sins of which a person has repented," see Wright, "Unclean and Clean (OT)," 737. These purifications, as described in Lev. 4, are conducted by the priests at a higher cost for they are remedies for more serious problem. The higher the *graded holiness* of the offender of an unintentional sin, the more demanding the purification is required of him or her, as seen in Lev. 4:27-35 for ordinary people; 4:22-26 for leader; 4:13-21 for assembly of Israel; 4:3-12 for anointed priest; see Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 115-148, who classifies personnel according to their cultic duties with respect to where they are assigned to participate in the spatial dimension of God's holiness, centered on the Tabernacle, followed by the court, and the surrounding community where the Israelites live.

As for Isaiah, what happens to him in v. 7 is consequential to what we have just discussed. The two chiasmic phrases *וְנָסַר עֲוֹנוֹךָ וְחַטָּאתְךָ תִּכַּפֵּר*, “thus your iniquity has departed, for your sin has been atoned for,” sets *עֲוֹן*, “iniquity,” and *חַטָּאתְךָ*, “sin,” in juxtaposition, but the former, associated with a Qal verb, is presented as an active agent whereas the latter, associated with a Niphal verb, is passive. In view of similar priestly language in Leviticus 14:20 where the purification ritual conducted by the priest for a leper is concluded with the remark *וַיִּכַּפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְנִטְהַר*, “thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean” (ESV), we may draw the following observation from looking at the two cases side by side: The tension created by Isaiah’s unclean lips (or the leper’s unclean disease) with the Holy One is not considered as solved just because of Isaiah’s repentance of his *עֲוֹן* (or the leper when his health takes a turn for the better). As the notion underlying *עֲוֹן* presents it as an agent of the unclean that took hold of Isaiah and gave him no shalom,¹⁸² “[the] tension must be neutralized and relieved by an act of atonement in order to restore the original order,”¹⁸³ the atonement being, in Isaiah’s case, his lips offered symbolically on the altar (or in the leper’s case, the sacrifices he brought to the priest). Thinking of *עֲוֹן* as a malicious agent like the leprous disease, I can readily come to terms with this striking but cogent remark by a biblical scholar: “[*עֲוֹן*] is ‘present in’ the perpetrator (1 S. 20:8; 2 S. 14:32), indeed, even as a self-efficacious, combative power that eventually ‘finds’ the perpetrating subject (2 K. 7:9) [...], not resting

¹⁸² See Koch, “*עֲוֹן*,” 551, where *עֲוֹן* is described as a self-destructive force within the perpetrator of a crime that gives him or her no peace.

¹⁸³ Lang, “*כִּפָּר*,” 292.

until the subject is killed [...] or ‘consumed’ in עָוֹן (Gen. 19:15).”¹⁸⁴ As such, we see that Isaiah’s (or the leper’s) atonement of sin is indicative of a ransom for the perpetrator which is paid to set him free from the control of עָוֹן (or the influence of the disease). However, as we have stated before, the precondition, which makes such atonement of sin possible, is that the uncleanness must be a “permitted” impurity or a transgression deemed inadvertent by the Holy One who sits on the judgment throne (cf. v. 1).¹⁸⁵ In the shadow of Uzziah’s leprous disease in v. 1 that bespeaks the void of atonement for him to the day of his death, the עָוֹן which has seized Israel will not depart from her until she is likewise consumed by it.

As such, what we find in the *hearing* report in vv. 8-13 is consequential to the *seeing* report in the aftermath of a boiling tension in the relationship between a holy God and “this people” who are anything but holy. Surely the judgment disclosed in v. 11b nullifies any hope of atonement for sin that Isaiah may have expected for Israel in v. 8, when he steps forward with alacrity to accept the task as YHWH’s messenger. But what may have confounded him even more is the role he will play in hardening this people’s heart (vv. 9-10). As Israel cannot overcome the effect of hardening, which is described as the dysfunction of perception and understanding, she will also not be able to evade the impending judgment looming large on her horizon.¹⁸⁶ For one thing, as Uhlig explains,

¹⁸⁴ Koch, “עָוֹן,” 551.

¹⁸⁵ A “permitted” impurity is one that can be ritually purified. For detail of this term, see Wright, “Unclean and Clean (OT),” 737.

¹⁸⁶ However, hardening was not always the case according to the three historical tests of Davidic kings in the book of Isaiah, of which the first two failed and the third succeeded, though Schultz suspects the result of the second test was unclear; see Schultz, “Isaiah, Book of,” 336-44. The first test was with King Ahaz in chapter 7-8 as if it were to make a point of the effect soon

“Hardening is brought upon the audience of Isaiah as the specific judgment upon unjust communication just as judgment comes because of the lack of righteousness in the political, social and religious realm.”¹⁸⁷ In so doing, he identifies hardening as the consequence of the people’s “unclean lips,” which makes the communication among them and with YHWH so perverted that it becomes impossible to convey the principles of moral cleanness to a point where people “call evil good and good evil” (5:20, ESV).¹⁸⁸ As a result, immoralities pollute every stratum of society because of a lack of justice and righteousness throughout, and this calls for a purifying judgment which ensues from the judgment of hardening. Still, Uhlig’s attempt does not address the question of why the Holy One wills to harden the heart of Israel instead of softening its hardness, if he has any intention of stopping the downward spiral before Israel hits rock bottom and crashes.¹⁸⁹

after the command of hardening was given to Isaiah. Ahaz’s rejection of YHWH’s word submitted the southern kingdom of Judah to Assyrian exploitation and interference; see Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 88-92. The second test was with an unnamed king in chapter 30-31. In defying YHWH’s word, his alliance with Egypt became a snare of Judah turning her into a prey for Assyrian invasion and devastation; see *ibid.*, 244-45. The third test with King Hezekiah in chapters 36-37 was antithetical to the first two. Despite the fact that Jerusalem remained under siege by a powerful Assyrian army, Hezekiah showed an unrelenting trust in YHWH’s word, which was then vindicated when YHWH intervened forcefully to destroy the Assyrians encamping around them; see *ibid.*, 284-85. Yet, an one-time reversal of hardening was not enough to turn back the tidal wave of ensuing judgment. Soon after the ordeal with Assyria, we just see in chapter 38-39 that there would be a repeat of the same cycle, all beginning with a temptation to trust in foreign alliances rather than in Israel’s covenant with YHWH. This time the foreign nation replacing Assyria was Babylon; however, there would be no more Hezekiah in sight down the road of history.

¹⁸⁷ Torsten Uhlig, “Too Hard to Understand? The Motif of Hardening in Isaiah,” in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 71.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-69, where Uhlig discusses the contribution of Isaiah 6 to the central aspects of hardening, specifically with the people’s “unclean lips.”

¹⁸⁹ Historically speaking, this rock bottom which happened beyond the prophet Isaiah’s lifetime was linked to Israel’s ordeal with Babylon introduced as King Hezekiah’s friend rather

Simply put, hardening is precisely a purpose of YHWH that prepares an unclean Israel for a wholesale judgment, as understood by many scholars.¹⁹⁰ However, as mentioned before, we can look beyond judgment at the picture of desolation in v. 11b to seek a more subtle reason for the purpose of hardening, which is also in the undertone of Isaiah's question of lament "Until when, O Lord?"¹⁹¹ In this light, YHWH's answer points us to the end of hardening, the time when the reversal of hardening becomes a possibility. That is, Israel's ability to see YHWH's glory, to hear his word, and to trust him in her heart will be regained when her wealth and political craftiness that previously won her pride, counsel, and security have all betrayed her, leaving her forsaken and lying in ruins.¹⁹² Then her process of turning and repentance will begin, and the healing of

than foe in chapter 39. From chapter 40 and forward, the reversal of hardening becomes possible after the purifying judgment that resulted in Israel's exile to Babylon has taken place. An example of Israel's possibility of reversal is disclosed in 43:10 which speaks of "a chance that the hardness of the servant Jacob-Israel can be overcome when they fulfill their appointment as the witness of YHWH," *ibid.*, 74. The reversal of hardening is linked to the Servant in 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12, who makes the overcoming possible to Israel and even the nations (cf. 42:6; 52:15).

¹⁹⁰ For examples, Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 140, writes, "[It] is clearly to legitimize Isaiah's prophetic activity in relation to the disasters that befell Israel and Judah at the hands of the Assyrian empire." Childs, *Isaiah*, 57, states, "The divine intent of election has been turned into a choosing for destruction (Amos 3:2)," though this statement is made amidst other arguments specific to exploring the tensions of hardening. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 257, notes, "In the course of [Isaiah's] activity, he would have been suddenly overcome by the awareness that his efforts were all for naught," as Isaiah's retrospective explanation of a failed ministry for a doomed Israel. To sidestep questions from the readers like "Does not the God of Israel will only good for his people? Was not the purpose of divine election to bestow life, not death?" Childs, *Isaiah*, 56, the LXX simply interprets hardening as Israel's own initiative in its translation.

¹⁹¹ The basis of Isaiah's lament is not about Israel's harsh judgment, for it is not disclosed yet, but her inability to see, hear, or understand YHWH's words and deeds.

¹⁹² Israel's fall into falsehood and deception, as generally described in 5:20, is conspicuous. Her sense of false security is built upon covenants with foreign alliances instead of YHWH who should be her rock of deliverance but now becomes her stumbling block (cf. 8:5-15). Again in 28:14-22, it is said twice that she has a "covenant with death" and "an agreement with Sheol" in her dealings with foreign nations (28:15, 18), upon which her trust and refuge are founded in lies and falsehood, rather than in justice and righteousness established by YHWH, her cornerstone in Zion. What she will reap are ruins and devastation when she is betrayed by the annulment of such covenants, first with Assyria in the context of chapters 8 and 28, and later with Babylon.

her unclean lips will take place so that “the people of YHWH will live as a new society in accordance with justice and righteousness, and the overcoming of hardening will be part of this renewal.”¹⁹³ Therefore, despite tensions evoked by the command of hardening, it may be envisaged as a delaying tactic in YHWH’s mission in order to uphold that he is holy, righteous, and trustworthy in his words and deeds at which time Israel will have no excuse of denial but total admission.¹⁹⁴ In the meantime, Isaiah, as a messenger of YHWH’s mission, will not find his message of condemnation and repentance perpetuating any real positive change for Israel because the purifying judgment,¹⁹⁵ as characterized by

¹⁹³ Uhlig, “The Motif of Hardening,” 71, as he ponders on the picture of rejuvenation in 29:17-24 after the purifying judgment is over.

¹⁹⁴ The time is so referred to as *בְּיוֹם הַהוֹיָא*, “in that day,” in the book of Isaiah. It appears 42 times in total, of which 41 occurrences are in chapters 1-39 and once in 52:6 that speaks of the waiting of “that day” in 1-39 already over. A quick examination of the verses with this term reveals how it looks like “in that day:” (1) human pride brought low (2:11, 17; 17:4; 22:20, 25; 23:15); (2) idols found worthless (2:20; 31:7); (3) realization of their own helplessness (3:7; 20:6; 22:8); (4) a time of mourning (3:18; 4:1; 22:12); (5) a time of returning to YHWH (4:2; 10:20; 11:10, 11; 17:7; 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24; 27:12, 13; 29:18); (6) a time of judgment and desolation (7:18, 20, 21, 23; 17:9; 28:5); (7) a time of deliverance (10:27; 12:1, 4; 26:1; 27:1, 2, 30:23). It is “in that day” that Israel will be able to overcome the effect of hardening and draw close to the glory and righteousness of the Holy One whom they will trust. However, we must understand that this class of prophecies are topological in nature: although they might have been fulfilled in historical events with Israel and certain nations, they can also find their eschatological significances in both space and time. As such, we may summarize the above traits of “in that day” in four aspects: (1) God’s wrath against sinners; (2) removal of hindrances from reliance on God; (3) defeat of enemies and victory for Israel; (4) the gathering of all nations to Israel; see also Paul R. Raabe, “Look to the Holy One of Israel, All You Nations: The Oracles about the Nations Still Speak Today,” *Concordia Journal* 30, no. 4 (2004): 336-49, who talks about these four aspects in this article.

¹⁹⁵ What qualifies a purifying judgment? Isaiah’s own experience in vv. 6-7 speaks of a purification that brings forth the atonement of his sin and thereby compels the departure of *עֲוֹן*, “iniquity,” from him. Unlike a cultic purification ritual which entails burning a sacrificial animal on the altar, Isaiah’s purification has his own lips “burnt” when they are touched by a glowing stone from the altar. As Gentry, “The Meaning of ‘Holy’ in the Old Testament,” 414, writes, it functions as “a forecast or harbinger of the coming judgment that will purify the people as a whole [...] an act of divine grace.” For Israel’s sin will not be atoned for by sacrifices she puts on the altar (cf. 1:11), but by judgment of such a magnitude that she will be evicted from her land into exile (cf. 27:7-9), we see that “the purification [...] of God’s people through the fire of judgment is a recurring motif in Isaiah’s oracles (Isa 1:2-9, 25-28; 9:7-20; 29:1-8), and Isaiah sometimes refers to Yahweh himself as a ‘devouring fire’ (Isa 33:14; cf. 10:17; 30:27-33; 31:9),” as noted by Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100. Yet, we must also understand that this purifying judgment is a

vv. 11b-13, still awaits Israel beyond his lifetime.¹⁹⁶ For an indefinite mission in which only time will tell when judgment comes, Isaiah concedes at the end of a period of his prophetic activity and says, “Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait (וְהִכַּיְתִי) for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope (וְקִוִּיתִי) in him” (8:16-17, ESV).¹⁹⁷

Amidst troubling evidences of hardening and ominous signs of judgment surrounding him, Isaiah chooses to embrace a hope of trust in YHWH in 8:16-17 where he expresses it through verbs like הִכַּה (“wait, long for”) and קָוָה (“hope, look eagerly”) that are also used similarly by psalmists and other prophets in their laments and prayers.¹⁹⁸ Inherently, there is a tension in this type of hope because

measured one, that a remnant will be saved by the exile (cf. 27:8). Furthermore, a purifying judgment has to do with removing the pollution of the land caused by the moral uncleanness according to the Levitical law (cf. Lev. 18:25, 27, 28; 19:29; 20:22). There a comparison is drawn with the Canaanites who lived in the land before the Israelites: “for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of הַתּוֹעֲבוֹת (“these abominations”), so that the land became unclean” (Lev. 18:27). Israel ought to behave herself to guard off הַתּוֹעֲבוֹת, otherwise she would suffer the same fate as the Canaanites: “You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out” (Lev. 20:22, ESV). Sadly, it comes down to the reality at Isaiah’s time that no atonement of sin is possible anymore for Israel other than her being vomited from the land – a purifying judgment measured for her.

¹⁹⁶ Isaiah did see the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E., but the southern kingdom of Judah – the Davidic kingdom which is the concern of his vision (cf. 1:1) – did not fall to the Babylonians during his lifetime. See Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 161, for a note of dates that mark the end of the northern kingdom.

¹⁹⁷ According to Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 365, the line that draws this closing remark “marks the end of the time when [Isaiah] fought the hardest to be heard, during the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War” during the reign of Ahaz, and “it seems that Isaiah was not active from 732 until the year Ahaz died (see 14:28-32).” And as Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 81, writes, “The final outcome was that Isaiah’s message was not accepted, leading to his period of ‘withdrawal’ as envisaged by 8.16-17.”

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Ps. 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 130:5; 33:20; 106:13; Hab. 2:3; Zeph. 3:8. G. Waschke states that most usage of the verb קָוָה in the prophets, including Isa. 8:17, bears a clear affinity for the language of the Psalms (“קָוָה,” in vol. XII, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 566); as such, he quotes from Westermann that “prophecy has nothing to do with Israel’s hope or hopes. Rather, one may clearly determine that the vocabulary of hope and waiting in the OT is not indigenous to the prophetic proclamation,” *ibid.*, but is indigenous to the Psalms and to wisdom. Furthermore, “Westermann suggests that the verb is ultimately at home in the confession of trust, which is why it occurs so frequently in laments of individual or in related genres. [...] In view of

nothing is circumstantial to its materialization, inducing a state of despair and helplessness that would kill off the hope. As for Isaiah, his hope is not that “he himself will physically get ‘rescued’ (from others’ disbelief and apathy of his message), but he plans to await the fulfillment of the message which has been proclaimed.”¹⁹⁹ In this light, Isaiah’s hope in 8:16-17 provides a vantage point of seeing a glimmer of hope that remains within Israel’s grasp in vv. 11b-13, despite the fact that her hope is plagued with even greater intensity of tension. That is, in Isaiah’s reckoning for Israel, her hope is not that she will be able to escape from the imminent judgment in v. 11b, but it rests upon the full fulfillment of the message for her: Beyond the judgment, there is the promise of a remnant in exile and their return to the land in due course, as alluded to in vv. 12-13.²⁰⁰

Even so, one cannot evade the tension in speaking of hope for a judgment resulting in rejection and forsakenness. The vision of Isaiah opens with the poignant description of an estranged relationship between YHWH and Israel: even though the people of Israel are YHWH’s precious possession like his children, they act as if they know nothing about the owner who brought them up, contradicting him in every possible way (cf. 1:2-3). As the condemnations unfold,

current distress and affliction, petitioners confess that they are leaving everything in Yahweh’s hands, expect everything from him, and trust in him alone,” *ibid*, 570-71. As for *הָקָה*, C. Barth notes that the two verbs, *הָקָה* and *הָקָה*, shows a clear parallelism in Isa. 8:17, and are close, if not fully synonymous here (“חכה,” in vol. IV, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 361).

¹⁹⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 368.

²⁰⁰ In view of my exegesis that vv. 12-13 is a commentary on v. 11b, it is reasonable to say that the focus of Isaiah 6 is still on judgment. Even within v. 13, “the transition between v. 13a, which speaks of additional judgment, and v. 13b, which, assuming the text is correct, offers hope beyond judgment, is quite abrupt,” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 101. These, nevertheless, all serve to highlight the tension in this type of hope – a precarious feeling that one must overcome with trust in YHWH’s promise.

it becomes clear that Israel has no more ability to discern what is clean and unclean, thereby profaning her holy status to a point where the Holy One recedes and hides his face from her (cf. 8:17). The hiding, being metaphorical and anthropomorphic, underlines a rejection that “he gives them over to terror, to being lost (see Pss. 104:29f.; 143:7; Deut. 32:20; Jer. 33:5; Mic. 3:4), which concretely means in many cases that they are given over into the hand of the enemy (e.g. Ezek. 39:23f.).”²⁰¹ From this prospective, the judgment of Israel, as projected in vv. 11b-13a, is the consequence of forsakenness by YHWH when he rejects Israel and withdraws his glorious presence from her. In view of the divine presence and absence, we can see readily that the *seeing* report (vv. 1-7) stands in stark contrast with the *hearing* report (vv. 8-13) in a chiasitic manner as follows:

YHWH’s presence before Isaiah (vv. 1-4)
 Isaiah’s softening of heart from seeing and hearing (v. 5)
 Mission of a seraph for Isaiah’s purifying deliverance (vv. 6-7)
 Commission of Isaiah for Israel’s purifying judgment (vv. 8-9)
 Israel’s hardening of heart from neither seeing nor hearing (v. 10)
 YHWH’s absence from Israel (vv. 11-13)

To speak of a hope of deliverance for an unclean Israel in spite of her harsh judgment is untenable, for her destiny of destruction is irrevocable and YHWH, who is the antagonist of the unclean, appears to place no merciful limit to

²⁰¹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 368. We can also ponder the implications of YHWH hiding his face from the converse – the tradition of Israel’s benediction in Numbers 6:24-26 which bespeaks her desire. When YHWH lifts up his face to shine upon Israel, he will be her watchman and keeper (וַיִּשְׁמְרֵךְ, v. 24), her source of grace and goodness (וַיִּרְחַמֶּךָ, v. 25), and her reason of well-being (וַיִּשְׂמַח לְךָ שְׁלוֹמִים, v. 26). So the opposite is clear when YHWH is hiding his face – all these benefits are gone. Israel will be exposed to attacks by enemies. Not only will there be a loss of all good things from her grasp, but it will also be compounded with a bombardment of all evils.

the judgment of sins.²⁰² However, what emerges paradoxically from v. 13b is *נֶרַע* *קִדְוֶה*, “a seed of holiness,” in a land which has been literally so burnt out that nothing is left after the catastrophe but a seemingly dead *מְצֻבָּה*, “stump.” As if to make a point, this hope in judgment of v. 13b looks meticulously diametrical to and forms an *inclusio* with the judgment in hope of v. 1a, alluded to by King Uzziah's death (judgment) amidst YHWH's glorious presence (hope).²⁰³ The term *נֶרַע קִדְוֶה* is striking not only because it signifies the existence of a remnant, the *נֶרַע*, like one being raised from death to life, but also because the remnant possesses a quality of *קִדְוֶה*, “holiness,” in light of what holiness means in the context of vv. 1-4. The tension in this type of judgment, as prompted by the hope that comes through it, raises questions like: “how can *this* (unclean) Israel become *that* (holy) Israel? How can a senseless, rebellious, arrogant, unjust people ever become a holy, submissive bearer of God's revelation (glory) to the world?”²⁰⁴ There are no explicit answers to these questions in chapter 6, except an allusion to Isaiah's purification in vv. 6-7 that draws a comparison of the judgment in vv. 11b-13a to a purification of sin in the reader's mind. For Isaiah's hope is founded on the fulfillment of the message which has been proclaimed, so is the hope of a future Israel. As for his contemporary Israel, there is no hope but doom!

²⁰² Isaiah's question *עַד-מָתַי* (“until when?”) in v. 11a reflects his belief of divine mercy from the Psalter that there must be a limit to the divine judgment, but YHWH's answer in v. 11b points to the opposite; see Childs, *Isaiah*, 57. Furthermore, Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 83, notes, “As the verse (v. 11) goes on to show, its outcome will be far more devastating than anything known previously, and at 8.17 this is all gathered up in the expression of God hiding his face.”

²⁰³ For a discussion of the interplay between judgment and hope in the book of Isaiah, see John N. Oswalt, “Judgment and Hope: The Full-Orbed Gospel,” *Trinity Journal* 17, no. 2 (1996): 191-202.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

2.5 Summary

The primary focus of this chapter is to identify and examine the tensions that exist in the relationship between YHWH and his covenantal people Israel in Isaiah 6. The first tension, as found in the *seeing* report in vv. 1-7 and shadowed by Isaiah's personal experience in YHWH's throne room, is due to the incompatibility between the holy and the unclean, paradoxically reflected in the relationship whereby we see YHWH, the Holy One, dwell in the midst of an immoral Israel plagued with injustice and unrighteousness. The second tension, as seen in the *hearing* report in vv. 8-13 and being consequential to the first tension when it bursts, is due to the incongruence between a harsh judgment owing to forsakenness and a glorious hope of restoration that is promised to come through it. It is in this light that we see the drama between the Holy One and Israel unfold in the book of Isaiah where these tensions are recurrent traits in its development. In fact, it is conspicuous throughout the book that themes speaking of YHWH's admonition against Israel and her judgment are interspersed with themes depicting YHWH's glory beheld by the remnant of Israel and their salvation, although judgment is the dominant theme in the first half of the book and salvation in the second. In the next chapter, we will unpack the thematic development of the book from a vantage point of our study on Isaiah 6, and take a closer look at the tensions and YHWH's determination to resolve them through his mission with Israel.

Chapter 3

A Book of Two Volumes and Seeing It through the Lens of Isaiah 6

Thematic Profiling, Analysis, and Theological Exposition

A relationship between Isaiah 6 and the book as a whole has long been observed by scholars. Their attempts to characterize it have painted different roles that Isaiah 6 plays in the framework of the composition of the book.¹ In spite of their differences, the roles all point to an implication that the prophet's visionary experience in Isaiah 6, especially the holiness of YHWH, has a profound ripple effect on the book. Taking this lead, I will use the scholarly findings as my basis to formulate a methodical and encompassing view, though inherently an adumbration, into the message of the book. The effort will materialize in the formation of a thematic profile of the book through the lens of Isaiah 6. For a book as diverse and rich in content as Isaiah, the thematic profile will provide a vantage point for us to look into our main inquiry in this chapter. The inquiry builds on what we have explored in the previous chapter, namely, the tensions that exist in the relationship between YHWH and his covenantal people Israel. Its scope will be broadened to look at these tensions in the whole book and their resolution, which I put forth as follows: the tensions between the Holy One and

¹ The use of the term "the framework of the composition of the book" is influenced by Rendtorff's essay, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," 170-80. In essence, he uses this term to refer to the elements, in particular those found in Isaiah 6, that are integral to the underlying structure of the book of Isaiah giving it shape and integrity as the text develops from beginning to end. The same meaning applies when I use it in my discussion.

Israel, as observed in Isaiah 6, permeate the book in an interlocking movement with their anticipated resolution, abrupt at times as the book develops till the end, yet through the development, YHWH's plan for Israel and his glorious purpose are also resoundingly revealed. In this chapter, I will first present the roles of Isaiah 6 in the underlying structure of the book in section 1, as has been discussed by scholars. In section 2, I will propose a method to view the book, in particular its thematic development, through the lens of Isaiah 6 undergirded by the motif of holiness. This will result in the creation of a thematic profile of the book, which I will discuss in section 3. Then the thematic profile will be used in section 4 to facilitate a theological exposition on our main inquiry as put forth above.

3.1 The Roles of Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book

Apparently, there are key relationships between the text of Isaiah 6 and the rest of the book. As Rendtorff has articulated, it is “not a text that can be isolated.”² Some scholars, drawn by the awestruck Trisagion in 6:3 and YHWH's peculiar epithet *קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל*, “the Holy One of Israel,” in Isaiah, look to the motif of holiness for correlation. Among them, Motyer perceives a progression of YHWH's holiness towards his people as the book of Isaiah develops: first in chapters 1-37 where he notes the awesome threat that holiness confronts the people with judgment, then in 38-55 the lengths to which the Holy One goes to deliver them, and finally in 56-66 the indwelling that the eternal state of holiness

² Rolf Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book,” 173.

he shares with them.³ In Motyer's words, "the broad theological identity of the Isaianic literature is secured by its almost exclusive claim to the title 'the Holy One of Israel.'"⁴ This title is also central to Roberts' evaluation of the Isaianic theology which he sees as rooted in Isaiah's encounter with YHWH in chapter 6 and subsequently unfolds into a threefold story of the book – First, Second, and Third Isaiah.⁵ Similarly, Goldingay attributes the unity of a collage of theological messages in Isaiah, structured in a fashion of parallel streams, to the distinctive feature that YHWH is the Holy One of Israel from the prophet's visionary experience.⁶ By these scholarly findings, we have confidence that the motif of holiness and the epithet קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל, which permeate almost every part of the book, ought to bear an encompassing effect on the development of the Isaianic message overall.⁷ However, we have no clear consensus on the role that a lofty

³ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵ J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," *Interpretation* 36, no. 2 (1982): 130-43. The threefold story includes: in First Isaiah, YHWH alone is Lord and the majestic transcendence from his holiness rightfully commands judgment and fear on his unclean people; in Second Isaiah, YHWH is the sole creator and sovereign of history who is rightly able to save; in Third Isaiah, YHWH exercises judgment and salvation in his righteousness.

⁶ John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 11-16. See also Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 25-27. By his reckoning, the characteristic description "the Holy One of Israel" functions as a glue that pieces together an edited collage of the book's theological messages in two parallel streams, each with three parts. The first stream consists of: chapters 1-12 – challenge and hope for Judah, trouble for Assyria (time of Ahaz), 13-23 – calamity for Babylon, calamity and hope for other peoples, and 24-27 – calamity and renewal for the world. The second stream consists of: chapters 28-39 – challenge and hope for Judah, trouble for Assyria (time of Hezekiah), 40-55 – calamity for Babylon, hope for Judah and other peoples, and (3) 56-66 – challenge and hope for Judah, and other peoples after exile, a new world.

⁷ See John N. Oswalt, "Holiness in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 41-58. In part 1 of this essay, Oswalt discusses seven usages of the epithet "the Holy One of Israel" as related to the holiness of God. In part 2, he explores how the words for "holy" in Isaiah apply to God, objects, and people. In part 3, he surveys the whole book to see how his findings about holy and holiness are supported or altered by the total content. See also Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Holy One of Israel," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson*, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 3-19, who presents a study of how the epithet "the Holy One of Israel" gives shape to the dynamic and unity of the Isaianic tradition.

motif as diverse as holiness plays in shaping the underlying structure of the corpus. As shown here, we can see three different delineations from Motyer, Roberts, and Goldingay, not to mention others, all taking on divergent views of the book's contour, steered by their respective interests in holiness presumably undergirded by Isaiah 6.

In order to pursue a more definitive answer to the role that Isaiah 6 plays in the framework of the composition of the book, one should perhaps look beyond a single motif of holiness and enlist further connections between the two. To that end, Rendtorff explores the intertextual links between Isaiah 6 and other parts of the book.⁸ By intertextual link, he means a literary connection by which an idea expressed through certain keywords in Isaiah 6 is linked to another text in the book where the same idea or a related concept is expressed with similar wordings or others from the same semantic field.⁹ A case in point is the repeated use of two keywords, רָאָה ("to see," 6:1, 5, 9, 10) and שָׁמַע ("to hear," 6:8, 9, 10), in chapter 6 to signify the prophet's ability to see and to hear, as opposed to Israel's inability to do the same.¹⁰ These two words as well as others in the same semantic field like בִּין ("to understand," 6:9, 10) and יָדַע ("to know," 6:9) are found recurrent throughout the book. In particular, they are used negatively to describe Israel's reprehensible state from the hardening of heart when she has lost this ability in the

⁸ Rendtorff, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," 170-80.

⁹ Rendtorff also refers to these intertextual links as "redactional or compositional links," for they are purported to be the works of redactors in the composition of the Isaianic messages (ibid. 172).

¹⁰ The ability (or inability) to see is connected with YHWH's כְּבוֹד ("glory," v. 3), which is portrayed prominently in vv. 1-4, and the ability (or inability) to hear his קוֹל ("voice," v. 8, and v. 4 through his holy attendants, the seraphim). Both כְּבוֹד and קוֹל are also key to the linkage between Isaiah 6 and the rest of the book.

early part of the book (e.g. 5:12; 22:11; 30:10), and positively her restored state from healing when she has regained it in the later part (e.g. 41:20; 52:6; 60:5).¹¹ As Rendtorff notes, “Israel’s heart is hardened until this state of things is explicitly ended, an end quite emphatically announced in 41:20.”¹² Another conspicuous example of an intertextual link is the close resemblance in terminology between 27:9a (יִכַפֵּר עֲוֹנֵי־יִעֲקֹב), “the iniquity of Jacob will be atoned for”) and 6:7b (וְנָסַר עֲוֹנְךָ וְתִטְאָתְךָ תִּכְפֹּר), “thus your iniquity has departed, for your sin has been atoned for”), whereby we see a parallel train of thought between Isaiah’s purification and “the purification of Israel from her sins and guilt [that] will be brought about through the annihilation of foreign altars.”¹³ Yet, more striking is an apparent parallelism that exists inconspicuously between Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 40. The parallel structure is succinctly illustrated as follows: first a heavenly voice (קוֹל) cries (6:4 and 40:3); then there is another voice which is immediately followed by a first-person response (6:8 and 40:6); the first voice proclaims the glory (כְבוֹד) of YHWH (6:1-4 and 40:3-5), and the first-person response opens for an announcement concerning what is to come (an enthusiastic response in 6:8 vs. a reluctant one in 40:6, and an announcement of judgment in 6:9ff. vs. one of salvation in 40:9ff.).¹⁴ The literary correlation between the two chapters naturally

¹¹ Israel’s behaviour is decried with these keywords as soon as the introduction opens in 1:2-3: “*Hear*, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: ‘Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox *knows* its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not *know*, my people do not *understand*.’”

¹² Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book,” 175.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 177-79. Besides the parallel structure, Williamson notes, “It is now generally agreed that the imperative plural in v. 2 (of Isaiah 40) points to a scene in the heavenly court, where, as in other portrayals of such a setting, such as Isaiah 6 itself, there is a dialogue between, and commands issued to, God’s attendant ministers. The voice of one crying out in 40:3-5 and the

raises further questions about their inter- or mutual dependency, but my goal here, for all intents and purposes, is limited to underlining the bearing that Isaiah 6 has on other parts of the book.¹⁵

As seen above, the role of intertextual links has produced convincing results about how the message of Isaiah 6 is woven into the book's dominant themes – by employing similar words or wordings, or even by adopting a similar literary structure. Conversely, it is also plausible for us to think of Isaiah 6 as a locus where dominant themes of the book converge to give the reader a foretaste of the Isaianic corpus.¹⁶ In this light, Oswalt sees that the personal experience of the prophet in chapter 6, after the preceding introductory chapters, can be correlated roughly to what the book itself intends to say to the nation Israel: 6:1-4 to a theme highlighting YHWH's exaltation, holiness, and majesty predominant in chapters 7-39, 6:5-7 to YHWH's fiery but ultimately gracious cleansing in 40-55, and 6:8-13 to YHWH's commission in 56-66.¹⁷ While Oswalt's division aligns

dialogue about what to cry in vv. 6-8 should then no doubt be seen in the same context" (H. G. M. Williamson, "From One Degree of Glory to Another': Themes and Theology in Isaiah," in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements*, ed. Edward Ball [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 182).

¹⁵ For Rendtorff's assessment on the dependency between chapters 6 and 40, see Rendtorff, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," 178-79. About the role that these two chapters play in two of the book's major themes, namely judgment and salvation, see Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 31-3.

¹⁶ Given the parallelism with Isaiah 6, Isaiah 40 also functions as a locus of the book except that the former has an emphasis on judgment whereas the latter on salvation. "And [this] order is significant: paradoxically, salvation emerges out of judgment and is possible only because of it" (Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 31).

¹⁷ John N. Oswalt, "Isaiah," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring The Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 217-23. See also A. Joseph Everson, "A Bitter Memory: Isaiah's Commission in Isaiah 6:1-13," in *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, ed. A. Joseph Everson and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2009), 66-75, where he discusses the role of Isaiah 6 within the rhetoric of the Isaiah Scroll. Specifically, he states, "Within the canonical portrait, Isa 6:1-13 can be examined in four particular literary contexts, first as part of chs. 6-11,

with the narrative structure of Isaiah 6, his characterization of the *hearing* report in 6:8-13 and the broad strokes of his mapping of the book can be perceived as an overgeneralization. For one thing, the message of 6:8-13 goes beyond commissioning (vv. 8-10) to the theme of judgment (vv. 11-13a) and subtly the theme of remnant (v. 13b) at the end.¹⁸ Furthermore, themes in Isaiah 6 do not isolate themselves in certain part of the book but recur throughout, although more prominently in some sections than others. A notable example is the intertwining of the theme of judgment owing to rejection and the seemingly opposing theme of remnant,¹⁹ so alternately woven that one can observe a pattern of abrupt oscillations between the two in the book, even though the former is dominant in the first half of the book and the latter in the second.²⁰ As Evans observes, “the complete book of Isaiah produces a dialectic, a dialectic that is present in the recurring themes of rejection and remnant.”²¹

then from the perspective of ch. 1, and chs. 2-12, next as a prophetic word heard in conjunction with texts in chs. 13-35 and finally as one text within the full sixty-six-chapter canonical portrait” (ibid., 66).

¹⁸ See my exegetical analysis in section 2.3 of this thesis. Furthermore, as Brueggemann notes, “Whereas earlier scholarship has treated this text (Isa. 6:1-12) as the report of an intense personal experience of the prophet, canonical perspective takes the text as a literary-canonical marker whereby Yahweh’s harsh verdict against Jerusalem is commended” (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 5).

¹⁹ Note the alternation of themes in these examples: (1) 1:7-8 (judgment) and 1:9 (remnant); (2) 10:20-21 (remnant), 10:22-34 (judgment), and 11:1-5 (remnant); (3) 27:6-9 (remnant), 27:10-11 (judgment), and 27:12-13 (remnant); (4) 65:8-10 (remnant) and 65:11-12 (judgment). Also, the theme of remnant is not strictly related to passages where the word of “remnant” (רִשְׁמוֹת) or others in the same semantic field appear, but also includes passages that refer to those who are redeemed after exile as well as those who are called “my servants” by YHWH in the latter part of the book after the redeemed are settled in Jerusalem.

²⁰ See Oswalt, “Judgment and Hope,” 191-202.

²¹ Craig A. Evans, “On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah,” *Vetus Testamentum* 38, no. 2 (1988): 131.

3.2 A Method to View the Book through the Lens of Isaiah 6

All three roles – motif of holiness, intertextual links, and thematic correlatives – offer unique perspectives into the framework of the composition of the book from their respective vantage points of Isaiah 6. In this regard, a question arises: can we integrate them into a single method so that they may work coherently to describe a more encompassing view of the whole book? Or, more precisely, how can we make use of them to formulate a method for creating a detailed profile of the book as seen through the lens of Isaiah 6, our vantage point? Perhaps an informed answer lies in meeting the following criteria. First, the method must selectively enlist a set of core themes in the book which are not only inherent in the message of Isaiah 6, but whose scopes and definitions can be broad enough to absorb related themes and subthemes under their umbrella.²² Second, there must be clear intertextual connections between Isaiah 6 and the set of themes to warrant our selection.²³ Third, the method must be undergirded by the motif of holiness so that our interpretation of Isaiah 6 is informed by the motif, and as such, the interpretation will set the right parameters for our selection of the themes in the first criterion.²⁴ To this end, our study of Isaiah 6 from the previous chapter will provide helpful guidance for our selection.

²² As the goal of the method is to portray a silhouette of the book with brevity and clarity, the subtleties of different yet related themes are intentionally glossed over when selecting a common denominator as their representative in broad strokes. This will become clear when we discuss the actual selection later.

²³ In a nutshell, the literary features of Isaiah 6, particularly the choice of words, their meanings and implications as we exegeted in section 2.3 of this thesis, are key to our search of corresponding thematic correlatives in other passages.

²⁴ In other words, the motif of holiness should be as intimately related to the set of core themes in my proposed method as it is to the message of Isaiah 6.

First and foremost, the division of Isaiah 6 into two parts – the *seeing* report and the *hearing* report – enables us to see how holiness is at work. To recapitulate, I will present a brief summary of the two reports starting with the latter. In 6:8-13, the second report sets forth the commission of Isaiah to preach the word of YHWH to a people of “unclean lips,” whose hearts have already been hardened. Their judgment is a done deal, as the unclean Israel will be utterly shattered when YHWH, the Holy One, hides his face from her. Yet, enigmatically the process will give rise to a holy remnant. The recovery of holiness by this group of people, whose hearts are no longer hardened, can be imputed to nothing but the Holy One’s presence with them again (cf. 4:2-4; 11:1-5). This brings us to the first report in 6:1-7 where YHWH’s holiness is manifested through his glorious presence to the prophet Isaiah. A parallel can readily be drawn from here to the remnant of Israel. After the exile, the same manifestation will also be visible to the remnant of Israel whose eyes are capable of seeing YHWH’s glory and whose ears now hear his voice (cf. 29:17-18; 32:1-4).²⁵ In light of this healing, the prophet, and Israel alike, will not need to be afraid of still being tainted by uncleanness, for YHWH will atone for their sins.

On the one hand, the understanding of Isaiah 6 outlined above, by and large, depicts a rough sketch of what the book intends to convey as it develops

²⁵ This connection between the first part of Isaiah 6 and the remnant is also noted by Rendtorff when he comments on the change from judgment marked by Isa. 6:8ff to the beginning of the announcement of salvation in Isa. 40ff. He states that “we saw in connection with the statement about the hardening of hearts in Isa. 6:8ff. that its annulment is found for the first time only in Isa. 40ff. So in the same sense the first part of chap. 6 could also be formulated with an eye to chap. 40 and in mutual relationship to that chapter,” Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book,” 179.

from beginning to end.²⁶ On the other hand, the book is so woven with an intricate pattern of themes from Isaiah 6 that a linear description can hardly justify its composition.²⁷ For this reason, the proposed method, being fleshed out hitherto, aims to profile the structure of the book by first mapping the message of Isaiah 6 to a set of core themes which will then be used to categorize passages in the book accordingly, all in hopes of revealing its compositional pattern at a finer level. By my reckoning, the set of core themes, which are prominent in chapter 6, core to the book, and comprehensive in definition, are law/instruction (תּוֹרָה), judgment (מִשְׁפָּט), remnant (שְׂאֵר), glory (כְּבוֹד), and salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), all being inherently associated with the holiness of YHWH in relation to Israel.²⁸ This selection deserves a further explanation as follows.

In the first place, the setting of Isaiah 6, purported to be the throne room of the heavenly court, situates YHWH as the King, and the ultimate Judge of his people.²⁹ Fundamentally, “YHWH is [Israel’s] lawgiver” (33:22b), for his word is

²⁶ It is generally recognized that chapters 1-39 are predominantly about Israel’s rebellion against YHWH and her judgment from him (along with other nations), and chapters 40-66 her returning to YHWH and salvation from him (also along with other nations). In between these two parts is a lapse of time whereby a remnant of Israel is preserved after the devastation of judgment. Historically speaking, this progression may approximately map to three periods of time although scholarly opinions vary: (1) Judah under the threat of the Assyrians (Isa. 1-39), (2) the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonian and the exile of her inhabitants (the lapse of time between chapters 39 and 40), and (3) the end of the exile in Babylon followed by the return of the remnant under the Persian rule (Isa. 40-66). Despite the different models of interpretation for the book of Isaiah, this general recognition is prevalent as Brueggemann discusses in *Isaiah 1-39*, 3-5.

²⁷ As judgment happens to fallen (old) creation in the old Jerusalem but salvation to restored (new) creation in the new Jerusalem, Webb observes that “this movement [from old to new] takes place again and again *within* the book as well as across the whole of it,” *The Message of Isaiah*, 30.

²⁸ The mappings to Isaiah 6 are respectively: vv. 8-10 – law, vv. 11-12 – judgment, v. 13 – remnant, vv. 1-4 – glory, and vv. 5-7 – salvation.

²⁹ For YHWH as the Judge, see 2:4; 3:13; 33:22; 51:5.

the Torah (תּוֹרָה)³⁰ – the law/instruction, conveyed to us in the book of Isaiah “as the teaching of YHWH, expressed by the prophet, which stands as the norm for proper conduct by both Israel and the nations, and which stands as the norm for order in the created world. [...] As such, תּוֹרָה signifies YHWH’s revelation to both Israel and the world at large.”³¹ Even so, his commissioning of the prophet to impart the law – his instruction – to the people of Israel will all be in vain for they have hardened their hearts to oppose his holiness, as we have seen in 6:8-10. With regard to the centrality of the theme of law/instruction in the book, Israel’s inability to conform is noticed as early as in 1:2 when YHWH summons the heaven and the earth to be jury in his court, so as to plead his case and persuade her to obey his instruction. As the book unfolds, the law in the form of admonition and exhortation prevails in its content (e.g. 1:10-23; 2:5-8; 7:1-17; 28:7-10; 30:1-11; 39:1-4; 41:21-29; 43:22-28; 48:1-22; 50:10-11; 56:1-8; 58:1-5; 65:1-7; 66:1-4). With regards to related themes which I will put under the umbrella of the theme of law/instruction, the law as a measuring rod of human’s

³⁰ The word תּוֹרָה appears twelve times in 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7. Sweeney notes that “the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה is more properly translated as ‘instruction’ (cf. *TDNT* IV: 1046), as indicated by its derivation from the *hiphil* form of the root ירה which means ‘to guide’ or ‘instruct’;” see Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 51. He goes on to say that the use of this word does not specifically or necessarily point to Mosaic Torah but simply conveys a general meaning of the instruction or teaching of YHWH, stating “the word תּוֹרָה elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible is employed as a technical term to refer to the Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses, [but] scholars generally presuppose that the prophetic context [...] establishes the meaning of תּוֹרָה as ‘instruction’;” *ibid.* I agree with Sweeney that תּוֹרָה is not a technical term in reference to Mosaic Torah or the Pentateuch. I will use the term “law/instruction” in my reference to the word תּוֹרָה, interchangeably with the use of “law” or “instruction” for brevity in some cases.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 63; see also Sweeney’s examination of the meaning of the word תּוֹרָה in its respective contexts in the book of Isaiah that leads him to the summary as quoted, *ibid.*, 58-63.

inner compliance with YHWH's rule leads to the theme of trust,³² and of behavioral compliance the theme of righteousness and justice;³³ likewise, as Israel's inability to conform – the theme of hardening³⁴ and the theme of blindness and deafness;³⁵ as a treaty between YHWH and his subject Israel – the

³² For a discussion of the theme of trust in the book of Isaiah, see, for instance, John N. Oswalt, "The Nations in Isaiah: Friend or Foe; Servant or Partner," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16, no. 1 (2006): 41-51. Through Israel's relationship with YHWH and other nations, Oswalt puts forth a number of interesting questions, all built on the theme of trust in different sections of the book, as he discusses them in the article: (1) Will Israel trust in the nations and have Jerusalem filled with their glory, or in the Lord and have Zion filled with his glory (Isa. 1-12)? (2) Is God the nations' ruler and their destiny in his hands (Isa. 13-39)? (3) Can God restore the remnant of his people from among the nations and manifest his glory in so doing (Isa. 40-48)? (4) If God's salvation is intended for all the people of the earth, will there be distinction between Israel and the nations (Isa. 55-66)? After all, it is made clear in chapter 1 that the rebellious Israel will be destroyed by her foreign foe, but only to see an abrupt change in the opening of chapter 2 that the nations, now her friend, will join Israel in learning the Torah and worshipping YHWH in Zion, a theme confirmed again at the end of the book.

³³ The root קדש occurs eighty-one times in the book of Isaiah, indicating clearly that righteousness has considerable importance for the book. In Isaiah 1-33, righteousness and justice appear almost as a word pair to signify morally correct behaviour that the rebellious Israel lacks. See John N. Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah: a Study of the Function of Chapters 55-66 in the Present Structure of the Book," in *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 66-67.

³⁴ For a discussion of the theme of hardening, see, for instance, Uhlig, "The Motif of Hardening," 62-83.

³⁵ Clements believes that the theme of blindness and deafness has an overarching bearing of the book's structure; see Ronald E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," in *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 100. See also Ronald E. Clements, "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," in *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 83-6.

theme of covenant;³⁶ as a worthy testimony for YHWH's acts in history – the theme of witness³⁷ and the theme of former things and new things.³⁸

Israel's inability to comply with the law breaks her covenant with YHWH, and in so doing, makes herself vulnerable to enemy attacks.³⁹ Moreover, her heedlessness to the dire situation causes her to plunge inescapably into a downward spiral, eventually leading to the judgment described in 6:11-13a. This is also a result of purifying Israel's perpetual uncleanness when YHWH upholds his holiness, as we have discussed in the previous chapter.⁴⁰ In fact, the theme of judgment against Israel is already dominant before chapter 6 (e.g. 2.9-4:1) and continues afterwards (e.g. 9:8-10:4; 10:28-34). Its scope is widened in chapters 13-23 where the judgment – “the nullification of autonomous states at the behest

³⁶ For one thing, “Old Testament prophecy, as instituted, continued the Mosaic office and was therefore covenant-centered (Deut. 18:15-22). Like Moses, the prophets offered what was given on Sinai and reapplied it to current social, religious, and economic questions,” William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 107. In this regard, Isaiah's prophecy is intrinsically linked to the covenant when the contemporary situations in the book did not measure up to it. See also Roberts, “Isaiah in Old Testament Theology,” 130-43, where he explores (1) how YHWH's holiness and its ethical demands on his people bring them purging judgment from their profanity against the Torah and his covenant with them, and (2) how YHWH's covenant with his chosen people is linked to his promises with Zion in reference to the Zion theology in Old Testament.

³⁷ The phrase “You are my witnesses” (אַתֶּם עֵדֵי) are repeated three times close to each other in 43:10, 12; 44:8, and the word “witness” (עֵד) also appears in 8:2; 19:20; 30:8; 43:9; 44:9; 55:4, all of which signify that YHWH's witness, whether it is an individual or collectively the redeemed Israel, will testify that he alone is God. As Clements remarks, “From a reference to those whose task was to act as ‘reliable witnesses’ (Isa. 8:2) to the inscribing of the child's intended name upon a tablet, the idea has developed that the whole of Isaiah's prophecy is a ‘witness’ to God's action and intentions towards his people” (Clements, “Beyond Tradition-History,” 89).

³⁸ The theme of former things and new things is related to the theme of witness, but only appears after chapter 40. According to Childs, the canonical arrangement of the Second and Third Isaiah has an intricate dependency on the First Isaiah by which the “former things” (רֵאשִׁיטוֹת) that were prophesized in the past have come to be fulfilled and the “new things” (חֲדָשׁוֹת) that are promised now are being inaugurated into reality, thus affirming the continuity of God's plan into the eschatological future; see Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 328-30.

³⁹ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 368.

⁴⁰ See section 2.4 of this thesis.

of Yahweh's sovereignty"⁴¹ – is pronounced towards the international landscape, Israel not exempted. The horizon of judgment is broadened even further to an apocalyptic scale in chapters 24-27, an apocalypse only after which a perfect new world order can emerge.⁴² Nonetheless, we see the trend reverse in scope when chapters 28-33 articulate judgment upon Jerusalem, but only to see it enlarge again in chapter 34 when YHWH lays a devastating blow on Israel's worldwide enemies.⁴³ Moving forward, the theme of judgment recedes, but resurges at the end of the book (e.g. 63:1-6, 10; 65:11-16; 66:5-6, 15-17, 24). In all these passages, our understanding of the theme of judgment (טִפְּשׁוּן) is in relation to divine punishment. However, another usage of the word טִפְּשׁוּן – translated as “justice” – is also prominent in chapters 1-33 and 56-66 where it is frequently used together with the word הַקְּדוּשָׁה (“righteousness”) in the same verse.⁴⁴ The theme of justice/righteousness is, as mentioned above, subsumed under the theme of law/instruction in my estimation, and its interplay with the theme of judgment highlights one principle: human's lack of טִפְּשׁוּן (“justice”) will be recompensed by YHWH's טִפְּשׁוּן (“judgment”).⁴⁵ As for its related theme, judgment as a result of YHWH hiding his face leads to the theme of rejection, which I will include under the banner of the theme of judgment.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 113.

⁴² See *ibid.*, 188-91.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, 217-19, 268.

⁴⁴ 1:21, 27; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 16:5; 28:17; 32:1, 16; 33:5; 56:1; 59:9, 14.

⁴⁵ In this regard, YHWH's judgment against human's injustice reveals his justice on behalf of those who are wronged. By the same token, for human's failure to punish those who deserve judgment, YHWH will need to act to level the playing field.

⁴⁶ Israel's rejection of YHWH's law sets off his rejection of Israel. A key example is illustrated by King Ahaz's refusal to listen to Isaiah's message in chapter 7, which is then

The theme of remnant (שְׂאָר) is prompted by its association with the term “a seed of holiness” (זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ) in 6:13b, a term unmistakably pointing to an offspring covered with YHWH’s holiness.⁴⁷ Although the word שְׂאָר appears many times in the book of Isaiah,⁴⁸ the expression זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ is unique to 6:13 in the whole Old Testament, except its only other occurrence in Ezra 9:2. There we find that the people of Israel, identified as the זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ, have entered into mixed marriages with other peoples around them after returning from exile, and in response to this, Ezra’s prayer in vv. 6-15 refers to this זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ as שְׂאָר (vv. 8, 13, 14, 15).⁴⁹ Like judgment, the theme of remnant is prominent in chapters 1-12, particularly through its connection with words like שְׂרִיד (“survivor,” e.g. 1:9), פְּלִיטָה (“escape,” e.g. 4:2), שְׂאָר (“remnant,” 10:20), and שֹׁרֶשׁ (“root,” 11:10). In Brueggemann’s reckoning, the thrust of these chapters is in the interchange of harsh judgment on Israel and hope of a remnant, with the promises of hope prevailing over the outcomes of judgment.⁵⁰ It is in this light that we see the theme of hope come through as a subtheme.⁵¹ The theme of remnant is moved to

followed by Isaiah’s pronouncement of YHWH hiding his face from Israel in chapter 8. See my discussion in sections 2.3 and 2.4 of this thesis about YHWH’s rejection of Israel in relation to her judgment in 6:11-13a; see also a discussion of the theme of rejection in Evans, “On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah,” 129-32.

⁴⁷ The association is undisputedly noted among commentators. See, for instance, Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 275.

⁴⁸ The root שָׂאֵר appears mostly in First Isaiah (e.g. 10:19, 20, 21, 22; 11:11, 16; 14:22, 30; 15:9; 17:3; 28:5; 37:4, 31, 32) and rarely outside (e.g. 46:3).

⁴⁹ See also Sweeney, “The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 58, for this association.

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 8-10.

⁵¹ The intertwining of judgment and hope is not limited to chapters 1-12 but recurrent in 1-39, and hope prevails in 40-66. In Clements’ reckoning, there are an “Assyrian” part of the book (1-35) and a “Babylonian” part (40-66) with 36-39 functioning as a transition in between and as “a suitable conclusion for the first half of the book by introducing an abbreviated summary of the message of hope which occupies the second half” (Clements, “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” 96). For a discussion of the theme of hope in relation to judgment, see Oswalt, “Judgment and Hope,” 191-202.

the sideline as judgment takes on the international landscape in chapters 13-23; its scope is, nevertheless, expanded to include foreigners (גֵּרִים, 14:1) and outcasts (נִדְחִים, 16:3-4) who escape from destruction to take refuge (סֶתֶר, 16:3-4) in the land of Israel.⁵² It is set in an eschatological timeframe along with the apocalypse in chapters 24-27, and the focus is no longer on the survival of a remnant but YHWH's acts of preserving them as special possession (26:16-19; 27:6-9, 12-13).⁵³ This is followed by the promise of YHWH's plan for the remnant that they will regain the ability to see and hear with understanding in chapters 28-33 (28:5-6, 23-29; 29:22-24; 33:13-16), though such hope is offered sporadically amidst rebuke and judgment against Jerusalem.⁵⁴ After the remnant has regained this ability, as exemplified by Hezekiah in chapter 37 amidst Sennacherib's beleaguerment of Jerusalem, the word "remnant" and others in the same semantic field fade out. Subsequently, this group of people, now having the ability to

⁵² We can see this in two texts. One is 14:1-2 where the people of Israel will return to their land after the fall of the arrogant Babylon, along with foreigners joining themselves to Israel; see Childs, *Isaiah*, 125. Another is 16:1-5 which "offers a prophetic proposal to Moab to seek refuge in Judah" (ibid., 131). As made clear by Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 34, there is no definite setting associated with 14:1-2. Similarly, perhaps 16:1-5 "is a 'vision' of the future, which took shape in postexilic Israel, within the context of the eschatological hope for the future" (ibid., 141).

⁵³ YHWH's acts of preservation mean his salvation. Following the lament of his faithful in 26:16-18 after judgment, Childs, *Isaiah*, 191, sees that "v. 19 has been designated as a *Heilsorakel*, the classic form of divine reassurance that salvation will come" but it "is now projected beyond the grave to a resurrection of life, a final victory over death itself." Within the eschatological context of chapter 27, there is a remnant of Israel who will, through the purifying judgment, respond obediently to YHWH by demolishing the idols in v. 9, and more striking is that in vv. 12-13, "the goal of God's purpose is formulated in the promised ingathering of Israel from its dispersion among the lands of its conquerors" (ibid., 198).

⁵⁴ Here we see a development between the theme of remnant in chapters 1-12 and 28-33. Though the former is on the promise of a remnant who will survive from the devastating judgment, the latter speaks of a condition beyond survival to include the ability to follow YHWH's law with obedience that they will sanctify YHWH's holy name (29:23). All this has to do with the wise and intentional plan of YHWH, which is compared analogically to the sowing and harvesting activities of a farmer in 28:23-29: "each crop calls for a different handling, but all according to a purpose" (ibid., 210). Likewise, all the dealings of YHWH with Israel amount to his good purpose.

behold his glory, is identified by YHWH as “my servant” (or probably, in some cases, along with “my servant”) in chapters 40-55 (e.g. 41:8-16; 42:1-9; 43:1-15; 44:1-8, 21-22; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).⁵⁵ In this light, we see a continuity in YHWH’s exhortation and instruction addressed dialogically to the same group of people in chapters 34-55 (e.g. 35:3-4; 40:9-11; 41:8-16; 43:1-15; 44:1-8; 51:7-8; 54:1-8),⁵⁶ whereby the theme of remnant is transformed into the theme of servanthood with frequent mentions of the term “my servant” after chapter 39. Furthermore, Clifford is quite right that in chapters 40-55, as “a new phase of the judgment process has been reached [...], the figure of Isaiah of Jerusalem seems to have been transposed into the figure of the anonymous servant,”⁵⁷ an archetype whom other servants will follow. As the theme of servanthood further develops in chapters 56-66, the previously singular “my servant” now becomes plural “my servants” (65:8-9, 13-15) who, as reflection of YHWH’s glory, have a mission to bring forth their brothers and sisters to Zion from the nations (60:1-9; 61:8-9;

⁵⁵ Within each of the passages referenced, the term “my servant” (עַבְדִּי) is used repeatedly by YHWH to refer to either Israel or an anonymous individual, except 50:4-9 where that individual is called “his servant” (עַבְדִּי) in 50:10. Along with the theme of servanthood are the four so-called “servant songs” in 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-9, and 52:13-53:12. Brueggemann suggests that regardless of the identity of the servant in these songs, this figure embodies the qualification for proclamation of the good news: a willing sufferer who shoulders a mission for the sake of the community in God’s emancipative work; see Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 13.

⁵⁶ Common to the referenced passages is the imperative “fear not” (אַל־תִּירָא – 2mp, אַל־תִּירָא – 2fs, or אַל־תִּירָא – 2ms) that appears to encourage the remnant, who is spoken to as a group of people (e.g. 35:4), the servant Israel (e.g. 41:10), or the city Zion (e.g. 40:9) sometimes personified as a woman (54:4), amidst YHWH’s exhortation and instruction.

⁵⁷ Richard J. Clifford, “Isaiah, Book of,” in Vol. 3, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible I-Ma*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 82. “Whereas in 6:10 the not-being-healed is a consequence of the not-being-able-to-repent, in 53:5 it is said that through the suffering of ‘the Servant of God’ the collective who is speaking will be healed,” writes Rendtorff in “Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book,” 176.

66:20-23).⁵⁸ The remnant, as a group of people capable of beholding the glory of YHWH and ministering to him as servants after judgment, prompts the inclusion of the theme of servanthood as a subordinate theme of remnant.

Now as we loop back from the end of Isaiah 6 to its beginning, we see immediately the theme of glory, which is closely associated with the theme of remnant in the book.⁵⁹ Through a scourging process of judgment, a remnant will emerge as a group of people whose hearts are no longer hardened. Like the prophet experienced in 6:1-4, they will be able to marvel at YHWH's royal majesty and to tremble at his commanding voice, both palpably manifesting YHWH's holiness in glory.⁶⁰ Yet, before this comes to fruition, whereby their blindness and deafness are healed as anticipated in chapters 28-33,⁶¹ the glory of YHWH is not expressed directly using words like ראה ("to see") and שמע ("to hear") in chapters 1-12, except in chapter 6 where the one who "sees" and "hears" is the prophet Isaiah. Rather YHWH's glory is conveyed by peace and security that he will bestow on Israel and the earth (2:2-4; 4:5-6; 9:1-7; 11:6-9).⁶² In

⁵⁸ I agree with Dumbrell's reckoning that the servants, as inhabitants of the new Zion who have been brought back there, "will be Yahweh's redeemed people, who will now fulfill the Servant role" (Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 129). Furthermore, "the traditional terms 'Yahweh's people,' 'servants,' and 'chosen' are redefined. Yahweh's servant is not the nation [of Israel] but the pious that seek him (65:1-7)" (ibid., 130), who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at his word (66:2).

⁵⁹ Watts states in *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 108. "[כבוד] usually describes God's glory, and it plays an important role in Isaiah indicating God's presence and his commanding appearance." As such, its connection with the having-been-healed remnant is naturally a very tangible development.

⁶⁰ Cf. 29:17-18; 32:1-4; 33:17-20.

⁶¹ Cf. 28:5-6, 23-29; 29:22-24; 33:13-16.

⁶² The implication that YHWH's glory brings peace and security to Israel is paramount. For it is a decision that Israel has to make: will she trust in the nations and have Jerusalem filled with their glory, or in YHWH and Zion with his glory? If her answer is the first, then it implies

chapters 13-23, although there is no mention of YHWH's glory in the context of judgment of nations, it is exalted by contrast when the pompous are brought low together with their glory (13:19; 14:18; 16:14; 17:3-4; 21:16; 22:18; 23:9). As the apocalypse comes upon the whole earth in chapters 24-27, its inhabitants who have waited for YHWH's righteousness give praise to his glory (24:14-16a, 23). The theme of glory returns to its previous focus on Israel in chapters 28-39 where the blind will see the glory of YHWH and the deaf will heed his voice, which is portrayed through two salient images, the blossoming of the wilderness (32:1-8; 33:17-20) and the beauty of a righteous king (29:17-18; 35:1-2; 35:5-7), and lastly also through Hezekiah's prayer (37:14-20).⁶³ Then two subordinate themes begin to emerge, both, in analogy, aimed to extol the glory of YHWH in what he can and will do to deliver the remnant from exile.⁶⁴ They are: the theme of Exodus that Israel once experienced from YHWH's providence in the wilderness (40:3-5; 43:16-21),⁶⁵ and the theme of creation that none can measure up to YHWH's acts

that she is putting herself in harm's way. See how this question is raised in Oswalt, "The Nations in Isaiah," 43.

⁶³ The theme that the glory of YHWH is seen and present with his people continues to run until the end of the book (e.g. 40:5; 59:19; 60:1; 66:18), which culminates in "that God's exclusive glory [is] to be seen in Jerusalem and this would act as a magnet to the nations who would surrender their 'glory' to her in acknowledgment" (Williamson, "From One Degree of Glory to Another," 189).

⁶⁴ In so doing, not only is the glory of YHWH displayed, but any questions that challenge if YHWH is capable of restoring the remnant from the foreign nations will be crushed by these subordinate themes; see Oswalt, "The Nations in Isaiah," 47.

⁶⁵ The new Exodus in the book of Isaiah is portrayed by using analogies from the first Exodus, thereby forming a parallel between YHWH bringing the exiles to Zion in the present and him leading the Mosaic generation to the Promised Land in the past. The theme of Exodus is prominent in chapters 40-55, not only with a journey through the wilderness under the care of YHWH, but also with him as the redeemer (e.g. 44:22, 24) in this new Exodus redemption; see Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 121. Another passage, for example, that alludes to YHWH's presence with the Israelites leaving Egypt is 52:12 (cf. Exod. 13:20-21; 14:19-20).

(40:12-16; 44:22-28).⁶⁶ The former extols YHWH's glory as revealed in the emancipation of his people from bondage by overpowering their enemy, whereas the latter in the fashioning of things to come about according to his meticulous design. The latter theme subsequently morphs into the theme of re-creation whereby YHWH's glory is displayed through the re-creation of new heavens and earth at the end of the book (65:17-25).⁶⁷

The theme of salvation is the last to be examined as we come to 6:5-7, the final unit of text to correlate with the composition of the book in my proposed method. It is prompted by the atonement of sin in v. 7 after the prophet has confessed his iniquity in v. 5; together the two verses prescribe the measure by which YHWH will rightly act for a penitent – salvation. While there are no places for iniquities in YHWH's holiness, we see also that his holiness deems no ransoms too high for the atonement of sins for those who have repented of their iniquities (cf. 43:3-4). In this light, Israel's future restoration from judgment duly constitutes the salvation that she will receive from YHWH after repentance.⁶⁸

Before this great reversal comes in full view in the second half of the book, 6:5-7

⁶⁶ The theme of creation is prominent in chapters 40-48 on YHWH as the Creator; see Oswalt, "Isaiah," 221.

⁶⁷ The re-creation of heaven and earth may be interpreted as a hyperbole. As such, "in 65:18f, the rebuilding of Jerusalem is actually termed as a new creation" (Rolf Rendtorff, "The Composition of the Book of Isaiah," in *Canon and Theology*, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993], 158). Also, this rebuilding of Zion, Jerusalem's other name, signifies YHWH's indwelling on earth again after the "former things" for "in the book, the second major character alongside God is Zion [which] functions as the concrete expression of God's dwelling with his creation" (Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah 1-66: Making Sense of the Whole," in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988], 122).

⁶⁸ This measure of salvation is also what YHWH has promised to do to his people in the law of covenant (e.g. Deut. 30:1-7; Judg. 2:1; Ps. 89:30-34); see Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah," 67-8, for a discussion of the connection between judgment and salvation; also, Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 31.

functions as a case in point that chapters “1-39 already puts the proclamation of salvation parallel to the proclamation of doom,”⁶⁹ despite the former having a less prominent role in these chapters than the latter. Amidst fierce warnings of judgment in chapters 1-12, salvation in the manner of justice and righteousness that YHWH will restore to Zion is announced in 1:26-27, and also at the end of chapter 12 where its inhabitants will sing praises to YHWH for his salvation. With regards to judgment in chapters 13-23 against foreign nations, there is a palpable sense of salvation bestowed on these autonomous states when YHWH subjects them to allegiance: paying tribute to Zion, abiding by the law, and joining Israel in worship (18:7; 19:16-25; 23:17-18). Through the apocalypse in chapters 24-27, salvation is propelled to the metaphysical realm where even death will be swallowed up and gone forever, and YHWH will ordain perfect peace for his people (25:1-9; 26:1-15). As the theme of judgment returns to Jerusalem in chapters 28-33, salvation also returns to its former concern – the restoration of justice and righteousness – whereby knowledge, peace, and prosperity will come upon Zion and her inhabitants (29:19-21; 30:18-26; 31:4-7; 32:15-33:6; 33:21-24). With the introduction of the great reversal from judgment on nations to salvation in chapters 34-35,⁷⁰ we see the theme of salvation clearly demonstrated in concrete actions in subsequent text. First, YHWH saved Jerusalem from the Assyrian siege and healed Hezekiah’s fatal disease (37:5-7, 33-35; 38:1-22). Then, through his anointed, Cyrus, the remnant will return safely to homeland

⁶⁹ Rendtorff, “The Composition of the Book of Isaiah,” 153.

⁷⁰ In view of the book’s symmetry, Schultz, “Isaiah, Book of,” 340, believes that Isaiah 34-35 already introduce the great reversal from judgment to salvation. This view, which I agree, is shared by other scholars (e.g. John D. W. Watts and Craig A. Evans).

from among the nations and the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt (e.g. 45:1-25; 49:8-18, 22-26). Over and beyond this, YHWH is exalted as the Savior (מוֹשִׁיעַ, 43:3; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8) and the Redeemer (לֹאֲדָ, 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16); along with the latter motif, the theme of redemption with respect to the remnant's liberation from exile is developed as a subordinate theme.⁷¹ Besides, the theme of righteousness emerges in close tie with YHWH's salvation in chapters 40-55 as the two words, דְּקָה (‘‘righteousness’’) and יְשׁוּעָה (‘‘salvation’’), occur in pairs as synonyms (45:8; 46:13; 51:5-6, 8), taking up the role that מִשְׁפָּט (‘‘justice’’) interplays with דְּקָה (‘‘righteousness’’) formerly.⁷² These two traits of righteousness as justice and salvation, however, both appear prominently in 56-66, especially their joint occurrence in 56:1.⁷³

3.3 A Thematic Profile of the Book through the Lens of Isaiah 6

Above I have presented five themes and their subthemes in the book of Isaiah. Together their footprints permeate the whole book from beginning to end. In order to profile the book by the method that I have proposed, these themes constitute the column headings of a table under which consecutive passages of the

⁷¹ The theme of redemption is also linked to the Exodus as Dumbrell states, ‘‘The use of *go'el* ‘redeemer’ at 44:24 puts us in touch with a key theme of Isaiah 40-55, a theme that bears on the new exodus redemption’’ (Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 121).

⁷² Rendtorff suggests ‘‘that the word צדקה/צדק has an entirely different function in the two parts of the book’’ (Rendtorff, ‘‘The Composition of the Book of Isaiah,’’ 162).

⁷³ For a discussion of the interplay of these three words in the book, see Oswalt, ‘‘Righteousness in Isaiah,’’ 59-72; Rendtorff, ‘‘Isaiah 56:1,’’ 181-89.

book are placed according to thematic correlation.⁷⁴ The column headings are: “Law/Instruction,” “Judgment,” “Remnant,” “Glory,” and “Salvation.” The table below, as filled with all passages from Isaiah 1:1 to 66:24,⁷⁵ delineates a thematic profile of the book,⁷⁶ and reveals the role that each theme plays in the framework of its composition, vertically from top to bottom and horizontally across each major section interplaying with the other themes in the table.⁷⁷ Note the following legend used in the table of the thematic profile:

Legend:

Underline – law/instruction in the form of admonition

* – pronouncement against foreign nation

** – pronouncement against all the earth

Cell in dark shading – text in Isaiah 6

Cell in light shading – text in Isaiah 40

(...) – passage listed under more than one theme

Bold – text containing the epithet קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל (“the Holy One of Israel”)

⁷⁴ The placement of passages goes from left to right on the same row of the table as it progresses through the book, and a new row is added if the next placement is in the same column or needs to move back to the left.

⁷⁵ The verse numbers in the table are based on the ESV translation of the book of Isaiah.

⁷⁶ The placement of passages to the respective themes was done according to the criteria of selection for these themes and their subthemes as explained above. The size of each passage varies, depending on where I drew the line when one theme crosses over into another. Some text may touch on multiple themes so that assigning it to one theme versus another became ad hoc. An example is 65:13-16 which describes blessings to YHWH’s servants alternately within the same verses with judgment against those who violate the law. I put this text under “Remnant” in favor of the subtheme of servanthood. Other places where a similar challenge is found are passages in chapters 56-62 that deal with the glory of YHWH experienced by the remnant or manifested in their salvation. In these cases, I list the passages under both the theme of glory and the theme of remnant or salvation, but place the verse numbers in bracket to signify that they belong to more than one theme (see the legend).

⁷⁷ As the set of themes is intrinsically tied to the message of Isaiah 6, it goes without saying that the complete table also reveals the role that Isaiah 6 plays in the framework of the composition of the book.

	Holiness⁷⁸				
	Law⁷⁹	Judgment	Remnant	Glory	Salvation
Introduction to 1-33 and the whole book⁸⁰ (1:1-2:4)	<u>1:1-6</u> <u>1:10-23</u>	1:7-8 1:24-25 1:28-31	1:9	2:1-4	1:26-27
Law foreshadowing Judgment (2:5-12:6)	<u>2:5-8</u>	2:9-4:1 5:1-30	4:2-4	4:5-6	
	<u>6:8-10</u>	6:11-13a	6:13b	6:1-4	6:5-7
	<u>7:1-17</u>	7:18-8:22 9:8-21		9:1-7	
		10:1-4 10:5-19* 10:22-34	10:20-21 11:1-5 11:10-16	11:6-9	12:1-6
Judgment on nations (13:1-23:18)		13:1-22* 14:3-23* 14:24-27* 14:28-31* 15:1-9* 16:6-14* 17:1-3* 17:4-11 17:12-14** 18:1-6* 19:1-15* 20:1-6* 21:1-10* 21:11-12* 21:13-17* 22:1-25 23:1-16*	14:1-2 14:32 16:1-5		18:7* 19:16-25** 23:17-18*
Judgment on the whole earth (24:1-27:13)	<u>24:5**</u>	24:1-4** 24:6-13** 24:16b-22** 25:10-12* 26:20-27:5** 27:10-11	26:16-19 27:6-9 27:12-13	24:14-16a 24:23	25:1-9** 26:1-15**
Judgment on Israel (28:1-33:24)	<u>28:7-10</u> <u>28:14-15</u> <u>29:9-16</u>	28:1-4 28:11-13 28:16-22 29:1-4 29:5-8**	28:5-6 28:23-29	29:17-18	29:19-21

⁷⁸ The motif of holiness is fundamental to our understanding of the themes as previously discussed in their selection.

⁷⁹ More precisely, the heading should be “Law/Instruction.” For the sake of brevity, I just label it as “Law.”

⁸⁰ Chapters 1-33 constitute the first “volume” of the book and 34-66 the second “volume.” I will explain this division in the following discussion.

	<u>30:1-11</u>	30:12-17 30:27-33* 31:1-3 31:8-9* 32:9-14 33:7-12	29:22-24 33:13-16	32:1-8 33:17-20	30:18-26 31:4-7 32:15-33:6 33:21-24
Introduction to 34-66 (34:1-35:10)		34:1-17**	35:3-4	35:1-2 35:5-7	35:8-10
Remnant seeing Glory (36:1-44:28)	<u>36:1-22*</u> <u>37:8-13*</u> <u>37:21-29*</u> <u>39:1-4</u>	37:36-38* 39:5-8	37:1-4 37:30-32	37:14-20	37:5-7 37:33-35 38:1-22
	<u>40:6-8</u>		40:1-2 40:9-11	40:3-5 40:12-26	40:27-31
	41:21-29 42:18-25 43:22-28 44:9-20	41:1-7**	41:8-16 42:1-9 43:1-15 44:1-8 44:21-22	42:10-17 43:16-21 44:23-28	41:17-20
Remnant experiencing Salvation (45:1-55:13)	46:1-13 48:1-22 50:1-3 50:10-11	47:1-15*	49:1-7 49:19-21 50:4-9 51:7-16 52:1-6 52:13-54:8 55:1-13		45:1-13 45:14-25 49:8-18 49:22-26 51:1-6 51:17-23 52:7-12 54:9-17
Law in spite of Salvation (56:1-62:12)	<u>56:1-8</u> <u>56:9-12</u> 57:1-2 <u>57:3-13</u> <u>58:1-5</u> 58:6-7 <u>59:1-15a</u> 59:21 61:1-4	59:17b-18**	(60:1-9) 61:8-9	(58:8-14) 59:19 (60:1-22)	57:14-21 (58:8-14) 59:15b-17a 59:20 (60:10-22) 61:5-7 61:10-62:12
Conclusion to 34-66 and 1-66 (63:1-66:24)	<u>65:1-7</u> 66:1-2 <u>66:3-4</u>	63:1-6** 63:10 63:15-64:12 65:11-12 66:5-6 66:15-17 66:24	65:8-10 65:13-16 66:20-23	65:17-25 66:18-19	63:7-9 63:11-14 66:7-14

First, a note on the sectional division in the thematic profile is warranted. As we start from the beginning of the book, the first section 1:1-2:4 serves as an introduction to chapters 1-33 and the book as a whole. The view that this unit of text introduces the book is generally agreed by scholars.⁸¹ However, to see it as an introduction to chapters 1-33 will hinge on a view that the book can be bisected into two volumes, an argument that we will find cogent agreement from the thematic profile as we will see in our discussion. At the same time, the bisectonal two-volume partition is conspicuous in the Qumran text in which there is a noticeable gap between chapters 33 and 34 in the *Complete Isaiah Scroll*.⁸² Modern scholars have taken this clue to look into the literary significance of the bisection. Among them, Brownlee first proposed that the two volumes are parallel in a bifid model; his idea and observations were later taken up and developed by others like Evans and Watts.⁸³ After the introduction, the major sections in the

⁸¹ E.g. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 10, sees 1:1-2:4 as “an overture of the main themes” in the book. By and large, scholars cogently agree that chapter 1 is the introductory chapter of the book, but not all see that 2:2-4, after the inscription in 2:1, should be tagged along as part of the introduction. However, the fact that 2:2-4 contains themes that are elaborated in later part of the book is indisputable. For example, Williamson writes, “Chapter 1 functions now as an introduction to the book as a whole” and “a vision is presented in 2.2-4 which governs much of the remainder of the book [after chapter 5]” (H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, The International Critical Commentary [New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006]. 3).

⁸² The gap is three-line wide between the end of chapter 33 and the beginning of chapter 34, as seen in the corresponding section of the Complete Isaiah Scroll from a photo in William Hugh Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible: With Special Attention to the Book of Isaiah* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 252. First-century Jewish historian Josephus saw the writing of the prophet Isaiah as “books,” purportedly the corresponding two volumes; see *ibid.*, 251.

⁸³ See Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible*, 247-50, for his outline on the parallel structure in the two volumes of Isaiah. He sees that a parallel concept exists between these chapters in the two volumes: 1-5 and 34:35, 6-8 and 36-40, 9-12 and 41-45, 13-23 and 46-48, 24-27 and 49-55, 28-31 and 56-59, 32-33 and 60-66. Evans succinctly summarizes Brownlee’s idea in this statement, “In their present literary form the two ‘volumes’ interpret each other, and each presents the dialectic of ‘ruins and blessedness’” (“On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah,” 133). Watts, influenced by Brownlee’s parallel structure, renders the book of Isaiah in his commentary as a literary drama, consisted of a prologue (1:1-4:6) followed by six

first half of the thematic profile are 2:5-12:6, 13:1-23:18, 24:1-27:13, and 28:1-33:24, each with the theme of judgment forcefully running through them as illustrated by their respective captions in the table above.⁸⁴

The second half of the thematic profile begins with section 34:1-35:10, which introduces the second volume by announcing Israel's great reversal – from judgment to salvation – through YHWH's two contrastive roles of governance played on Israel's behalf: devastating blow to her enemies in chapter 34, and life-giving help to the remnant for her homecoming in chapter 35.⁸⁵ It is then followed by these major sections: 36:1-44:28,⁸⁶ 45:1-55:13, and 56:1-62:12, the first two with the theme of remnant prominently featured, and the third with the theme of salvation interplaying with the theme of law/instruction exhorted upon those who are now living in Zion, as captioned in the table. While changes in rhetoric and thematic development after chapter 55 cogently set apart what follows into a

acts (5:1-12:6, 13:1-27:13, 28:1-33:24, 34:1-49:4, 49:5-54:17b, 54:17c-61:11) and an epilogue (62:1-66:24), titled "the Vision of Isaiah," and played against a Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian background as the acts go; see Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, lxxii-lxxviii.

⁸⁴ Many commentaries agree that the first major section of the book ends after chapter 12; see, for instances, Childs, *Isaiah*, 9; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 171; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, vii. The next divisions 13-23 and 24-27 are also cogently agreed upon, though some may combine them into one section because of obvious connection between them; see Childs, *Isaiah*, 113, 171; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 271; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27, A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), vii. For the following division, although not everyone breaks it at the end of chapter 33, most would draw a line between that chapter and its next. Watts' commentary is one which divides 28:1-33:24 into one section; see Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 Revised*, 416. For others which note the line but do not divide after chapter 33, see, for examples, Childs, *Isaiah*, 199-200; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 380-84.

⁸⁵ Besides Schultz, "Isaiah, Book of," 340, see also Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 268, for a discussion of YHWH's roles in this section.

⁸⁶ Many scholars separate chapters 36-39 from 40ff., but there is a cogent continuation in the theological message between the two parts, as we will see in the discussion of section 36:1-44:28.

distinct section,⁸⁷ the division between chapters 44 and 45, as I did, is primarily motivated by the mention of Cyrus at 44:28 and immediately again at 45:1 that signals a new phase for the remnant of Israel from chapter 45 forward, from a message of hope expected to a message of hope realized.⁸⁸ The final section 63:1-66:24 functions as a conclusion which brings a closure to the whole book by forming an inclusio with 1:1-2:4 in many remarkable parallels already noted by scholars.⁸⁹

Furthermore, other intrinsic characteristics, as seen from the thematic profile, show that the two volumes resonate with each other. One that is central to our discussion is the role played by Isaiah 6, which is mirrored in structural details by its counterpart Isaiah 40, as previously discussed. There is, however, a

⁸⁷ According to historical criticism, chapters 56-66 constitute the Third Isaiah which is the third part of the book, following the First Isaiah (1-39) and the Second Isaiah (40-55). In a nutshell, though the majestic transcendence from YHWH's holiness rightfully commands judgment and fear in the First Isaiah, he is also the sole creator and sovereign of history who is rightly able to save in the Second Isaiah. As such, the Third Isaiah portrays YHWH as one who will exercise judgment and salvation in his righteousness. For a discussion of the book along this historical-critical division, see, for instance, Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," 130-43.

⁸⁸ This separation finds, for example, cogent agreement from Westermann who says that "this passage (the oracle of concerning Cyrus in 44:24-28 and 45:1-7) forms the mid-point in the collection of Deutero-Isaiah's oracles [... that] it ties the prophet's message of comfort [in chs. 41-44] to a contemporary event [in chs. 45ff.], and does so in a way that shocks Israel and makes a radical break with everything of which she had hitherto been persuaded, for it says that God makes Cyrus, a heathen king, his agent (anointed), through whom he intends to perform his work of setting Israel free" (Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969], 154).

⁸⁹ The inclusio is cogently noted by scholars; see Schultz, "Isaiah, Book of," 338. Also, see Anthony J. Tomasino, "Isaiah 1.1-2.4 and 63-66, and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 57, no. 1 (1993): 81-98, where he notes the respective thematic parallels between: (1) 1:2-9 and 63:7-64:11, in sinful situation, the former is a call for repentance and the latter a prayer for mercy; (2) 1:10-20 and 66:1-6, in condemned cultic practice, the former is a call for repentance and the latter a promise of judgment; (3) 1:21-26 and 66:7-13, in personification of Zion, the former is a harlot and the latter a mother giving birth; (4) 1:27-31 and 66:14-17, in the redemption of Zion, both announcing the salvation of the righteous and the destroy of the wicked; (5) 2:2-4 and 66:18-24, in glorification of Zion, the former is more universalistic in tone and the latter more for Israel's sake. Tomasino also notes a significant verbal parallelism between chapters 1 and 66, especially at the beginning and the end of these chapters.

great contrast between these two chapters in the way that each draws the attention of the reader to a different focus of their respective volumes. Chapter 6 is on the announcement of judgment against Israel while chapter 40 is on the announcement of salvation for her remnant. Yet, both are strikingly unfolded in the backdrop of YHWH's glory.⁹⁰ Immediately after Isaiah 6 is a collection of historical accounts in chapters 7-8, first concerning an incident with King Ahaz that due to the hardness of his heart, he tacitly refused any help from YHWH because he trusted in his own scheme of working with the Assyrian. This, in consequence, sets forth the tone of a dirge for the people in what are coming to them (cf. the "woe oracles" in 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1).⁹¹ The order is reversed in the second volume whereby a series of historical events about King Hezekiah is first presented before Isaiah 40 in chapters 36-39, conspicuously featuring that amidst imminent crisis, Hezekiah's repentance and unrelenting trust in YHWH bring not only the deliverance of Jerusalem but also the healing of his

⁹⁰ While the glory of YHWH is seen only by the prophet in chapter 6, it will be seen by "all flesh" in chapter 40 as 40:5 indicates. Goldingay construes that "all flesh" probably refers to all living creatures because a link can be sought between 40:5 and 6:3 as well as 35:2. "In 6.3 the seraphs call out (a verb that is very significant in 40.1-11) that the whole world is full of Yhwh's splendour, and this is not limited to the human world, while in 35.2 the natural world sees God's splendour" (John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* [London, UK: T&T Clark, 2005], 22).

⁹¹ The core of the historical accounts in chapters 7-8 is 7:1-17 which is a prose text describing the encounter of the prophet Isaiah with King Ahaz who refused to accept YHWH's invitation to trust in him. At any rate, 7:1-8:22 (or 7:1-9:6 as some suggest) is commonly known as the Isaianic Memoir that purportedly constitutes a discrete collection of oracles authored by the prophet Isaiah himself, though this hypothesis has been downplayed since the height of historical criticism receded; see Childs, *Isaiah*, 42-44, for a brief discussion of this Memoir hypothesis.

own body.⁹² This positive turn of things, thus, acts a precursor for a restoration that is to come in subsequent chapters.⁹³

Switching our perspective from sectional to longitudinal in the thematic profile allows us to see other remarkable details about the book of Isaiah. First is the theme of law/instruction. Readily noticeable is the absence of this theme from section 13:1-23:18 when judgment is lashed out at individual nations including Israel, though it is present in every other section.⁹⁴ The law is YHWH's instruction of life for his people so that they may choose right and shun evil. The complete absence of instruction, even admonition, may possibly carry an overtone in this section that as Israel's contempt and rejection of the law have reached an extreme, she has also inevitably failed the mission of being YHWH's witness in revealing his glory to the nations through ordained ways of holy living.⁹⁵ As such, a judgment process seems to have become the tool to teach Israel and other nations to take heed of YHWH's instruction, which is universal to the whole earth.⁹⁶ In this light, "the nations and Israel are given one and the same criterion for admittance to Mount Zion,"⁹⁷ a topic that will be more fully developed later from chapter 56 onwards (cf. 56:1-3). The theme of judgment, on the other hand,

⁹² As Evans, "On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah," 133, notes, chapters 6-8 are a biography of Isaiah and Ahaz standing in parallel with 36-40 that are a biography of Isaiah and Hezekiah. In my analysis, though, I isolate chapters 6 and 40 and compare them separately.

⁹³ Brueggemann says it well that Isaiah 36-39 "functions to summon Israel to faith in a circumstance that bespeaks doubt, timidity, and fear" (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 282).

⁹⁴ It is also missing in the introductory section (34:1-35:10) of the second volume, which signifies the great reversal from judgment (chapter 34) to restoration (chapter 35). As such, there is no role played by the theme of law/instruction in this bridge section.

⁹⁵ The repeated statement "You are my witnesses" (43:10, 12; 44:8) signifies the mission of the redeemed Israel whereby all the families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham when she is set aright (41:8; 51:2); see Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 32-3.

⁹⁶ Cf. 24:5 on the universality of YHWH's instruction.

⁹⁷ Clifford, "Isaiah, Book of," 87.

takes up a role throughout the book. We should, however, note that the only judgment found in section 45:1-55:13 is one against Babylon in 47:1-15, which, at the same time, implies salvation for the remnant of Israel. Also, in section 56:1-62:12, judgment is only briefly, yet forcefully, mentioned in 59:17b-18 where YHWH, projected in the image of a “Divine Warrior,” wreaks vengeance on all his enemies. In Childs’ reckoning, “the emphasis of v. 18 on the divine rules governing his actions [of vengeance] offers a purposeful transition to his future execution of judgment against all forms of evil,”⁹⁸ a topic which is further developed in the last section of the book (63:1-66:24).

Despite not being as prominent as the themes of judgment and salvation in the two volumes of the book, the theme of remnant has a continuous run recurring in every section of the thematic profile, suggesting that the goal of a remnant is set forthright from the beginning till the end of the book. In other words, the development of a holy remnant, being able to see YHWH’s glory and hear his voice through a process of purification in judgment and salvation, is key to the message of the book.⁹⁹ Next, moving to the theme of glory in the thematic profile, we find that it is not directly conveyed in sections 13:1-23:18 in the first volume and 45:1-55:13 in the second. While it should not be a surprise that we do not see YHWH’s glory explicitly mentioned in the former when he is hiding his face in

⁹⁸ Childs, *Isaiah*, 489.

⁹⁹ In judgment, the promise of a remnant offers hope, and in salvation, the realization of a remnant fulfills this hope. Thus, the theme of remnant has an overarching effect on supporting these two predominant yet dialectic themes in the book, linking together their respective oracles in demonstrating the holy character of YHWH. It is in this light that we can see why Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, 90-92, regards the remnant as holy, paradoxical, and dialectical feature in Isaiah’s doctrine of holiness.

judgment, perhaps we should wonder why it is the same in the latter when YHWH is revealing himself in salvation. At any rate, the reason is simple because “all flesh shall see it together” (40:5) through the remnant, as YHWH’s glory is bound up with the remnant and his salvific acts in the development of the book from chapters 45ff. This close connection is so much so that we can observe the theme of glory woven with the theme of remnant in 58:8-14 and with both the themes of remnant and salvation in 60:1-22 from the thematic profile.¹⁰⁰ As such, the two questions previously raised, and repeated here – “how can *this* (unclean) Israel become *that* (holy) Israel? How can a senseless, rebellious, arrogant, unjust people ever become a holy, submissive bearer of God’s revelation (glory) to the world?”¹⁰¹ – are addressed in 45:1-55:13 and 56:1-62:12 where we find the answers to these questions through the faithful remnant bearing this striking change.¹⁰² Last is the theme of salvation which, like that of remnant, is recurrent in every section of the thematic profile. On the one hand, its predominance in the second volume is unquestionable as it works in concert with the theme of

¹⁰⁰ A case in point is the Servant of YHWH who reveals and reflects his glory in these sections, and whose passages are classified under the theme of remnant in the thematic profile. For instance, the Servant is “a light for the nations” (49:7), and is able “to sustain with a word those who are weary” (50:4); even “kings shall shut their mouths because of him” (52:15). Then, in 60:1-2, YHWH addresses Zion where the remnant of Israel inhabits, saying “arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. [...] the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.” This Israel is later referred to as YHWH’s servants (65:8-9, 13-15), the ones who follow the footsteps of his Servant. See Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 129-30, for a discussion of the servants, who are YHWH’s redeemed people brought back to live in the new Zion.

¹⁰¹ Oswalt, “Judgment and Hope,” 195.

¹⁰² Following the questions he posed, Oswalt writes, “When the nation of unclean lips has undergone the experience of the man of unclean lips, then the nation will be empowered to bear a message to the world as the man was empowered to bear a message to the nation. This is why chap. 6 occupies the place in the book it does, I believe” (ibid.). Both the prophet Isaiah and the remnant have undergone an experience of purification through burning though their processes are radically different in substance. For the remnant, a process of judgment is purposefully the means by which they are purified to bear the striking change as seen in 45:1-55:13 and 56:1-62:12.

remnant. On the other hand, its role in the first volume is surprisingly noticeable, as seen from passages concerning salvation in this part of the book, signposting not only its forthcoming but also that in judgment to sins, we can still find the hope of salvation from sins.¹⁰³

3.4 A Theological Exposition of the Tensions and Their Resolution in the Book of Isaiah

As discussed in the previous chapter, two tensions can be observed in the strained relationship between YHWH and Israel from Isaiah 6: one arises from the conflict in character between YHWH's holiness and Israel's uncleanness, and the other, consequential to the conflict, from the dilemma in outcome between YHWH's rejection of Israel and her glimmer of hope only grounded in him.¹⁰⁴ The whole book of Isaiah is also permeated by this type of tensions at various points that we can perceive from the thematic profile. Before charging ahead to explicate this claim, perhaps a little recapitulation of what we have learned hitherto is warranted as a helpful pause. From our exegesis on Isaiah 6, YHWH's holiness is outwardly manifested by the glory of his presence over all the earth. Yet, Israel's uncleanness, on account of her shameless lack of justice and

¹⁰³ See Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 31, for a discussion of judgment to sins and salvation from sins as he juxtaposes these two main themes in the book. Specifically, despite judgment to sins in the first volume, we can still find salvation from sins, for example, in these passages: justice and righteousness will be restored in Zion (1:26-27), praises will go out from Mount Zion to all the peoples (12:1-6), the enemies of Israel will worship YHWH together with her (19:16-25), death will be swallowed forever (25:1-9) and YHWH's people will live in perfect peace (26:1-15), and finally a foretaste of salvation is intensified for those who wait upon YHWH in judgment as salvation is drawing near (29:19-21; 30:18-26; 31:4-7; 32:15-33:6; 33:21-24). In a similar way, Anderson remarks that "God's saving purpose is operative through the judgment, in order that there may appear a new Jerusalem, a new humanity, a new creation" (Anderson, "The Holy One of Israel," 19).

¹⁰⁴ Refer to the previous chapter, especially section 2.4 of this thesis.

righteousness, is a blatant defilement of his holiness. This conflict is seen plainly by her indictments under the law from YHWH's covenantal perspective. Consequently, in rejection of Israel's uncleanness, YHWH is compelled to withdraw his glory by hiding his presence from her, thereby making her vulnerable to attacks from all fronts that brings her judgment in being consumed by sins.¹⁰⁵ Yet, a glimmer of hope still exists from judgment that will ultimately produce "a seed of holiness," a remnant that will sprout on the land once they lived and prospered. This outcome creates a disheartening dilemma from Israel's perspective,¹⁰⁶ a conundrum that is extremely hard to grapple with, for she must ponder the meaning of a scourging judgment and embrace a hope of trust that good will eventually emerge paradoxically from affliction in YHWH's plan for her, his covenantal people.¹⁰⁷ With this recap, we are now ready to look at the thematic profile section by section and discuss the conflict and dilemma that interplay between themes, and how the thematic development unfolds into their resolution.

The introduction 1:1-2:4 touches on every main theme that the book intends to convey although this section has put more weight on conflict due to Israel's morally unclean behaviour as charged in 1:2-6, 10-23, as well as on

¹⁰⁵ See section 2.3 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ This is equally true from the prophet Isaiah's perspective when he lamented "Until when, O Lord?" (6:11).

¹⁰⁷ A trust that is reflected by the prophet Isaiah in, for example, 8:17 as previously discussed.

judgment leading to her ruins and desolation in 1:7-8, 24-25, 28-31.¹⁰⁸ What is striking, however, is in between the series of indictment and sentencing, there are discontinuities in the text filled with a message of hope and rejuvenation in the future: a hope that is seen in the promise of a remnant by YHWH's mercy to Israel (1:9), and a rejuvenation that will see justice and righteousness restored through redemption in Zion (1:26-27). For Zion will be lifted up in YHWH's glory and be inhabited by those who walk by the law/instruction of YHWH from all nations (2:2-4).¹⁰⁹ Scattered at various places in the introduction is, therefore, a salvific message amidst a forceful indictment. It is almost inconceivable to the reader as to how it is possible to connect the dots between two dramatic outcomes so antithetical to each other.¹¹⁰

Following the introduction, the next major section in 2:5-12:6 is laden with announcements of judgment against Israel (2:9-4:1; 5:1-30; 6:11-13a; 7:18-8:22; 9:8-21; 10:1-4, 22-34), particularly in a series of "woe" oracles and in a refrain.¹¹¹ The archenemy of Israel at the prophet Isaiah's time, the arrogant

¹⁰⁸ See Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 55, 127, and 152 respectively for scholarly references to seeing 1:7-8, 24-25, 28-31 as individual units on the announcement of judgment, purportedly added as a result of redactional expansion.

¹⁰⁹ The change of tone from judgment to hope for the future in 1:9, 26-27 is noted by Williamson in his commentary (*ibid.*, 54, 129-31), where arguments regarding their origins as written by the first author or added later by redaction are discussed. In addition, 2:2-4 "have clearly been given a prominent setting in the book as a whole, [...] a vision of the ideal Zion as the center of God's peace-promoting rule of the whole earth" (*ibid.*, 172).

¹¹⁰ Apparently, judgment is allegedly the means to connect the dots as it is portrayed as a purification process in 1:25, by which all the impurities of Israel will be smelted away.

¹¹¹ A series of הוי ("woe") oracles begins in 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22 respectively, which is picked up again at 10:1, 5, though the woe in 10:5 is reserved for Assyria. A couple of אוי ("woe") can also be found at 3:9, 11, not counting the one that the prophet Isaiah mourned for himself in 6:5. The refrain "for all this his anger has not turned away..." is repeated at 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4. Apparently, chapters 6-8 seem to be an interruption to the continuity of the "woe" oracles

Assyria, is not exempted from her share of woe (10:5-19) in the picture. In comparison, charges brought against Israel under the law are relatively short and general (2:5-8; 6:8-10), but one case in point, a historical narrative concerning King Ahaz in 7:1-17, is nevertheless decisive enough to prove that Israel can neither see nor hear the law because of the hardness of heart. Amidst a chain of doom speeches forewarning YHWH's withdrawal of his holy presence before an unclean Israel,¹¹² it is baffling to see a beam of light shone at times into this picture as if dawn were about to break over the horizon. First, the theme of remnant is picked up from the introduction and developed in 4:2-4; the survivors will be called holy as they live in YHWH's glorious canopy (4:5-6).¹¹³ Second, a great light is portrayed as breaking through the darkness revealing the rule of a righteous king whose governance manifests YHWH's glory on the earth (9:1-7). Third, more about the survivors is disclosed in 10:20-21; 11:1-16: they are the remnant dispersed all over the place, but they will return to YHWH at his call and leading; one among them, who is called the stock (עֵצ) of Jesse,¹¹⁴ will rise up to judge and to bring perfect peace to the earth.¹¹⁵ Fourth, salvation is explicitly

and refrain, an observation that serves as a basis for the *Memoir* hypothesis previously mentioned; see Childs, *Isaiah*, 42-44.

¹¹² Cf. 8:17.

¹¹³ The thematic development does not imply that 4:2-6 was written at the same time by the same author as the introduction, but whoever did it did so consciously with what precedes it; see Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 305.

¹¹⁴ Cf. 11:1. It is clearly connected to the root (עֵצ) of Jesse in 11:10. See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 670-72, also 642-46, on arguments of this connection and how they differ.

¹¹⁵ This figure is a king whose ancestry is rooted from King David, the line of Jesse, though he is compared to a shoot sprouting from the roots of Jesse pointing to, apparently, a felled tree like the imagery we have seen from 6:13, hence my connection of him to the theme of remnant in both 11:1-5, 10-16. As Williamson notes, "The present text does not bewail the sad state of the Davidic dynasty, on the contrary, in spite of hardships, now and then it will remain in blossom, and the divine proof in the immediate predicament is a fresh shoot on the dynastic tree grown forth of the primeval cutting" (ibid., 643).

called out at the end in 12:1-6 to pronounce the triumph of light over darkness. At any rate, a disheartened fact is: the terrifying judgment announced in this section has yet to come in full, in spite of an exultant future that, no matter how superb it is, still falls out of line with the present reality.

The next section comprising of chapters 13-23 is undisputedly a collection of judgment oracles directed against foreign nations although chapters 17:4-11 and 22:1-25 are out of place in this regard for they are concerned with Israel herself.¹¹⁶ Perhaps the question is not why they are out-of-place but why the sudden shift from Israel to the foreign nations, Israel's foes and oppressors though they might be political allies at times. The fact that the collection of judgments begins with an enigmatic reference to Babylon in 13:1-22, and towards the end has another in 21:1-10, may shed a hint that the doom of Babylon, which seemingly brackets the collection, is important to the thematic concern of the book in conjunction with the fall of other political entities.¹¹⁷ Amidst the waves of national conflicts, betrayals, and disasters that keep coming one after another, however, hope will be found in and flown from Israel when we look at 14:1-2, 32; 16:1-5. That is, the remnant of Israel will be restored and be joined by foreigners

¹¹⁶ Some, e.g. Schultz, "Isaiah, Book of," 339, sees that chapters 13-23 alludes to the 8th B.C.E. political development whereas other, e.g. Clements believes, "What we see to be the case in regard to the Babylonian prophecies (13-14) is, in a larger and more complex fashion, true of the book as a whole. Where these two chapters reflect Israel's fortunes at the hands of the neo-Babylonian empire, the book as a whole covers the wider political fortunes of Israel from the eighth to the fifth centuries B.C." (Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," 95-6).

¹¹⁷ Clifford, "Isaiah, Book of," 78, discusses several reasons of Babylon's prominent role in this section although the threat of the Babylon in the prophet Isaiah's days was nowhere near that of Assyria. Nonetheless, in light of the plot of the whole book, the doom of Babylon is paramount to the connection between Judgment and salvation whereby the remnant will be able to return home from exile.

taking refuge in the house of David justly governed by the law. As if this hope were not startling enough, the resolution that consummates tacitly in the revelation of YHWH's glory is pushed even further in 18:7; 19:16-25; 23:17-18 where there are abrupt shifts from preceding texts, all pointing to the blessings of YHWH's salvation which will flow out of Zion, his dwelling place, to Israel's foes. Particularly confounding is the portrayal of the Assyrians and Egyptians who are enlisted as YHWH's people in the same rank as the house of Israel.¹¹⁸ As boldly written as such, one will need to accept this enigma with faith, especially that good will come out of evil even for one's adversaries in YHWH's plan, which will be fulfilled in an indefinite timeframe marked as בְּעֵת ("at that time," 18:7) or בַּיּוֹם ("in that day," 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24).¹¹⁹

Then it comes the so-called Isaianic Apocalypse in chapters 24-27 where no dateable historical allusion is stated.¹²⁰ If the oracles in the previous section are illustrative of YHWH's purpose in bringing salvation to individual nations

¹¹⁸ After the judgment in 19:1-15, the Egyptians enigmatically begin to incline to YHWH when they recognize "the purpose that the Lord of hosts has purposed against them" (v. 17). As Brueggemann notes, "The oracle is theologically discerning. First there is *cry/deliver* (v. 20), and only then *know/worship/pay vows* (v. 21). [...] That is precisely the sequence in the Exodus narrative concerning Israel: Israel 'cried out' (Exod. 2:23-25) and only later 'believed' (4:31). [...] The salvific act precedes acknowledgment" (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 163). While I applaud Brueggemann's observation from the Exodus text, I do not agree that acknowledgment comes after salvation even in this case, for the recognition of YHWH's purpose in v. 17, no matter how poor it is, is already a sign of acknowledgment to YHWH.

¹¹⁹ However, the future is firmly predicted as מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה ("at the end of seventy years") in 23:17. Various reasons are, for example, proposed by Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 435-46. There is no clear consensus to the answer though. Perhaps Brueggemann is right in pointing out that the fortunes of Tyre are bound up with those of Israel in this case, as he writes, "the profits [of Tyre] will be 'holy to Yahweh' [...] The acknowledgment of Yahweh is not simply a theological or a liturgical one; it is a pragmatic, political one whereby adherents to Yahweh, presumably Jews after the Exile [in seventy years], will enjoy the produce of the world system" (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 186-87).

¹²⁰ See, for example, Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," 134, for a general reference to this term.

through judgment, then we can anticipate the world judgment in this section to bring a new chapter of YHWH's salvific acts after the universal punishment.¹²¹ In this light, we can construe that the decisive turn to the theme of salvation in 25:1-9; 26:1-15 from preceding passages of judgment is not contingent but intentional in making this point.¹²² The theme of remnant in 26:16-19 picks up the imagery of pregnant women who cry out in pangs, akin to the Egyptians who are like women trembling with fear in 19:16. However, the difference here is that deliverance has yet to come to save the remnant of Israel while they are awaiting judgment to come upon their oppressors.¹²³ In somber despair, an unyielding hope lives on: YHWH will raise up the dead bodies from the earth (26:19), an astounding belief that Israel can count on, without which all hope will be suffocated.¹²⁴ The whole reason of the world judgment is laid bare in chapter 27 that it is for the purpose of delivering the remnant of Israel (27:6-9, 12-13). Nevertheless, it is also clear that judgment must begin with the house of Israel so that her own guilt will be atoned for (27:9), a guilt "which had weighted [her] down like a heavy curse during all these past centuries and which had not allowed [her] to live in freedom and prosperity as the people of God."¹²⁵

¹²¹ See especially Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 332, for a discussion of the purpose of this final and universal judgment.

¹²² Perhaps, a most striking promise is in 25:8 where YHWH's life-giving power is strong enough even to "swallow up death forever." Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 532-33, offers several possible interpretation to this line, and believes that an understanding of the defeat of any life-threatening forces through YHWH's salvation will suffice.

¹²³ As Wildberger labels in his commentary, the heading of 26:16-18 is "The Lament: Israel's Condition is Hopeless" (ibid., 565).

¹²⁴ Thus, 26:16-18 is ended with an oracle of salvation in v. 19 (ibid., 567).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 595. Evans sees the whole book resonate with this point when he writes, "Together with First Isaiah, Second and Third Isaiah are telling the people of God that redemption

The last section of the first volume in chapters 28-33 returns to a discourse on all the core themes, like the first section in 2:5-12:6, as far as our thematic profile is concerned. We see new indictments against Israel in 28:7-10, 14-15; 29:9-16; 30:1-11 that culminate in a long list of judgment oracles throughout the section, many prefixed by the same interjection marker הוי (“woe”) as they are before.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, two among the list are against Assyria (30:27-33; 31:8-9), and one against all the nations which are gathering to attack Mount Zion (29:5-8), all in a rhetoric affirming that as YHWH’s tools, those who are raging against Israel have been set a limit on his terms and for his purpose, and they will be restrained by him.¹²⁷ To that end, the theme of remnant whose subject is at the center of tension between judgment and salvation – the two sides of YHWH’s righteousness – finishes off the first volume with a high note pointing to resolution of the tension.¹²⁸ In an amazing development seeing YHWH pedagogically explaining his plan to the remnant (28:5-6, 23-29; 29:22-24; 33:13-16),¹²⁹ a time is foreseen in 29:17-18; 32:1-8; 33:17-20 when they will see the

actually began with the judgment of God’s people” (Evans, “On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah,” 131).

¹²⁶ Thus, the woe-oracles here seem to form a continuum with the first section, notwithstanding the gap in chapters 13-27. While the “woe” may be “typical” in expressing the prophet’s lamentation as Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 475, states, it is unlikely to be coincidental, given that chapters 13-27 are purportedly inserted by a later redaction; see Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 1-2, 445-47.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 232, on this argument.

¹²⁸ Israel experiences this tension because YHWH’s righteousness embraces both judgment (מִשְׁפָּט, justice for punishing the sinners) and salvation (שִׁוּעָה, help for delivering the sinners), each antithetical to the other when she is the subject of both YHWH’s actions. These two aspects are not brought together until 56:1ff; see also Oswalt, “Righteousness in Isaiah,” 59-72.

¹²⁹ A case in point is 28:23-29 where a parable is used to explain the plan of YHWH. After painstaking walking through different possible interpretations to this passage, Wildberger ends his commentary with a note that “Isaiah tries to use this parable to show [to the remnant of his time] that such a decision [that God makes for them] is not random but rather has good

glory of YHWH for their blindness and deafness are healed.¹³⁰ On account of the healing, they will experience the salvation of YHWH, as depicted in 29:19-21; 30:18-26; 31:4-7; 32:15-33:6; 33:21-24.¹³¹ To reinforce the healing of the remnant, the closing of this section, and the first volume, ends with the verse: “And no inhabitant will say, ‘I am sick’; the people who dwell there [Zion] will be forgiven their iniquity” (33:24). Not only is this a sharp contrast with the sickness of Israel at the beginning (cf. 1:5; “the whole head is sick”), but more profoundly, it is also a reflection of Isaiah’s own experience of salvation from his woe in 6:5-7.¹³²

On the one hand, as far as our concern with the thematic profile has gone hitherto, it would have been quite an all-round prophetic message that could be adumbrated by chapter 6, had the book of Isaiah ended with the first volume.¹³³ On the other hand, although the first volume is scattered with promises of hope for Israel, revealed by the themes of remnant, glory, and salvation as they unfold and interplay, there is still a lack of “an incarnational and located quality [...] in

grounds” (Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39, A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002], 56).

¹³⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, the hardness of Israel’s heart has prevented her from seeing and hearing. The healing implies that the hardness will be removed, but more importantly, it means that the remnant will turn to YHWH and so be healed (6:10b).

¹³¹ Unlike before, the theme of salvation in this section renders many details of YHWH’s corresponding acts in concrete terms. Perhaps, 33:22, in a threefold declaration of allegiance, summarizes what the remnant can anticipate: “For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us.”

¹³² This implication is significant for my thesis stands on the ground that the message of Isaiah 6 has an overarching bearing to the core themes of the book.

¹³³ Perhaps the observation that the book of Isaiah is purportedly comprised of two volumes may suggest that an ancient manuscript of each volume, nonextant now, could have been read in its own right by readers at an much earlier time; see Evans, “On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah,” 132, on arguments leading to this conjecture, especially one that the IQIsaiah^a scroll in the Qumran text was made by copying from two separate and distinct manuscripts.

terms of the social, political, economic, and international realities of the day”¹³⁴ with these themes, unlike the theme of judgment which is seasoned with references alluded to particular historical contexts. We will, however, see the opposite in the second volume where the theme of judgment concerning Israel lacks the quality of historical particularities while the theme of salvation does not lack this quality. As such, the imminence of judgment in the first volume is replaced by the imminence of salvation in the second. In light of this proposition, the pronouncements in the second volume will also shift gears from anticipation to fulfillment of the prophetic messages disclosed in the first, bringing us from afar to up-close as if events were unfolding before our eyes.¹³⁵

The opening section of the second volume begins with YHWH summoning an audience (34:1) in the same way as its counterpart (1:2). Unlike the previous plea to his case against Israel before a jury, the heaven and earth, YHWH wastes no time but bluntly sentences a stern judgment to the nations in chapter 34, signaling a clear and decisive measure in the making to save Israel from her enemies.¹³⁶ Immediately, we see a reversal of her fortune in chapter 35 where YHWH begins to address the remnant in a conciliatory voice in 35:4, marking the first use of the imperative אַל־תִּירָא (‘‘fear not’’) which we will continue to see repeatedly in a series of speeches to the remnant.¹³⁷ They will see

¹³⁴ Raabe, ‘‘Look to the Holy One of Israel,’’ 343.

¹³⁵ See, in particular, the discussion of ‘‘former things’’ and ‘‘new things’’ regarding the intricate dependency of the Second and Third Isaiah on the First in Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 328-30.

¹³⁶ See Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 27, and contrast it with Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 329.

¹³⁷ The imperative also appears as אַל־תִּירָא or אַל־תִּירָאִי, the two 2nd person singular forms of אָרָא; together it can be found at 35:4 (2mp); 40:9 (2fs); 41:10 (2ms), 13 (2ms), 14 (2fs); 43:1

the glory of YHWH at a time they least expected, analogous to seeing an imagery full of vibrant life in the wilderness (35:1-2, 5-7), an imagery apparently picked up from the last section of the first volume in 32:15 that betokens the restoration of justice and righteousness in the land (cf. 32:16).¹³⁸ There will be a “Way of Holiness” for salvation of Israel, prepared for the redeemed to return to Zion from exile, and any threats that have previously hurt them will be eliminated (35:8-10).¹³⁹ For the unclean will not pass over this highway (v. 8), indicating that the judgment which the remnant went through effectuated a purification to smelt away the unclean from Israel. In these two chapters, the introduction provides a bird’s eye view into the second volume: how the prophetic message in the first volume will be fulfilled through judgment and salvation.

The next section 36:1-44:28 of the second volume starts with a historical narrative (36:1-39:8) followed by a prophetic encounter with YHWH (40:1-31) and then a discourse of exhortation and “fear-not” oracles (41:1-44:28). This arrangement bears a noticeable reversal from its counterpart (2:5-12:6), arguably

(2ms), 5 (2ms); 44:2 (2ms), 8 (2mp); 51:7 (2mp); 54:4 (2fs). The term in 44:8 is אֶל־תִּרְהוּ which is purportedly from the root תִּרְהַ, a hapax legomenon in the Old Testament that may probably be a primitive derivative of תִּרְ among other possibilities; see John Goldingay, and David Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 Volume I*, The International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006), 341-42.

¹³⁸ This is not a coincidence but an indicator that while the second volume charts its own course in new development, it does not stop reflecting upon the first from the very beginning. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 275, probes the intertextual link further to include 29:17; 30:23-25; 32:15. Instead of seeing the link’s connection to 32:16, he leaves an equivalent impression when he writes that “such restoration exhibits Yahweh’s glory, Yahweh’s impressive capacity for regal governance.”

¹³⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 353, pictures the return as a procession to the temple where only the clean are allowed to enter.

signaling that things are turning around after hitting rock bottom.¹⁴⁰ As the events with King Hezekiah in chapters 36-39 were briefed earlier, we will focus on their significances only as evidenced by the thematic profile. First, the fatal consequence of King Sennacherib and the Assyrian army (37:36-38) is a judgment based on his own despicable words against the law of YHWH (36:1-22; 37:8-13, 21-29) who is, after all, not only the God of Israel but also the God of all the kingdoms of the earth (37:16), and whose instruction is applicable to them all.¹⁴¹ Second, Hezekiah's prayer in 37:14-20, representing the voice of the remnant whose eyes are now open to see the glory of YHWH, projects a faith that they must hold on to despite facing the immense tension of a gravest situation set before them; otherwise there will be no hope.¹⁴² Third, the Assyrian account exemplifies the themes of remnant (37:1-4, 30-32) and salvation (37:5-7, 33-35) in a concrete historical context,¹⁴³ and this works as a pretext to a greater salvation in the future for the remnant in Babylon, foretold by the prophet in 39:5-

¹⁴⁰ The first major section of the first volume begins with a discourse of admonitions and "woe" oracles (2:5-5:30) which is *interrupted* by Isaiah's Memoir consisting of his prophetic encounter with YHWH (6:1-13) and a historical narrative (7:1-9:7) before returning to the discourse in 10:1-34). The parts of 11:1-12:6 stand outside of our comparison with 36:1-44:28, and so are 4:2-6; 9:1-7 to this matter.

¹⁴¹ Three times the arrogant words of the Assyrian king begin with כֹּה־אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ ("thus says the king", 36:4, 14, 16). Finally, YHWH strikes back with יִשְׁרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("thus says YHWH the God of Israel") in answering Hezekiah's prayer, indicting the prideful actions of the Assyrian king and condemning him to a coming judgment. As Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 425, writes, "The mocking song (37:21-29), directed against an enemy, when taken as a whole, is an announcement of judgment, the reason for which is provided by the arrogance of the king."

¹⁴² Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 292, calls the prayer "a model of faith." As he explains, this faith that transpires hope is grounded in a doxology that the prayer begins with before going into complaint and petition. I may say that without eyes to see the glory of YHWH, there will be no praise to him, no doxology. Clearly, Hezekiah and, by extension, the remnant with him in Jerusalem, have recovered from this blindness.

¹⁴³ As such, a concrete historical reference to the theme of the remnant and their salvation, which is absent in the first volume, is inserted in the second volume, giving it an "incarnational and located quality" as previously discussed; see Raabe, "Look to the Holy One of Israel," 343,

7. Subsequently, the prophetic vision in chapter 40 looks past the judgment – the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people by the Babylonian – while speaking tenderly to the remnant of their imminent emancipation.¹⁴⁴ In this light, chapter 40 presents a reversal in arrangement from chapter 6 as salvation now trumps judgment. Then it comes the exhortation to Israel in 41:21-29; 42:18-25; 43:22-28; 44:9-20 that her folly of trusting in anything but YHWH has all come to nothing and led to her ruin.¹⁴⁵ Yet, YHWH will bring judgment to the nations (41:1-7), which in turn means salvation for her. On this note, the remnant is summoned to fear not (41:8-16; 43:1-15; 44:1-8).¹⁴⁶ Rather they should anticipate with gladness the glory of YHWH (42:10-17; 43:16-21; 44:22-28) which will be revealed from their redemption and restoration (41:17-20).¹⁴⁷ To this end, Cyrus, YHWH's shepherd (רֹעֵה) and messiah (מָשִׁיחַ), will be the means of his salvific work for Israel (44:28; 45:1). Though the appearance of the name Cyrus is

¹⁴⁴ Whether the event pointed to a time in the past or in the future, when chapter 40ff. was written, is a question that inevitably leads to the authorship debate of the book, a topic outside the scope of this thesis.

¹⁴⁵ Central to the argument in the exhortation is that idols are no gods, which have been proved to be of no help at all to Israel though she was too eager to trust in them formerly because of her blindness. YHWH establishes his case by directly confrontating the false gods (41:21-29), pinpointing the blindness and deafness of Israel (42:18-25), asserting her obstinacy in sinning (43:22-28), and mocking the idol-makers (44:9-20); see Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55 Volume I*, 191-92, 253-57, 304-6, 336.

¹⁴⁶ Goldingay, *ibid.*, 155, notes, “The exhortation not to be afraid is a central feature of the passage (41:8-16),” and so is it in 43:1-15 and 44:1-8; see *ibid.*, 270, 319.

¹⁴⁷ The thematic profile in its table form offers a vantage point to see that the passages on exaltation of YHWH's glory (42:10-17; 43:16-21; 44:22-28) is preceded by one which declares salvation; in this way, the remnant will unmistakably see and understand it as the work of his hand (41:17-20).

peculiar here, it provides a significant clue for construing the historical context of passages in this section and the next.¹⁴⁸

Among the remnant, an enigmatic one emerges in 42:1-9 – the servant of YHWH – who will shoulder a mission to Israel and beyond to the nations, and whose ethics are above reproach. This servant, central to the theme of remnant in section 45:1-55:13 of the thematic profile, recurs in 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12 which, together with the earlier passage, form a series so-called the Servant Songs.¹⁴⁹ Following the line of Cyrus and that of the servant, the message of salvation in this section is two-pronged. One aspect is keyed on YHWH’s messiah. His conquest will bring the remnant back from exile to Zion (45:1-25) through the fall of Babylon (47:1-15),¹⁵⁰ and as such, YHWH’s words formerly pronounced will come through (46:1-13; 48:1-22).¹⁵¹ Another is undergirded by the servant who will restore YHWH’s covenant with the remnant (49:8-18) and

¹⁴⁸ One peculiarity, as Goldingay and Payne point out in their commentary, is that although the name Cyrus of the Persian king is recorded in 44:28; 45:1, “Isaiah 40-66 never names Media/the Medes (contrast 13.17; 21.2; also, e.g., Jer 51.11, 28) or Persia/the Persians (contrast Second Temple writings, Chr, Ezra, Neh, Esther, Daniel, also Ezek 27.10; 38.5);” John Goldingay, and David Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 Volume II*, The International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006), 14-15. Also, see *ibid.*, 15, that the MT use of the word מָשִׁיחַ is “a common middle-eastern description of a king,” and so is מְשִׁיחַ (“one who is anointed”) as discussed in *ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁹ For a helpful summary of the general thrust of the Servant Songs, see Carol J. Dempsey, *Isaiah: God’s Poet of Light* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2009), 147. In short, Dempsey sees that the servant whose power rests in YHWH’s Torah has a mission to bear witness to him globally; the mission will be activated in due time, for which the servant will suffer and be rejected, but his hope is in and with YHWH; as such, the servant embodies the presence of YHWH among his people in both glory and suffering, like light shining into darkness that points the way to YHWH.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 261-99, 315-37, for the discussions of 45:1-25 and 47:1-15 respectively.

¹⁵¹ However, the usage of the word רֵאשִׁיטוֹת (“former things”) in 46:9 only “suggests it denotes events that have happened in accordance with Yhwh’s word. [...] we cannot be precise as to whether ‘former events of old’ are creation, Israel’s history as a whole, the exodus, the fall of Assyria or of Jerusalem, or the first victories of Cyrus – all as implementations of Yhwh’s word,” *ibid.*, 311. The same applies to the use of this word in 48:3; see *ibid.*, 344-45.

lead them from darkness to light (50:1-3, 10-11).¹⁵² The sign of salvation is, therefore, comprised of two elements: homecoming to Zion and re-establishment of the law in covenantal relationship, conspicuous in the themes of remnant and salvation in this section. After all, what good would the homecoming be if YHWH did not return to Zion with the remnant as if their relationship were still severed?¹⁵³ At any rate, the remnant is “a seed of holiness in the land” (6:13b) only if YHWH returns with them. The good news is: YHWH’s return to Zion is a resounding yes, and so should the remnant’s be (52:7-12).

The work of Cyrus the messiah was a one-time enterprise by which he inadvertently accomplished YHWH’s purpose in setting the remnant free to go home (cf. 45:4-5);¹⁵⁴ on the contrary, the work of the servant is ongoing and intentional in making the remnant righteous even to the point of self-sacrifice (cf. 53:7-11). Homecoming to Zion and re-establishment of the law are, after all, matters on two different tangents. We have known this too well from the

¹⁵² The text in 49:8 that reads וְאֶתְּנֶנְךָ לְבְרִית עִם (“and I will give you as a covenant to the people”) transpires that the servant is a legal binding between YHWH and the people. Friesen believes that a language of Exodus is used to describe this covenant as the following verses in 49:9-11 speaks of the servant effectuating the release of prisoners and the emancipation of those in darkness that resembles the former Exodus; see Ivan Friesen, *Isaiah*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 308. He also thinks that the people in this covenant include both Israel and the nations for YHWH appoints the servant as a light for the nations earlier in 49:6. At any rate, the phrase וְאֶתְּנֶנְךָ לְבְרִית עִם also appears in 42:6, right after which the servant is said to be a light for the nations.

¹⁵³ This question is prompted by the situation in Exod. 33 where YHWH refused to go with the Israelites to the Promised Land after they sinned against him by building the Golden Calf. In Moses’ intercession, he would rather not go if YHWH did not go with them. After all, without the presence of YHWH, there would be no rest and no grace from him, bespeaking only lawlessness and chaos.

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of Cyrus’s historical decree, recorded in a document commonly called the Cyrus Cylinder, that brought forth the exiles’ emancipation, see Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 286-88. This decree “concerning Cyrus and his foreign policy, however, calls into question any idea that Cyrus was acting with entirely selfless motivation or with any special interest in Judah or its God,” *ibid.*, 287.

ancestors of the remnant as they were prone to breaking the covenant time and time again after entering the Promised Land.¹⁵⁵ This precariousness is evidential in the thematic profile when we turn to the theme of law in section 56:1-62:12, and see an ominous sign revealed in a series of admonition (56:9-12; 57:3-13; 58:1-5; 59:1-15a) even though they are presented alternately with speeches of exhortation (56:1-8; 57:1-2; 58:6-7; 59:21; 61:1-4) and amidst a robust development in the theme of salvation that bespeaks grace and mercy to all turning to YHWH with a contrite heart (57:14-21; 58:8-14; 59:15b-20; 60:10-22; 61:5-7; 61:10-62:12).¹⁵⁶ With that said, let me recap the claim with which we started our discussion from Isaiah 6: a tension that arises from the conflict in character between YHWH's holiness and Israel's uncleanness, and the other, consequential to the conflict, from the dilemma in outcome between YHWH's judgment and her hope of salvation by him. We have seen the first tension develop and grow into the second tension in the first volume, and how both

¹⁵⁵ In 57:3-4, those being addressed are called "offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman" among other defamatory name callings, implicating their ancestors as an unfaithful wife in breaking her covenant with YHWH the husband, a metaphor also used by Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; see John Kessler's excursus of Israel as YHWH's unfaithful spouse in *Old Testament Theology: Divine Call and Human Response* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 233-44.

¹⁵⁶ While this line of summary is too condensed for a section so rich, it highlights a good example of what this thematic profile can reveal upon looking at the arrangement of the respective passages that fall in the categories of law – admonition and exhortation – and salvation. A challenge of this section is, as many commentators grapple with, a lack of specific references to a particular context for these passages, without which an immediate question arise: who are those receiving the admonitions which stand as a striking derivation from the trend of exhortation hitherto since chapter 40? For example, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 475, suggests that the people admonished in 57:3-13 may not be the returnees from exile but those who had stayed in Judah and kept following the abominations condemned in chapters 1-12. This is, nevertheless, only a conjecture as nothing in the context can confirm it. Another example can be observed from a positive image of foreigners and eunuchs keeping the Sabbath while holding fast the covenant (56:1-8) versus a negative one of YHWH's people fasting but breaking the covenant (58:1-5). Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 165, perceives this, in the emerging Judaism after their return to Jerusalem, as an example of disputation spoken from one advocacy against the others whose voices must be reconstructed by imagination from other books of the Old Testament (e.g. Haggai, Zechariah, Ezekiel).

tensions seem to have been resolved before the current section in the second volume. However, in light of the admonitions in this section, a question is brewing: will the same purification process of judgment and salvation repeat itself in the life of the returnees after they have been back to their land?¹⁵⁷

The last section 63:1-66:24 of the second volume, also the conclusion of the book, is unequivocal in its answer to the question as we shall see. Similar to how the second volume is introduced in chapter 34, it begins with a recount of YHWH's vengeance on the peoples who were Israel's enemies (63:1-6) epitomized by Edom and Bozrah,¹⁵⁸ then followed by his people singing praises to him for their salvation from afflictions (63:7-9).¹⁵⁹ This, however, abruptly changes to a condemnation of their rebellious behaviour (63:10), and then bounces back to a remembrance of salvation in Exodus (63:11-14), but only to see their current circumstances plunge into a prayer for mercy as a result of judgment (63:15-64:12).¹⁶⁰ In light of a purported context that the remnant has returned to their land, a profound implication that we may draw from this apparent judgment-

¹⁵⁷ Undoubtedly, we know the answer when we look back into the history of Israel. The point is, however, we should not answer the question ourselves, or worse read our answer into the text when we presuppose a historical setting for chapters 56-66 that the text never explicitly informs us. Rather, we should let the text speak for itself as we read on. One thing is for sure: everything is done purposefully in YHWH's perfect plan.

¹⁵⁸ See, for instance, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 521-22. Like chapter 34, there are no specific references to a particular context other than Edom and Bozrah in this passage. While both call the judgment "a day of vengeance" (34:8; 63:4), the parallel term "a year of recompense" formerly used has become "a year of my redeemed."

¹⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 523-37, for a commentary on the section 63:7-64:12.

¹⁶⁰ This short summary of 63:1-64:12 is another good example of what the thematic profile can show at a glance that there is a pattern of alternating themes of judgment and salvation in the passage. At a finer level, though through a slightly different lens, Goldingay, *ibid.*, 523, sees that in appealing for YHWH's salvation from yet another judgment, 63:7-64:12 "does suggest an alternating between confrontation (63:7-14, 17-19; 64:5-7) and plea (63:15-16; 64:1-4, 8-12), but elements of confession, questioning, prayer, appeal, and accusation interweave and repeat without forming a consistent pattern."

salvation cycle is that physical deliverance alone is not in and of itself a solution to effectuate a permanent change to one's rebellious disposition in drifting away from the law and the covenant.¹⁶¹ As such, for those who do not hold on to the covenant already restored by the *proto-servant* in the Servant Songs (cf. 49:8-18), the cycle is, sadly, bound to repeat itself. However, the section does not end here. In condemning those who do not walk by the law to judgment (65:1-7, 11-12), YHWH emphatically states his purpose that they will not be completely destroyed for his servants' sake (65:8-10).¹⁶² These servants will emerge from the judgment-salvation cycle to be YHWH's beloved (65:13-16), allegedly because they are made righteous in following the footsteps of the proto-servant.¹⁶³ They are truly the chosen of YHWH, not only in name but also in substance, deemed worthy of dwelling in the renewed Jerusalem (65:17-25).¹⁶⁴ Then the final chapter concludes

¹⁶¹ In reality, we can perhaps sense the difficulties and challenges that might have swayed the remnant from Webb's description of their circumstances in *The Message of Isaiah*, 219-20: "It was a time of high expectations and immense difficulties. There was tension between the returnees and those, including foreigners, who had been living in the area during their absence. [...] Their numbers and resources were limited, and neighbouring groups viewed them with suspicion or outright hostility. [...] [This] is a time when tensions develop and some fall away, and when those who do remain faithful are not always sure what is the right thing to do."

¹⁶² This is an answer to his people's plea in 63:17, which is made "for your servants' sake." So YHWH says in 65:8 that he will do "for my servants' sake," and the following verse (v. 9) describes the servants as YHWH's chosen.

¹⁶³ In 65:13-16, the blissfulness of the servants is set in stark contrast to the doom and gloom of those who turn their back on YHWH (v. 11-12) in spite of his earnest call to repent. See Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 540-41, for a discussion of 65:8-16 about these two types of people living in the same community. In light of this comparison, we can plausibly construe that the servants are simply those who respond to YHWH's call for repentance when they are judged. There are, however, no direct connections of the "servants" in 65:13-16, or in chapters 56-66, to the "servant" in the Servant Songs. In fact, the word *עֲבָדִים* ("servant") only appears in plural in 56-66, but its occurrence in 40-55 is only in singular, except the last one in 54:17 which is plural and appears at the end of a passage following the last Servant Song (52:13-53:12). This passage describes YHWH's covenant with those who are "the heritage of the servants of YHWH" (54:17), apparently because they follow the footsteps of the proto-servant whose suffering and righteousness makes them right (53:11). In this way, the "servants" in 54:17 sets a parameter for the meaning of the "servants" in 56-66.

¹⁶⁴ Goldingay, *ibid.*, 541-44, speaks of the use of a mythical language in 65:17-25 to symbolize a radical transformation on earth as a new creation (re-creation) that is also mirrored in

YHWH's mission disclosed in the book by recapitulating a message similar to what we have discussed in 63-65 but with one critical addition: through the judgment-salvation cycle, his servants will be brought forth from all the nations where the remnant is exiled, and they will dwell and serve in Zion (66:18-23).¹⁶⁵

3.5 Summary

This chapter starts with a discussion on the various roles that Isaiah 6 plays in the framework of the composition of the book. Specifically, we focus on the motif of holiness, intertextual links, and thematic correspondences between Isaiah 6 and its whole. By launching from a message central to the characterization of YHWH's holiness in Isaiah's visionary experience, we put forth a set of themes which are eminent in that message, and whose occurrences are ubiquitous in the book, often signposted by intertextual links to Isaiah 6. The set of themes are law/instruction, judgment, remnant, glory, and salvation; other themes which are related or subordinate to them are put under their umbrella. Together, this set of themes, as arranged side by side in the thematic profile proposed in this chapter, lend us a critical view into the framework of the

heaven, like the two sides of a coin. As such, the servants dwelling there "will see the fulfillment of God's original creation vision, of a full human community of life with God," *ibid.*, 543.

¹⁶⁵ It has been said in 52:10, "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," and again in 61:11b, "the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations." As Roberts discusses in "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," 139-41, YHWH's glorious plan with Zion includes more than the house of Israel but also a universal dimension of all the nations; before this comes to fruition, the nations are YHWH's instrument to bring salvation to Zion through judgment, and the figure of the Suffering Servant has a mission to Israel and the nations. Schultz attempts to highlight the complex relationship between Israel and the nations as follows: "within the canonical book of Isaiah, particular election (of Israel) [...] is presented as the primary – but not exclusive – means of extending a future universal offer of salvation to the nations," Richard L. Schultz, "Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 127.

composition of the book. Through this lens of Isaiah 6, we have a vantage point to characterize the ebb and flow of tensions in the book that are also evidential between YHWH and Israel in Isaiah's visionary experience. In the same way as we see Isaiah's tensions resolved through a purification with a glowing stone when his unclean lips are confronted by YHWH's holiness, we see Israel's tensions with YHWH resolved through a purifying judgment followed by a reversal leading to salvation. The process from judgment to salvation is in and of itself full of dilemma and tension, for Israel under judgment by YHWH must also find her hope resting on him alone. Ultimately, the tensions are resolved in the fruit of a holy remnant whose redemption and return to Zion will manifest his glory. As the themes in the thematic profile interplay, we see an interlocking movement of tensions and their resolution in the book until the end, as presented in the exposition above.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

A Note on the Implications of the Study

The argument of this thesis has been based on a claim that two tensions exist between YHWH and Israel, both of which can be articulated from the prophet's vision in Isaiah 6. We can also see the tensions permeate in the development of the book, as themes foreshadowed by the message of the vision are manifested predominantly in an interplay of law/instruction, judgment, remnant, glory, and salvation throughout the book. Chapter 2 of this thesis explicates the two tensions: one arises from the conflict in character between YHWH's holiness and Israel's uncleanness, and the other from the consequence in outcome between his decisive judgment against her and her hope of salvation from him alone, all noted primarily in the context of Isaiah 6. Chapter 3 extends our contour to the whole book. With the help of a thematic profile created to guide our discourse through the lens of Isaiah 6, we walk through an interlocking movement of the tensions and their anticipated resolution in the book. This pattern of oscillation prevails throughout, bespeaking a resounding purpose in YHWH's mission with Israel that a holy people, being able to behold his glory, will emerge from the purifying judgment, and through salvation, be gathered to him as his beloved in Zion. This purpose is also disclosed tacitly to the prophet in his commissioning to the mission (cf. 6:13b). It is reinforced with majestic and

glorious details towards the end of the book where we see that a holy remnant, whom YHWH calls “my servants,” will come together triumphantly before him in Zion from all the nations. All this will happen in spite of the emergence of a judgment-salvation cycle that seems to jeopardize the mission. After all, the cycle can only be purposive and redemptive in YHWH’s plan.

In this concluding chapter, the implications of the study for our understanding of the epithet קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל (“the Holy One of Israel”),¹ as it is used almost exclusively in the book as a distinctive designation of YHWH, will be briefly developed in two directions.² Both will help us construe the meaning of קדוש (“holy”) in palpable ways as it is experienced by יִשְׂרָאֵל (“Israel”). First, as a relational designation,³ it bespeaks the disposition of the Holy One’s covenant with Israel. Second, as a functional designation,⁴ it evinces the dynamic that constitutes the function of the Holy One’s mission in shaping Israel to be the beloved inhabitants of the new Zion . In either way, the epithet occurs twenty-six times throughout the book to underline YHWH’s determination in accomplishing

¹ Grammatically speaking, the term יִשְׂרָאֵל (“Israel”) is a genitive which provides clarification for the preceding construct term קדוש (“Holy One”); see Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 13-18.

² In the book of Isaiah, the epithet occurs twenty-six times, including one occurrence that reads “the Holy One of Jacob.” Outside the book, it is used only five times in the Old Testament, namely in Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer. 50:29; 51:5. Its occurrence in 2 Kgs. 19:22 is not counted, for the verse is the same as the one in Isa. 37:23, both amidst a text almost identical in the two books.

³ In this case, “Israel,” as a genitive of relationship, holds a relation with the construct term “the Holy One;” see Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 14.

⁴ In this case, “Israel,” as an objective genitive, receives the action implied by the construct term “the Holy One,” see *ibid.*, 13.

his purposive and redemptive plan for Israel.⁵ The exploration in this chapter, incomplete in nature, is meant to be a preliminary to what may be considered in full in a future work.

4.1 “The Holy One of Israel” As a Relational Designation

The epithet, as a relational construct, speaks of a relationship that the Holy One has with Israel, which is undoubtedly grounded on the covenant at Mount Sinai.⁶ We will pursue a further understanding of it based on the contextual implications of the epithet as it appears along with the theme of law/instruction and the theme of remnant in the thematic profile, both of which undergird fundamentals of the relationship. On the one hand, YHWH prescribes the law by which the relationship is defined and governed for all entering into the covenant with him.⁷ On the other hand, the remnant is the group of people who have the ability to receive the instruction, thereby keeping themselves within the bounds of the relationship.⁸ Others who find themselves in the covenant but lack the ability to abide by its terms are admonished and forewarned of divine punishment around the corner.⁹ In light of the significance of the themes of law/instruction and remnant to the relational aspect of the epithet, we will glance over the contextual implications of its occurrences in passages along these two themes respectively.

⁵ The twenty-six occurrences are in 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23 (קדוש יִצְחָק), “the Holy One of Jacob”); 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14.

⁶ Cf. Exod. 19-24.

⁷ See, for examples, Isa. 2:3; 33:22; 51:4.

⁸ See, for examples, Isa. 28:5-6, 23-29; 29:22-24. Note that the theme of remnant is quite often bound up with the glory of YHWH in the second volume (chapters 34-66) of the book, as previously mentioned in the discussion of the thematic profile.

⁹ E.g. Isa. 1:2-8; 28:7-13.

“The Holy One of Israel” makes its first appearance (1:4) at the introductory section of the first volume (chapters 1-33) of the book. It is amidst a passage (1:2-6) which decries utmost estrangement of Israel from the Holy One, although their relationship ought to be as close as children to the father or a herd to the herder.¹⁰ This analogy lays bare a case that Israel has broken off from the terms of the covenant which are prescribed for her own good in the first place. At the closing section of the volume, the second appearance of the epithet (30:11) along with the theme of law/instruction reinforces the same message. Situated in a context (30:1-11) which portrays Israel as stubborn and deceptive children who despise the care of their father, the fact that Israel has firmly turned her back to the counsel of the Holy One is undeniable.¹¹ There are also two appearances of “the Holy One of Israel” in the second volume (chapters 34-66) along with the same theme. The first (37:23) is found at YHWH’s answer (37:21-29) to Hezekiah’s prayer (37:14-20). In the prayer, the king pleads with YHWH that he alone is God, and thus Israel can count on his word of deliverance in spite of the Assyrian beleaguerment. Previously, it is on this crucial point that Sennacherib spoke of the opposite when mocking the remnant in Jerusalem as well as Hezekiah, and by extension the living God. In other words, Sennacherib’s self-elevation usurped the holiness of YHWH, and paved the way for his self-

¹⁰ Wildberger says it well, “This particular meaning of the [epithet] fits very well into the present context; the Holy One of Israel is the God of covenant who is viewed as the kind father who has raised his people; it is this background which underscores the reason why abandoning him is not only unprecedented but also impossible to comprehend,” *Isaiah 1-12*, 25.

¹¹ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 146, for an elaboration of this point.

destruction.¹² The implication of YHWH invoking the epithet in his answer to Hezekiah is profound: Israel, in her unique relationship with the Holy One, will always find his word trustworthy, for he is in control of everything that he has planned (cf. 37:26-29). The second occurrence (48:17) along with the theme of law/instruction in the second volume also echoes the first. It is located in a passage (48:1-22) which announces that the former things – judgment – YHWH declared have come to pass, and the new things he has spoken of – deliverance by Cyrus – will soon happen. Together with its context, the epithet informs Israel that as her closest kinsman, the Holy One will redeem her; in so doing, she will be taught that every word from him is trustworthy and profitable.¹³

Along with the theme of remnant, the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” first appears in 10:20 within a context (10:20-21) that bespeaks a remnant who, after surviving from a destruction, has a change of heart from trusting in humans to YHWH. In this verse, the juxtaposition of the epithet and someone whom the remnant trusted but has since turned to strike them carries a subtle implication: the remnant will see that the relationship between the Holy One and Israel endures forever, but not so the other.¹⁴ We subsequently see the epithet along with the same theme in 29:23, although with variation. Slightly modified as “the Holy One of Jacob,” it is set in parallel with “the God of Israel,” both as titles that the

¹² See *ibid.*, 426.

¹³ Besides being her redeemer, the epithet in 48:17 also emphasizes that the Holy One is a teacher and a guide whose instruction is the law, Torah; see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 280-81.

¹⁴ Williamson sees 10:20 reflect the change of heart as “a contrast between relying on human aids rather than *the Holy One of Israel*,” *Isaiah 6-12*, 561, and after learning their lesson, “the true remnant will trust exclusively in God” (*ibid.*, 563).

remnant will hold as holy in reverent fear, for they have all come to understanding the word of the Holy One (29:24). Yet, a perplexing question remains: why are the titles not “the Holy One of Israel” and “the God of Jacob” in the text? Perhaps, a plausible clue lies at the reference to Abraham and the house of Jacob in 29:22. Abraham is described as redeemed in an allusion to YHWH calling him out of Mesopotamia (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). By extension, YHWH called Jacob in the same way when it was the time for him and his household to flee Mesopotamia in order to escape from the control of Laban (cf. Genesis 31:1-3). Therefore, “the Holy One of Jacob” is reminiscent of the work of the Holy One in the life of the person Jacob,¹⁵ which will also be manifested in the journey of the remnant, Jacob’s children.¹⁶ Two subsequent occurrences of the epithet along with the theme of remnant are found in 41:8-16 where both Abraham and Jacob are also mentioned.¹⁷ In this passage, the encouragement “fear not” is imparted three times to the remnant, for they are chosen by the Holy One as he did from the beginning with his servant Jacob through his covenant with Abraham. Addressing himself as her redeemer in parallel with the epithet in 41:14 is significant, for it is the Holy One’s reminder to Israel that he will bring her out of exile in strength as

¹⁵ YHWH changed Jacob’s name to Israel at the ford of the Jabbok when he was on his way back to the Promised Land with his household (Gen. 32:22-32), after he had worked for Laban for twenty years in Mesopotamia and finally fled.

¹⁶ This argument receives its support from Brueggemann who believes that the references to Jacob and Abraham in 29:22 are done so explicitly in memory of the ancestral narratives in the book of Genesis; see Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 238-39.

¹⁷ Blenkinsopp sees the same as Brueggemann that the mentions of Abraham and Jacob in 41:8-16 are for the purpose of “historical significance, in the sense that, just as Abraham was called to a mission in his day, so [the remnant is] now chosen at this crucial juncture of history to play a role” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible [New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002], 200).

he did with Jacob formerly.¹⁸ In so doing, she will make her boast in "the Holy One of Israel" (41:16), her covenantal relationship with the Holy One.¹⁹

The epithet appears six more times along with the theme of remnant in 43:3, 14; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9. In the first three times, the name Jacob is found in the contexts of the epithet, which alludes to the house of Jacob in reference to the remnant.²⁰ In the last three, however, the name Jacob is no longer in scope in their contexts;²¹ rather, reference to the nations is found, which indicates a spread of the remnant all over the earth.²² The change of scope seems to find its turning point in 49:6 whereby YHWH declares that the servant in the Servant Songs will not only bring back the remnant of Jacob, but also will be a light for the nations so that salvation will reach to the end of the earth. In other words, the servant will effectuate, by a means untold, salvation beyond the tribes of Jacob to all the nations in gathering a remnant to YHWH.²³ Immediately after 49:6, the epithet is invoked in 49:7, a verse which connotes that while the Holy One is the redeemer

¹⁸ Her strength is described in vv. 15-16 by an analogy of a threshing sledge which will crush any obstacles down before the remnant. As such, the three times of "fear not" in 41:10-14 are substantiated by a strength that will be bestowed on them; see Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 92-3.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 94.

²⁰ The context of the first two occurrences is 43:1-15 whereas the context of the third is 49:1-7.

²¹ The contexts of the last three occurrences are 54:1-8, 55:1-13, and 60:1-9 respectively.

²² In 54:1-3, a woman, purportedly Zion in personification, is commanded to spread out her tent, meaning her territory, to the right and to the left to dispossess the nations for her offspring. In 55:5, nations are drawn in subjection to a Davidic Messiah, who is said to be "a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples" (v. 4). In 60:1-9, Zion is summoned to arise and shine, and her light will draw the nations to her bringing about the repatriation of her children. For a discussion of 54:1-3, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 360-62; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 415-18; for 55:4-5, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 370; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 439-40; for 60:1-9, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 210-14; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 536-42.

²³ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 302.

of Israel, the servant whom he has chosen to shoulder the mission will further his claim beyond Israel to all the nations.²⁴ Prior to 49:7, the two occurrences of the epithet in 43:3, 14 evince, with the help of their context, a close and authoritative ownership that the Holy One has over Israel as her creator (43:1, 7, 15) and king (43:15). As such, he will certainly save and redeem the remnant from the hands of the Babylonian.²⁵ After 49:7, the epithet's next occurrence in 54:5 continues in the same fashion to emphasize the nature of this intimate relationship: the Holy One is the maker and husband of, allegedly, Zion personified as a woman – the city where the remnant will inhabit after redemption.²⁶ The epithet appears again in 55:5 and 60:9, both in their contexts signifying that the Holy One will bring honor and praise to Israel (55:5) and the personified Zion (60:9) respectively, for the remnant is a reflection of the Holy One's glory.²⁷

4.2 “The Holy One of Israel” As a Functional Designation

The epithet, as a functional construct, speaks of Israel as a people who, by the function of the Holy One's mission, are shaped to exhibit a character conforming to his holiness, and are worthy of being called his servants. From this

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 304-5; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 294-95. Note that while Blenkinsopp relates the one who is “deeply despised, abhorred by the nation” in 49:7 to the exilic Israel, Oswalt points it to the Suffering Servant in 52:13-53:12.

²⁵ Isa. 43:3 speaks of the length that the Holy One will go to save and redeem his own people Israel, and 43:14ff. “details God's promises to demonstrate to the world by means of Israel that he is the only Savior” (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 151); see also *ibid.*, 139-40, on v. 3.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 419.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 439-40, on 55:5, and 543, on 60:9.

perspective, first and foremost is that being “the Holy One in her midst,”²⁸ YHWH will strive to uphold his holiness in accordance to the covenant with Israel.²⁹ He will render Israel accountable for violations of his holiness, yet at the same time, he will be accountable to her in the covenantal relationship so that she will not be abandoned forever.³⁰ The premise sets off a dynamic between the Holy One and Israel in the book of Isaiah. From persuasions and admonitions to forewarnings of ruins and devastation, we find that YHWH’s words have effectuated nothing but only to aggravate the hardness of Israel’s heart. Then the inevitable comes suddenly upon Israel, whereby the righteous judgment of YHWH becomes a palpable object lesson for Israel to learn from her ordeal. Nonetheless, hope prevails in the book. When Israel finally learns her lesson and comes to her senses, YHWH’s righteousness will be manifest in the salvation of her remnant, a redemptive duty that YHWH, her closest kinsman, will not forsake. In the following, we will briefly go over the epithet in passages along the themes of judgment and salvation in the thematic profile, both of which constitute the dynamic of YHWH’s mission that shapes Israel to be his beloved people for his glory.

In company with the theme of judgment, the first two occurrences of the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” are found within the context of 5:1-30. In the

²⁸ Cf. Hos. 11:9. Gammie suggests that Isaiah’s use of the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” is inspired by Hosea’s “the Holy One in your midst” (Hos. 11:9). For his argument, see Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, 74-75. At any rate, the Holy One’s presence among Israel was first symbolized by the Tabernacle of Moses (cf. Exod. 25:8-9) and later by the Temple of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 6:11-13).

²⁹ Cf. the so-called Holiness Code in Lev. 17-26.

³⁰ Cf. Deut. 29:1-29 which holds Israel accountable for her violations of the covenant, and 30:1-10 which obligates YHWH to restore her when she returns to him.

parable of the vineyard (5:1-7), Israel is denounced for bearing the wrong fruit – injustice and unrighteousness – despite YHWH’s attentive care. Then a contrast is made following the parable that the Holy One will exalt himself in justice and righteousness (5:16) by punishing those who violate his holiness. The invocation of the epithet in 5:19 speaks of Israel’s mocking of the word of the Holy One, which instigates his wrath.³¹ Immediately in 5:20-23, three woe-oracles are pronounced against the ones whose acts are despicable. Then the epithet appears again in 5:24, signaling that the Holy One will swiftly discipline Israel like a consuming fire to right the wrong.³² Subsequently, the epithet occurs another time in the section (chapters 13-27) where YHWH declares judgment against individual sovereign states and the whole earth. As “the Holy One of Israel” is bound up with Israel, the occurrence of the epithet in 17:7 is located in a passage (17:4-11) concerning the house of Jacob. The passage sheds light on the Holy One’s disciplinary action against Israel that in tearing down her idols, she will set her eyes on her Maker but not what she makes.³³

There are three occurrences of the epithet along with the theme of judgment in the next section (chapters 28-33) where we see the discourse return to Israel. The first in 30:12 introduces an oracle of judgment in which an analogy of a potter smashing a defective pottery is used to characterize the severity and

³¹ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 207-8.

³² See *ibid.*, 211-12.

³³ See Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 148.

swiftness of judgment.³⁴ The image is reminiscent of the Maker of Israel in 17:7 and the owner of the vineyard in 5:1-7, both bewildered and disappointed by what they end up with from the endeavour. The second occurrence follows immediately in 30:15 to introduce a dialogue between the Holy One and Israel (30:15-17), which delineates a rebellious nature seemingly ingrained in Israel. In the dialogue, we see that she tries to find every excuse to resist returning to the Holy One for help, even at the point of losing all hope from self-help.³⁵ The third time that the epithet appears is in 31:1, situated in a passage (31:1-3) which stands out as a good case in point for its previous occurrence in 30:15: Israel looks to the Egyptians for strength in crisis instead of relying on the Holy One.³⁶ After chapter 33, the appearance of the epithet along with the theme of judgment is found one more time in 47:4. Within a context (47:1-15) which sees Babylon being the subject of judgment, the epithet is used together with the term “our Redeemer” to appeal to the Holy One’s standing in solidarity with the remnant.³⁷ Calling Israel “my people” and “my heritage” (47:6) now that his anger with her is a thing of the past, the Holy One renews their relationship by inaugurating Babylon’s judgment, thereby bringing about her deliverance.

Last but not least, we come to the appearance of the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” along with the theme of salvation in the thematic profile, which we can

³⁴ As Brueggemann says, “The most sustained image of destruction is that of a broken pot” (ibid., 243).

³⁵ See ibid., 244-45. Also, Wildberger is right in saying that “[God] sets forth the resistance of Israel in such sharp focus in v. 16 that he allows his partners in conversation to speak for themselves,” *Isaiah 28-39*, 161.

³⁶ The mention of horses in 31:1 is connected to the previous one in 30:15. At both places, the epithet is found. See ibid., 210.

³⁷ See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 443.

find in 12:6; 29:19; 41:20; 45:11; 60:14. First and foremost, the fact that its first appearance is at the very end of the last verse of a major section, which is full of pronouncements of judgment, is remarkably telling: the epithet affirms, without a doubt, that salvation lies at the heart of the Holy One's mission in fashioning Israel to be a people of trust in Him with praise and gratitude, despite the inevitability of judgment in her present situations.³⁸ In 12:6, the epithet is embedded in the clause *בְּקִרְבְּךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל* (“in your midst is the Holy One of Israel”) within a context (12:1-6) that is saturated with thanksgiving and adoration poured out to the Holy One from the remnant of Israel in Zion, his dwelling place. At the same time, the remnant also has a mission to proclaim the name of the Holy One to the nations (12:4). The mention of his anger as a thing of the past (12:1) and of the remnant's trust and strength resting on him (12:2) are both related to prominent phenomena of a people who, after judgment, are able to behold the glory of the Holy One. The next appearance of “the Holy One of Israel” in 29:19 also speaks of a character trait of Israel which the Holy One is pleased to see in those who will come to receive his salvation. They are described as *עֲנֻיִם בְּיַהֲוָה* (“the humble towards YHWH”) and *אֲבִיּוֹנֵי אָדָם* (“the poor of humankind”), which together signify a character of submission and trust in the Holy One that hinges not at all on the blessing of material possessions.³⁹

Immediately, they stand in stark contrast with the ruthless and the braggart in

³⁸ In relation to the predominance of the theme of salvation in the latter half of the book, Williamson notes that “[the epithet's] occurrence here at the conclusion of this song (12:1-6) is therefore entirely appropriate to round off the first part of the book at this intermediate stage of its development (as well as, by extension, of the completed book as we have it),” *Isaiah 6-12*, 740. Likewise, Brueggemann writes, “if these chapters (1-12) constitute an intentional unit, then it is important that Israel's final word is praise and thanks,” *Isaiah 1-39*, 111.

³⁹ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 112.

29:20, who will be cut off from the Holy One. The humble and the poor remains in focus when “the Holy One of Israel” appears again in 41:20. In a repetitive rhetoric crafted to show how far the Holy One will go to save the humble and the poor from thirstiness, his passion in upholding the covenant with them is vividly demonstrated in 41:17-19. To that end, they will see his salvation and recognize the work of his hands with deep gratitude.⁴⁰

The focus in the next appearance of the epithet shifts to Cyrus in 45:11, who is YHWH’s anointed instrument to emancipate the remnant from exile in Babylon. There the implication of the epithet is tied to a disputation in the context (45:1-13) over which YHWH dismisses objections to his designation of Cyrus from an implied complainant, possibly denoting a view of the exilic community.⁴¹ By invoking the epithet, the Holy One asserts authority over his relationship with Israel as her Maker (cf. 17:7). As such, he has the absolute right in shaping her future and how it will be unfolded, even by means of Cyrus to bring forth salvation and righteousness.⁴² Along with the theme of salvation, the last appearance of the epithet in 60:14,⁴³ which is also the final one in the book, resonates with the first in 12:6 in the exaltation of the Holy One through Zion. In the context of 12:6 (12:1-6), the exaltation is manifested by the inhabitants of Zion giving praise and thanks for their salvation, whereas in that of 60:14 (60:10-

⁴⁰ See Childs, *Isaiah*, 320; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 94-96.

⁴¹ See Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55 Volume II*, 31-33, and *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 275-76.

⁴² See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 209-11.

⁴³ In 60:14, the epithet is located as part of the expression “Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (צִיּוֹן קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) which sees “Zion” as a construct term predicated on “the Holy One of Israel” functioning as a possessive genitive.

22), it is propelled to a new height when all the nations that revere Zion will come to her in total submission because the Holy One is in her midst (60:10-16).⁴⁴

Furthermore, righteousness will be forever established in Zion (60:21), where the Holy One is the light of all (60:19-20) who enter there willingly through her open gates (60:11). No room will be allowed for the wicked (60:18). As such, the last appearance of the epithet “the Holy One of Israel” in 60:10-22 brings to a finale the mission of the Holy One with Israel, a mission by which the Holy One has fashioned Israel to be the beloved inhabitants of the new Zion.⁴⁵

4.3 The Last Word

In the above, we have briefly examined the implications of the study on the epithet *קדוש ישראל* (“the Holy One of Israel”) in the book of Isaiah. However, a critical question remains: what is the significance of the epithet that it is used predominantly in the book? As can easily be seen, nothing will actually be lost in the message of the book if we just remove the epithet from it completely.⁴⁶ In light of this, perhaps we should not try to read the significance of the epithet into the book. Rather, a better direction is to read the significance of the book into the epithet as I have shown above. In other words, what is meant or implied by “the

⁴⁴ See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 545-46.

⁴⁵ In Childs’ reckoning, with which I concur, what is being described here “has become radically eschatologized. The new Jerusalem is not a rebuilt earthly city, but the entrance of the divine kingdom of God, the creation of a new heaven and earth. Yet the promise is still tied to the faithful of Israel, to the obedient offspring who await the promised blessings of God (61:9),” *Isaiah*, 500.

⁴⁶ Some scholars, e.g. Williamson, have suggested that most uses of the epithet is merely a late addition sprinkled throughout the book by redaction. For his argument of how the use of the epithet gets into the book, especially by Deutero-Isaiah, see H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg (London, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 22-38.

Holy One of Israel” is painstakingly explicated by the book as it is used in the book. This observation falls in line with our examination of the epithet that along with passages that serve as the contexts of its occurrences in the book, “the Holy One of Israel” resonates with the reader in two aspects: a relational aspect which bespeaks the covenant that YHWH will hold Israel accountable for violating his holiness, and a functional aspect which entails the mission of YHWH in shaping Israel’s character to conform to his holiness. In view of what we have discussed, “the Holy One of Israel” is central to the understanding of the book, and consequently, we may consider it as a locus of the Isaianic theology.⁴⁷

This thesis began with an inquiry into two tensions between YHWH and Israel as observed in Isaiah 6. One is due to the staggering conflict in character between YHWH’s holiness and Israel’s uncleanness in violation of the covenant. The other, being consequential to the conflict, is due to the dilemma in outcome between YHWH’s judgment against Israel and her hope of salvation from him alone, each of which constitutes a dynamic of YHWH’s mission. In light of the covenant and the mission, we see that these two tensions stand at the heart of the relational and functional aspects of “the Holy One of Israel” respectively. Not only are the tensions observed in Isaiah 6, but also they permeate the book in an interlocking movement with their anticipated resolution. This pattern of oscillation, abrupt at times, prevails throughout the book, bespeaking an unyielding covenant of YHWH with Israel and a resounding purpose of his

⁴⁷ Regarding the significance of “the Holy One of Israel” to the Isaianic theology from different perspectives, see Anderson, “The Holy One of Israel,” 3-19, and Roberts, “Isaiah in Old Testament Theology,” 130-43.

mission in shaping her to be his holy people that reverberates twenty-six times with the dominant epithet קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל (“the Holy One of Israel”) in the book of Isaiah.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The twenty-six times include the “the Holy One of Jacob” in 29:23.

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