

The Theme of Perception and Imperception in the Book of Isaiah

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Abstract

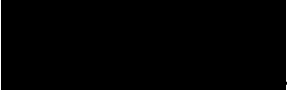
The theme of (im)perception, which embraces the physical (not-)seeing/hearing with the intellectual and spiritual (mis-)understanding, occurs significantly as the message of the mission of the prophet Isaiah of the 8th century BCE (6:9-10), yet is taken up beyond 6:9-10, and develops in relation to different groups of people and to different other themes throughout the three main divisions of the book of Isaiah.

The theme of (im)perception has been recognized by some scholars as a way of viewing the book of Isaiah as a unity, though there is no monograph in the scholarship tracing systematically how this theme develops throughout the book of Isaiah, whereas the most related monograph, Uhlig's *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah*, only concentrates on Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 40-66.

Taking the thematic approach with a close investigation of the Isaianic texts in which the theme of (im)perception occurs in semantic or conceptual terms in Isaiah 1-12, 28-35, 40-55 and 56-66, this study will demonstrate that the theme of (im)perception is a topic that the whole composition reflects on, and that it develops along with the other themes of the book, such as the theme of the righteousness, the relationship between Jerusalem and nations and the light and darkness.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.
Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament.</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Brigs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>BHS</i>	Elliger and W. Rudolph (ed.), <i>Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihefte Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CDCH</i>	<i>Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
DI	<i>Deutero-Isaiah for Isaiah 40-55</i>
<i>ETHL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>FOTL</i>	<i>The Forms of the Old Testament Literature</i>
<i>GKC</i>	Wilhelm Gesenius, <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E Kautzsch. Translated by A. E Cowley. 2 nd ed. Oxford: Glarendon, 1910.
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J.J. Stramm. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994-99.
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBM	<i>Hebrew Bible Monograph</i>
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Isa	<i>The Book of Isaiah</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
FI	<i>Prima-Isaiah for Isaiah 1-39</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by Helmer Ringgren, G. Johannes Botterweck and Heinz-Josef Fabry
<i>TTh</i>	<i>Tijdschrift voor Theologie</i>
TI	<i>Third Isaiah, or Trito-Isaiah, for Isaiah 56-66</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Contents

Abstract.....	<i>i</i>
Declaration.....	<i>ii</i>
Thanks and Acknowledgements.....	<i>iii</i>
Abbreviations	<i>v</i>
Contents.....	<i>vi</i>
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Identifying the Task of this Study	1
1.2 Situating the Current Study in the Scholarship	2
1.3 Methodology: A Literary-Thematic Study.....	5
1.3.1 The Definition of a Literary-Thematic Method	6
1.3.2 The Relationship of a Literary-Thematic Method with Rhetorical Criticism and Rhetorical Situation	13
1.3.3 Literary-Thematic Method in relation to the Phases of Historical Development of <i>Isa</i>	15
1.3.4 Summary.....	17
2 The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 1-12	18
2.1 The Imperception Theme in Isa 1:2-31	18
2.1.1 The Structure of Isa 1:2-31	18
2.1.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 1:2-31.....	19
2.1.3 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 1:2-31	25
2.1.4 The Imperception Theme in Isa 1:2-31.....	27
2.2 The Imperception Theme in Isa 5	27
2.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 5.....	28
2.2.2 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 5.....	33
2.2.3 The Role of the Imperception Theme in Isa 5.....	34
2.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 6.....	36
2.3.1 The Structure of Isa 6.....	37
2.3.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 6.....	38
2.3.3 The (Im)perception theme in Isa 6.....	46
2.4 The (Im)Perception Theme in Isa 7-9:6.....	47
2.4.1 The Structure of Isa 7-9:6	47

2.4.2	A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 7:1-9:6.....	50
2.4.3	The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 7:1-9:6	70
2.4.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 7:1-9:6.....	71
2.4.5	Summary.....	73
2.5	Conclusion	74
3	<i>The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 28-35</i>	77
3.1	Introduction.....	77
3.2	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 28	77
3.2.1	The Structure of Isa 28.....	77
3.2.2	A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 28	79
3.2.3	The Interconnectedness of Subsections, and the (Im)perception Theme, of Isa 28	85
3.2.4	Summary.....	87
3.3	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 29	87
3.3.1	The Structure of Isa 29.....	88
3.3.2	A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 29	88
3.3.3	The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 29.....	98
3.3.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 29.....	99
3.3.5	Summary.....	101
3.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 30	101
3.4.1	A Literary- Thematic Analysis of Isa 30:8-17, 20-21.....	101
3.4.2	The Imperception Theme in Isa 30:8-17	103
3.4.3	Summary.....	105
3.5	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 32	106
3.6	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 33	108
3.6.1	The Structure of Isa 33.....	108
3.6.2	Rhetorical Situation of Isa 33	110
3.6.3	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 33	111
3.6.4	Summary.....	113
3.7	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 34-35	113
3.7.1	Rhetorical Situation of Isa 34-35.....	113
3.7.2	The Placement and Function of Isa 34-35.....	114
3.7.3	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 34-35.....	115
3.7.4	Summary.....	117

3.8	Conclusion	117
4	<i>The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 40-55</i>	119
4.1	The Structure of Isa 40-55	119
4.2	The Perception Theme in Isa 40:12-31.....	120
4.2.1	The Structure of Isa 40:12-31	120
4.2.2	A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 40:12-31.....	121
4.2.3	The Perception Theme in Isa 40:12-31	124
4.3	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 41:1-44:23	125
4.3.1	The Structure of Isa 41:1-44:23	125
4.3.2	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 41:1-42:13.....	128
4.3.3	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 42:13-44:23.....	136
4.3.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 41:1-44:23.....	152
4.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 44:24-48:22	154
4.4.1	Structure of 44:24-48:22.....	154
4.4.2	A Literary-Thematic Study of 44:24-45:25	155
4.4.3	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 46-48.....	159
4.4.4	The (Im)perception Theme in 44:24-48:22	164
4.5	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 49-55	165
4.5.1	Structure of Isa 49-55	165
4.5.2	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 49	167
4.5.3	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 50:1-52:12.....	171
4.5.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 52:13-54:17.....	177
4.5.5	Summary.....	182
4.6	Conclusion: The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 40-55	182
5	<i>The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 56-66</i>	185
5.1	The Structure of Isa 56-66	185
5.2	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 56-59	187
5.2.1	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 56-59.....	187
5.2.2	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 56-59.....	193
5.3	The Perception Theme in Isa 60-62	194
5.3.1	A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 60-62.....	194
5.3.2	The Perception Theme in Isa 60-62	196

5.4	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 63-66	197
5.4.1	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 63:7-64:11.....	197
5.4.2	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 65.....	205
5.4.3	The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 66.....	206
5.5	Conclusion	212
6	<i>Conclusion</i>	213
7	<i>Bibliography</i>	217

1 Introduction

1.1 Identifying the Task of this Study

What YHWH commissions Isaiah to do in Isa 6:9-10 is intriguing,¹ and how this commission comes about and develops as presented in the final form of *the Book of Isaiah* (abbreviated as ‘Isa’ below) is worth exploring. This commission highlights the tension between the physical seeing/hearing and the intellectual/spiritual understanding: the former does not guarantee the latter. As we read backward to chs.1-5, we soon note that the very beginning, 1:2-3 have already marked Israelites’ *imperception* (לא ידע and לא בין*), 1:4-9 their *stubbornness*, that is, their irresponsiveness to YHWH’s discipline, 1:10-14 their *misperception* of true worship; and later 5:12 ‘they do not regard (לא נבט*) the deeds of the Lord, or see (לא ראה*) the work of his hands’. Among these occurrences, 1:4-9 and 1:10-14 fall into the category of *conceptual* imperception, while others the category of *lexical* imperception. Besides, as we read further from ch.6 onwards, we come to note that imperception theme is taken up by other passages of Isa. 42:18-20 and 43:8 state the servant’s *blindness* and *deafness*, 56:10 the watchmen and shepherds’ *blindness* and lack of *knowledge* or *understanding*. These verses highlight the addressees’ state of, and responsibility for, their imperception or misconception, whereas 6:9-10; 8:16+29:10², 11³, 14b⁴; 44:6-28 (esp.v.18) and 63:17 (a communal lament of the *hardness* of their *hearts*) seem to denote that it is YHWH [and/or the prophet] who initiates their failure to perceive. On the contrary, 29:18 and 32:3-4 speak of the future overcoming of this condition, 35:5 their healing, 11:9 and 29:23-24 the gaining of *knowledge* and *understanding*, 42:7 the opening of the eyes of the blind, and 42:16 the blind being led and guided upon the road they have not known.

Since there are passages about blindness, deafness and hardening, while others about the overcoming of them, the theme is usually investigated as the theme of hardening, with hardening as a means of YHWH’s judgment, and de-hardening as salvation.⁵ However, not least because hardening has the connotation of YHWH’s initiative in hardening his people, which, as will be demonstrated in this

¹ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 1, states, “Reading the commission of the prophet Isaiah is and always will be *confusing, perplexing and even shocking*, whether one reads it for the first or the hundred-and-first time, either as a professional exegete or as a layperson.” Italics added.

² The lethargic spirit upon the people’s eyes and head, that is, upon their prophets and seers, echoes 1Kgs 22:21-23 where the spirit entices Ahaz by being a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets.

³ The sealed and thus incomprehensible scroll/vision.

⁴ YHWH poured out a spirit of deep sleep upon Israel.

⁵ See the details in section 1.2.

study, is not the case, and because the same tension does not exist only among Judahites, but also among foreigners, such as Assyrians and their kings (10:5-34), Ephraimites (28:1-1-6), this study will undertake ‘perception’ and ‘imperception’, together abbreviated as (im)perception, instead of ‘hardening’ and ‘de-hardening’ as the investigating theme. More significantly, a closer investigation of these occurrences of the theme throughout Isa will demonstrate that the development of the theme is more *dynamic* than its development from hardening to de-hardening. Rather, the theme plays a key role in the composition of Isa, as witnessed firstly *in its relation to other themes* in Isa – such as kingship, (un)righteousness, judgment and salvation, remnant, idols vs YHWH, Israel-and-nations (or Zion’s destiny) – and secondly *in the distinct settings* of each of the three main divisions of Isa. It is submitted that a study of the theme of (im)perception in Isa can contribute to a wider understanding of the theology of the OT. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the development of the (im)perception theme throughout Isa, undertaking a literary-thematic approach. The theme’s relation to other key themes will be noticed incidentally during this dissertation. Since (im)perception is expressed in the tension between the physical (im)perception and the intellectual/spiritual (im)perception, the theme of (im)perception in this study will embrace the vocabulary category of physical (im)perception such as ראה, גבט, שמע, און, עין and לב, in relation to that of intellectual (im)perception, ידע and בין, with their verbal and nominal forms, and their positive or negative uses. Besides, as noted above, some texts fall into the category of conceptual (im)perception. Therefore, the key texts for analyses are identified as follows: 1:2-3; 5; 6:9-10; 11:2, 9; 29:9-10, 17-24; 32:1-4; 35:5; 42:18-25; 43:8; 44:18-20; 48:6-8; 49:7, 26; 50:10-11; 51:1-8; 52:8; 52:13-53:12; 56:9-57:2; 57:18; 58:3; 59:15, 16; 63:17 and their contexts.

1.2 Situating the Current Study in the Scholarship

As mentioned above, this theme has been usually investigated as the theme of ‘hardening,’ or of ‘blindness and deafness.’ Either way, even though this theme has been increasingly recognized as a key theme in understanding the composition of Isa, the scholarly works on this theme are still quite limited in terms of both their scope and depth, which will be evidenced by the following brief survey.

Many scholarly works on the redactional development of Isa have observed the significance of this theme in understanding the composition of Isa. For example, R. Clements’ ground-breaking essay “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah” (1982) points out the significance of the theme of ‘blindness and deafness’ in understanding the unity of Isa, the major question about which is the relationship of Chs.

40-55 with 1-35.⁶ H.G. M. Williamson notes in his *The Book Called Isaiah* (1994) the various passages in Isa 40-55, in particular, 40:21; 41:20; 42:16, 18-19; 43:8, 10; 44:18; 52:15, that relate to 6:9-10, and takes this as part of his evidence that DI has been composed as a continuation of the message of Isaiah (chs.1-35) by Deutero-Isaiah.⁷ A much longer list of this kind of works can be added here, however, they all rarely did more than cite the passages related to the theme, or at most associate it with judgment/catastrophe or salvation/restoration, but not with other themes in Isa.

In Craig Evans' *To See and Not Perceive* (1989), a study on the early Jewish and Christian interpretation of Isa 6:9-10, he comments briefly on other texts apart from 6:9-10 in Isa that deal with the "obduracy motif" and "in what ways the Isaianic obduracy motif functions in the canonical form of the book of Isaiah."⁸ In the obduracy texts relating to 6:9-10 that he discusses, that is 29:9-10; 42:18-20; 43:8; 44:18, and 63:17, he notes that while 6:9-10 and 29:9-10 proclaim that "God has actually promoted obduracy," and 63:17 laments so, Second Isaiah says only that "the people are in an obdurate condition." He obviously views Second Isaiah as a development of First Isaiah in terms of obduracy, when he writes

in First Isaiah the prophet declares God will harden Israel; in Second Isaiah the prophet declares that Israel is indeed in a hardened condition. But, in keeping with the overall arrangement of the book, Second Isaiah also looks to a time of restoration, when the people of God will be perceptive again (Isa 40:5-28).⁹

However, his mentioning of 59:9-10 and treatment of 63:17 do not keep up the above flow, that is, show how these parts are integrated into the wider literary context or in the story of 'obduracy'.

After briefly citing the restoration texts in which the people's eyes and ears will once again function, he concludes that

It would appear, then, that obduracy in the book of Isaiah is meant to be understood as *a condition, brought on variously by arrogance, immorality, idolatry, injustice, and false prophecy*, that renders God's people incapable of discerning God's will. This inability leads to judgment and calamity. However, it is also understood to *be a condition that God brings about himself*, as part of his judgment upon his wayward people. But Isaiah, if not the eighth-century prophet, certainly the canonical book, announces that after the judgment, there is restoration, in which perception returns (attended by righteousness, justice, and trust in God).¹⁰

⁶ Clements, 'Unity,' 125, writes: 42:18-20 and 43:8 echoes strikingly 6:9-10, which indicates "the exilic prophet of Isaiah 40-55 did know and allude to the prophecies of Isaiah". He also notes the theme is picked up in 32:3 and 35:5, though he just touches upon it. His further essays substantiate his observations, see his "Beyond", 101-104.

⁷ Williamson, *Book*, 46-51. Outside of Isa 40-55, he also mentions 56:10-11 and 57:1.

⁸ Evans, *To See*, 42-46.

⁹ Evans, *To See*, 45. Italics added.

¹⁰ Evans, *To See*, 46.

Overall, Evans has included several important passages among the “obduracy texts” and has rightly emphasized that they play a crucial part in the whole book, and that “the obduracy and restoration texts are an important part of the dialectic of ruin and future blessedness to which the book of Isaiah as a whole gives expression.”¹¹ However, his brief treatment of these texts makes it rather a mere description of ‘statements’, and his conclusion not analytically grounded despite being correct. Besides, there are also further passages needing to be considered. Most importantly, he does not establish how the theme relates with other themes in Isa.

In Williamson’s *The Book Called Isaiah* (1994), the theme of blindness and deafness demonstrates Isaiah’s influence on Deutero-Isaiah. For him, the Deutero-Isaiah whose ears are open daily (Isa 50:4-9, esp. 50:4b-5a) is qualified to open the sealed document of First Isaiah (8:1-4; 8:16; 30:8).

In his monograph dated 1998, “*About Zion I will not be Silent*”: *The Book of Isaiah as an Ideological Unity*, Antti Laato states that “In spiritual terms, hardening justifies the remnant theology”,¹² and “Through the remnant theology the motif of hardening is also closely associated with the Assyrian invasion in Isaiah 36-37.”¹³ Though he sets forth with the statement that “we shall now demonstrate that the texts within Isaiah 1-35 which contain the idea of hardening are related to Isaiah 36-37,”¹⁴ he actually blankets all these texts except 1:2-3 underneath his discussion of the hardening in 29:9-14, 15-24 to relate hardening to Isa 36-37.¹⁵ For Laato, the Assyrian invasion, the threat that penetrates PI, is a purifying judgment, whereas Judah’s exemption and salvation from it during Hezekiah’s reign temporarily fulfilled the promises of salvation in PI. Besides, he regards Isa.1 as the orientation to read 1-39 and 40-66, that is, the miraculous salvation of 36-37 as briefly presented in 1:4-9. Thus, this lack of a clear and detailed treatment of the significant hardening passages does not do justice to these texts, nor to the theme, hence resulting in merely superficially mentioning it.

The most detailed monograph on this theme is Uhlig’s *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah* (2009). His outline of the main chapters shows the development of the theme: Isaiah 6 announces hardening as the effect of Isaiah’s proclamation; then, in a hardened situation, the hardened were appointed as witnesses in 42:14-44:23, and characterized before their return in 44:24-49:13, and the hardened would overcome the hardening through the individual servant (49:14-

¹¹ Evans, *To See*, 42.

¹² Laato, *About Zion*, 96.

¹³ Laato, *About Zion*, 97.

¹⁴ Laato, *About Zion*, 97.

¹⁵ Laato, *About Zion*, 97-102.

55:13); Later 56-66 zooms in on those in the homeland, whose imperception is presented in 56:9-59:21 while the still hardened are disclosed in 63:7-64:11. Besides, Uhlig sees hardening as related to ‘connective righteousness’ in Isaiah. He understands the proclamation of PI as YHWH’s judgment upon Israelites for their unrighteousness through the means of hardening them, hence the illocutionary acts of Isaiah’s proclamation have the perlocutionary effect of hardening them, that is, the more Isaiah proclaims, the more hardened the people are. For Uhlig, Isa 40-66 is a communicative act through the voice of 40:1-8 for the exiled people in Babylon (DI) and for those in the homeland (TI) to de-harden the people because of YHWH’s *הקדקד* /salvation through the servant of Isa 53 (DI), while it is still necessary for them to show *הקדקד/הקדקד* to each other (TI). Meanwhile, 63:7-64:11 demonstrates there are still people who remained hardened after the proclamation of 40:1-62:8, hence did not belong to YHWH’s people or servants. However, he does not give reasons for why some people remained hardened after the proclamation of 40:1-62:8 while others are all de-hardened. Overall, Uhlig has made a significance contribution to the topic. However, Uhlig focuses very much on Isa 6 and 40-66, while in his conclusion chapter, he also acknowledges that “further research will need to study in more detail those texts that, for limitations of space, were not included in this study”, which includes “various passages in Isa 1-39 (e.g. Isa 1:2-3; 11:2, 9; 29:9-10, 17-24; 32:1-4; 35:5).”¹⁶ This leaves for analysis how his un-addressed passages fit into his portrayal of the development of the theme in Isa. Besides, while he understands 1-39 and 40-66 as from two voices, it is noteworthy that various voices are blended in 1-39 and 40-66. This means the authoritative voice belongs to the book as a final composition, thus every passage must be read ultimately in the light of every other passage. Moreover, while Uhlig has correctly recognized the hardening theme is closely related to ‘righteousness’, it is also noteworthy that ‘righteousness’ is not the only theme to which the hardening theme is closely related. I also think he underestimated the significance of Isa 53.

Therefore, there exists a need in the scholarship of Isa for a study, this dissertation, to investigate how the (im)perception theme is woven with other themes in Isaiah with continuity and discontinuity under different rhetorical situations in the composition of Isa.

1.3 Methodology: A Literary-Thematic Study

This study will undertake a literary-thematic approach to trace the development of the (im)perception theme throughout Isa. In this section, I will firstly give a working definition of Literary-Thematic method locating it in the history of literary methods in biblical scholarship and naming the literary

¹⁶ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 319, fn1.

features that the study accounts for in its work with the theme. Secondly, I will distinguish literary-thematic approach from rhetorical criticism and locate my attention to rhetorical situation within its literary-thematic method. Thirdly, I will state its mode of integrating insights from the phases of historical development of the book within its study of the final form.

1.3.1 The Definition of a Literary-Thematic Method

I will define this method firstly by locating it in the history of literary methods in biblical scholarship and by naming the literary features that this study accounts for in its work with the (im)perception theme.

1.3.1.1 The History of Literary Methods in Biblical Scholarship

This history is recounted mainly based on John Barton's *Reading the Old Testament: Methods in Old Testament Studies*, while also on David J.A. Clines' *The Theme of Pentateuch*, and also the article "The New Literary Criticism" by Clines and J. Cheryl Exum. There are broadly three groups of literary methods in biblical scholarship. Firstly, the traditional historical methods focus more on the history *behind* the text. Among them, source criticism concerns its possible authors/sources, form criticism its *Genre/Sitz im Leben* while redaction criticism looks for the redactors' theological intentions. Secondly, some other literary methods focus more on *the text as we have it*, rather than what is behind the text. The canonical approach, (biblical) structuralism, new criticism, rhetorical criticism and narrative criticism all fall into this category. Thirdly, some other literary methods emphasize the readers' role in a text's meaning, such as feminist criticism, reader-response criticism and reception theory.

Traditional Historical Methods: Behind the Text

With regards to the first category of literary methods, as John Barton points out, both source criticism and form criticism arose originally from the observable literary discrepancies in the Old Testament Text, such as the creation narratives in Gen1-2, the flood story in Gen 6-9, and different outlooks of Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah (and Trito-Isaiah) and so on. With a desire to understand and explain, they both turned out to cut the text into pieces – while source critics ascribe different pieces of the text to different authors, form critics regard texts in relation to social conventions, and

look for their *Sitz im Leben*.¹⁷ Unfortunately, they only helped in understanding different pieces in a text, but do not contribute to the understanding of the whole text as we have it. For example, source criticism produced the basic division of Isaiah into two or three separate books, plus the identification of many additions in each part, with the prevalent trend of publishing commentaries on one section of Isa rather than the whole book. Form criticism was concerned with separate ‘forms’ within books.

Built on the ‘success’ of source and form criticism, redaction criticism asks what theological intentions have brought these different sources or forms into one text.¹⁸ For example, redaction critics state that the ‘*Table of Nations*’ in Gen 10, one of the genealogical lists, functions to link “the history of Abraham and his descendants...with ... ‘primeval history’ of the preceding chapters, and so to present the history of Israel as the climax and chief purpose of the history of the whole world.”¹⁹ Similarly, while Gen 2:4a seems to float loosely between two creative narratives, redaction critics note that its same formula (“These are the generations of...”) occurs also in 5:1; 10:1; 11:10; Num 3:1 – all of which orient readers to see what the immediately following texts imply about relations between different groups of Israel or different nations of the world. This suggests that Gen 2:4a introduces the second creation narrative, not as what happened next after the first creation account, but as a more explicit statement of 1:26-27.²⁰ Barton observes,

In principle, then, redaction criticism is a perfectly reasonable approach; and in practice there are texts even in the Old Testament where it can be remarkably illuminating (I have instanced Chronicles). But more often than not it is either unnecessary, because the text is a unity anyway, and we are competent to read it, or unsuccessful, because the inconsistencies that remain, the very inconsistencies that enable us to know the text is a redacted one, are such that we remain in doubt as to how it should be read in its finished form.²¹

All the above three methods “can take us way towards a better understanding of what lies behind the biblical text, but they all seem to fail us if we look to them for help in reading the text as it actually meets us when we open a Bible.”²²

¹⁷ Cf. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 43 writes: “Both ask ‘How could one author possibly have written this text?’ Source criticism then proceeds by breaking the text up into sections that one author could have written; form criticism detects elements embedded within the text, or aspects of the finished text which suggest that it was not written so much as used in particular settings whose conventions account for features inexplicable in literary terms. Both methods tend, and are often criticized for tending, to fragment the text, to cut it up into pieces that can be more readily understood. But we have seen that, so far from stemming from a sort of disrespect for the text, this is essentially the product of an overwhelming desire to understand, to perceive the text as intelligible - a desire which is frustrated unless the text is cut into pieces.”

¹⁸ See *Ibid*, 45-60.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 48.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 49-51.

²¹ *Ibid*, 59.

²² *Ibid*, 77-8.

Post Traditional Historical Methods: The Text Itself

The dissatisfactions and frustrations with these traditional historical methods led Childs to propose the canonical approach which aims not to discover the author or history behind authors or redactors but reads the Bible as Scripture, and views parts in relation to the whole, claiming that the whole provides the context for the parts. It assumes ‘theological competence’, and literarily it adds a genre of ‘religious literature’ into the genre discussion of literature.²³ Childs showed considerable interest in the historical development of the text, especially in his early work, such as his *Commentary on Exodus*,²⁴ whereas his later works inclined more to the wholistic reading, such as his *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*.²⁵

Structuralism concerns primarily “how a text comes to have the meaning that it evidently has, with explaining why the reader is likely to perceive it as bearing that sort of meaning” and sees the answer lying in the *cultural system* that operates “according to certain conventions.”²⁶ Thus, in theory, a structuralist analysis of OT is to exploit conventions of OT. For example, Roland Barthes’ structuralist analysis of Gen 32:22-32 exploits the convention of the fairy tale, resulting in a disorientation.²⁷ Barton also adds, “However, not all structuralist work on the Old Testament has been so concerned with large questions of the nature of literature or the distinctiveness of Israel; very often, like other kinds of criticism, it has been interested in the exegesis of particular passages for their own sake.”²⁸

New criticism, which “flourished chiefly in America but with considerable influence in Britain in 1940s and 1950s,” is uninterested in the authors’ or redactors’ intention or the history of the text at all.²⁹

²³ Ibid, 86-7.

²⁴ Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*.

²⁵ Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*.

²⁶ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 104, 113-4.

²⁷ See the full illustrates in Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 116-8. On the fairy-tale convention of Quest, there is an Originator, Hero and opponent, and Helpers or Originator’s aids. “One standard pattern is for the Originator of the Quest to step in and help the Hero, either in person (as in stories where the Hero is given a magic horn or other device with which to summon the Originator’s aid) or through intermediaries called Helpers (often friendly animals or people otherwise extraneous to the plot, such as the woodcutter in *Red Riding Hood*). Another is for the Originator to be present again at the end of the Quest - as when the Hero is sent by a lady to perform some deed, with her own hand in marriage as the prize for successfully accomplishing it.” In Gen 32:22-32, the Opponent and Originator turn out to be the same one, just like in a modern detective story where the detective and the murderer turn out to be the same.

²⁸ Ibid, 119.

²⁹ Ibid, 142.

Concerning rhetorical criticism, though it is concerned with the potential effect of the text on an audience (or reader), Clines' and Exum's following definition of it relates it more to new criticism with a focus on the text itself:

Rhetorical criticism...concerns itself with the way the language of texts is deployed to convey meaning. Its interests are in the devices of writing, in metaphor and parallelism, in narrative and poetic structures, in stylistic features ...it has regard to the rhetorical situation of the composition and promulgation of ancient texts and to their intended effect upon their audience. But, like new criticism, its primary focus is upon the texts and their own internal articulation rather than upon their historical setting.³⁰

By comparison, structuralism, the canonical approach, and new criticism, all take the text *in its finished form* as the proper object of criticism. However, while structuralism and new criticism both state the text has a determined and publicly accessible meaning, canonical approach regards it is possible for a text to have different meanings in different contexts and canons.

Readers: Before the Text

Another trend of biblical criticism emphasizes the readers' role in the meaning of a text.

Reader-response criticism states a text does not have inherent meaning, but only has meaning when it encounters with a reader.³¹ Similarly, as Clines and Exum point out, the focus of feminist criticism "is not upon texts in themselves but upon texts in relation to another intellectual or political issue."³²

A Thematic Approach

In the history of literary methods in biblical scholarship overviewed above, the important turn came with Clines and others (around 1980) who began to read texts as works of literature. This had two aspects. Firstly, texts were read for their literary qualities, that is, as poetry, or as narrative, or other genres. Secondly, there was a trend to reading biblical books as wholes in their final forms. As Clines states in the 'Afterword' of the second edition of his book *The Theme of Pentateuch*, two decades after the publication of his first edition, in biblical scholarship:

These days, it is no longer necessary to justify reading the final form of the text or to relegate historical questions to a later chapter (which I did) or to omit them altogether (which I did not). These days there are plenty of literary studies that do not apologize for what they are doing, but simply get on with it.³³

Robert Polzin's *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges*; Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* and *The Art of Biblical Poetry*; Meir Sternberg's *The Poetics of Biblical*

³⁰ Clines and Exum, "The New Literary Criticism," 16.

³¹ Ibid, 18-19.

³² Ibid, 17.

³³ Clines, *Theme*, 129.

Narrative; S. Bar-Efrat's *Narrative Art in the Bible* and Tremper Longman's *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* are just a few among the examples of authors who illustrate the newer literary methods based on the final form of biblical texts.

In Isaiah studies also, there was a new tendency to read Isaiah as a whole book, partly because this was the form in which it was handed down, but also because scholars became more aware of literary and theological commonalities between the various parts of the book.

Because of these trends, one could begin to trace themes running all the way through the book of Isaiah, e.g. Abernethy's *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom*³⁴ and Clements' article "A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah".³⁵

A *thematic* study is important because scholars of OT Theology used to look for a theological 'centre' of the OT, around which all the OT's ideas could be organised – a classic example was Walter Eichrodt's suggestion of 'covenant'. This quest has long ago been given up, because the content of the OT is simply too diverse to be described in this way.³⁶ However, thematic studies could still be applied to individual texts. A very good example of this shift can be seen in the comparison of the two editions of Clines' *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. In his first edition, Chapter 2 'Definitions', Clines offered several possible definitions of a theme: 1) "a conceptualization of a narrative plot", 2) "the central or dominating idea in a literary work ... the abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work", 3) "a rationale of the content, structure and development of the work", 4) functioning as "an orientation to the work ... a warning or protest against large-scale misunderstanding of a work ... evidence that the work is coherent or systematic ... a control on interpretations of the text that treat it as a relatively autonomous work of art, with polyvalent significance", and 5) distinguishing from "'intention', 'motif', 'subject', and so on."³⁷ However, Clines' definition of a 'theme' changes slightly from his first edition to the second edition. Even though he didn't change the content of the chapter on 'The Definition', he did note in his 'Afterword' in the second edition that whereas he had thought there is only one central theme of Pentateuch, he later came to acknowledge that there are many themes in the Pentateuch, possibly resulting from the impact of the shift from the modern to the postmodern.³⁸

³⁴ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom*.

³⁵ Clements, "A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah."

³⁶ Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority in the OT*.

³⁷ Clines, *Theme*, 19-22.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 130-132.

One of the approaches for OT scholars to do theology is to identify various important themes, and to address them by studying them in particular parts of the OT. An example is R. W. L. Moberly's *Old Testament Theology*, in which he simply considers a variety of topics, and examines them by studying key OT passages in detail. On p. 1 of his book, he names several topics that occur in OT Theology, but as he says, his list is not exhaustive.

This current study understands a theme not as an exclusive theme of a book, but as a topic that is marked out as important by its *regular occurrence* and *key structural positions* in the book, a topic that *undergoes development* in the book, and that helps *integrate the meaning of the whole book*. There are many themes under such a definition in Isa, among which there is the (im)perception theme, which is related to other themes, as will be further illustrated in the current study.

Summary: The Location of Literary-Thematic Approach in the History of Literary Methods of Biblical Scholarship

As mentioned above, the shift to reading the bible as a literature enables tracing a theme throughout a book. However, how could a theme be traced through a large book that has so much variety and so much poetic expression in it? My answer was to apply literary analysis to sections of the book selected for their relevance to the theme. Ideally, one would do this for every chapter of the book, but this was not practically possible within a doctoral dissertation limit.

A literary-thematic study of Isa will demonstrate that individual passages had their own original settings, which may have varied greatly, and that the (im)perception theme is expressed in nuanced ways in its literary contexts with continuities and discontinuities while a picture of the theme is built up by accumulating the separate analyses.

As Barton shows, modern literary methods do not obscure the fact that biblical books consisted of diverse materials that had varied origins. Nevertheless, in modern literary theory when the different parts of a book are put together, they create a new thing.³⁹ This new thing has integrity apart from the separate sources of its parts, which a mathematic formula suffices to illustrate, that is, $x+y = (x+y)$. This is true generally for *Isa*, which as a whole is a powerful demonstration of the historical rise and fall of empires.

Therefore, the literary-thematic approach undertaken in this study is based on modern literary methods which are interested in (the final form of) the text itself, making it possible to trace a theme

³⁹ This idea was expressed, for example, by Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 59-60.

through a large book like Isaiah, and which acknowledges the possibility of the mutual-illumination of parts and whole.

1.3.1.2 *Literary Features in Relation to the (Im)Perception Theme*

A literary-thematic approach in this study entails two dimensions. Firstly, it is the texts in which the (im)perception theme appears that are selected for study. This includes the texts with the vocabulary category of physical (im)perception such as ראה, נבט, שמע, אזן, עין and לב, in relation to that of intellectual (im)perception, ידע and בין, with their verbal and nominal forms, and their positive or negative uses, and texts that fall into the category of conceptual (im)perception.

Secondly, it orients its concern to the structure and coherence of Isa, the literary genres and techniques that it employs; and how such features (structure, genre, techniques) help express the meaning of the text. In another word, these chosen texts are studied in their literary contexts as literary texts, that is, as narratives (e.g., Isa 6, 7, 8) or as poetry (e.g., other Isaianic texts). In his brief introduction to biblical narrative, Tremper Longman III notes that the four common elements in biblical narratives are “plot, characters, setting, and narrator/point of view.”⁴⁰ They all shape the dynamics of a narrative. Biblical narrative is distinguished by its spare and unembellished style, so that any details in a narrative are for some kind of purpose. Besides, the way in which dialogues are progressed is also illuminating in a narrative. My analysis of Isa 6-8 takes these texts as narratives, elaborating on how characters and settings are depicted, and how the plot and dialogues evolve, which altogether are how the (im)perception theme is expressed and to which the theme is related.

Biblical poetry is consistently characterized by terseness, parallelism, imagery and figurative techniques like simile and metaphor. These literary features are also present in narrative, but occur in much higher frequency, in poetry. Other literary features include repetition, apostrophe, alliteration, assonance, word play, irony, allusion, comparison, contrast, allusion, juxtaposition, paradox, hyperbole, symbolism, personification, emphasis, pun, and onomatopoeia and so on. As will be shown in the analysis chapters, my literary-thematic studies of relevant Isaianic poetic texts all trace the (im)perception theme with an appreciation of the aesthetic and rhetorical interests of the texts.

⁴⁰ Ryken and Longman, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*.

1.3.2 The Relationship of a Literary-Thematic Method with Rhetorical Criticism and Rhetorical Situation

1.3.2.1 Comparison of Literary-Thematic Method with Rhetorical Criticism

Some literary techniques investigated in this study are similar to rhetorical techniques. They are simply the techniques in the literary texts themselves, but have different names under different methods, hence they are called rhetorical techniques by rhetorical criticism while literary techniques by modern literary criticism. Rhetorical criticism, however, is best suited to analysing shorter sections of text than a whole large book like Isaiah, while a literary-thematic method goes beyond the scope of rhetorical criticism, to give an account of the full development of a theme in this large and varied book.

Meanwhile, many scholars have found the concept of rhetorical situation appropriate to the prophetic books, because the prophets' discourses are by nature rhetorical: that is, they aim to *persuade*. For this reason, I propose to also use some of the language and concepts of rhetorical criticism as a means of analysing the texts in Isaiah that illustrate the theme of (im)perception. The study as a whole is not an exercise in rhetorical criticism as such. That method has been successful in the study of shorter books or of portions of books,⁴¹ but it is problematical for a very long book, because the notions of audience and situation are more complicated. Instead, I will use rhetorical analysis as an aid to the exegesis of texts that are by nature rhetorical. At times, it will help an understanding of how texts that have a redactional history can hold together as a persuasive unit.

1.3.2.2 The Applicability of Rhetorical Situations in a Literary-Thematic Study of Isaiah

Every biblical passage may have different layers of settings: the setting behind the text, the setting in/of the text, and the setting in front of the text. Similarly, different concepts of setting are used in the studies of Isa, for example, historical setting, ideological-historical setting, and rhetorical or communicative setting. The historical setting, *Sitz im Leben*, refers to the political, social, and cultural conditions in which a particular biblical text was written. It is associated with historical criticism and proposed that understanding the historical context can help scholars interpret the text and understand its meaning in its original setting. Thus, one of historical critics' tasks is to reconstruct the original historical setting of a text, the setting behind the text. However, since Isa includes both the prophecy of the 8th century BCE prophet Isaiah son of Amoz and also the many

⁴¹ Gitay, "Amos 3:1-5." Idem., *His audience*. Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*.

layers of redaction and composition upon that prophecy, and the referred time in the book spans across several centuries from pre-exilic, to the exilic and to post-exilic period, it is very difficult to identify the exact historical setting of a particular text of Isa. This leads Laato to propose the ideological-historical setting in his understanding of the ideological unity of Isa. According to Laato, the ideological-historical is presented by the text itself, and is multidimensional.⁴² In the case of Isa, Laato suggests that the ideological-historical settings of PI, DI and TI are respectively the pre-exilic, the exilic, and the post-exilic, despite his acknowledgement of the later material in PI.⁴³

Scholars who see the genre of prophetic book as rhetorical discourses aiming to persuade or convince the people, and who therefore employ rhetorical criticism in their biblical studies, use the term ‘rhetorical situation’. The concept of the rhetorical situation was first promulgated by Lloyd F. Bitzer in his article “The Rhetorical Situation.” While Bitzer regards rhetorical situation as “a natural context of persons, events, objects relations and an exigence which strongly invites utterance,”⁴⁴ J.N. Vorster claims that the rhetorical situation “only comes into existence when the exigence of the situation comes into relationship with the ‘interest’ of the rhetor”.⁴⁵ Besides, it is also worth noting that when the reader reconstructs the text’s rhetorical situation, its interests and contextualization, she does so out of a rhetorical situation of her own, her own interests and contextualization. The new rhetorical criticism emphasizes that rhetorical power is present in a text not just once, when it is first uttered or written, but also for future readers in their own rhetorical situation.⁴⁶

Concerning the identification of rhetorical situation, Wullner⁴⁷ mentions three aspects of traditional rhetorical study: a text’s *status* (or basic issue),⁴⁸ underlying *topoi* (or *loci*, the “places” or

⁴² Laato, *About Zion*, 60.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 170-1.

⁴⁴ Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation”, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Vol. 25, Selections from Volume 1 (1992), [pp. 1-14], 3-4.

⁴⁵ J.N. Vorster, “The Rhetorical Situation of the Letter to the Romans: An Integral Approach” (DD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 1991), 30.

⁴⁶ George Aichele et al., *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 163-164.

⁴⁷ Wullner, 456, and see the literature for each ways respectively in fns 47, 48 and 49.

⁴⁸ Referring to whether the central question of the text is a question of fact, of definition, of quality, or of jurisdiction. Cf. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 18-19; Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, §§79-138. For application to exegesis, see J. D. Hester, “The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:1 1-2:14,” *JBL* 103 (1984) 223-33; on *stasis status*, see esp. 226-28.

“material”),⁴⁹ and rhetorical *genre*,⁵⁰ while Kennedy and Gitay further emphasize the significance of audience in defining the rhetorical situation.⁵¹ With regards to Isa, to identify the rhetorical situation of the book does not mean that the book contains the actual discourses or speeches delivered by the prophet, for which Möller criticised Shaw’s *Speeches of Micah*.⁵² Rather, while acknowledging the redactional history of the book, I am focusing on the final form, which means I will identify the rhetorical situation and audience mainly based on the text in question, even though sometimes I may get some insights from historical situation.⁵³ ‘Rhetorical situation’ is not the same as ‘historical situation’, and indeed that actual rhetorical situations can rarely be located historically, but rather only be inferred from the text, that is, in their literary context which is ultimately the whole book of Isaiah. As will be seen in later chapters in the current study, the *topics* and the *audience* in Isa will be the most decisive in identifying the rhetorical situations in Isa. Besides, different parts of Isa do witness some nuanced rhetorical situations that are reflected in the literary texts themselves in their association with different thematics in the book. Thus, the concept of ‘rhetorical situation’ can support the literary-thematic study of (im)perception theme by drawing out the means by which Isa develops that theme. ‘Rhetoric’ and ‘theme’ are closely interwoven in Isa. Thus, it is applicable to investigate the rhetorical situations of Isa even though this study undertakes a literary-thematic approach.

1.3.3 Literary-Thematic Method in relation to the Phases of Historical Development of *Isa*

As well noted among Isaianic scholarship, there is literary and historical-critical evidence that supports the demarcation of Isa into three main sections, Isa 1-39 (PI), 40-55 (DI) and 56-66 (TI). An example for the literary evidence is the variety of structures inherent in the three major divisions: the

⁴⁹ referring to the topics of arguments, that is, “the ‘places’ where he looks for something to say about his subject.” There are three kinds of topics, namely, *common* topics (includes four groups: “the possible and impossible, past fact, future fact, and degree”), *material* topics (eg. “Messiah,” “Son of God,” “faith,” “hope,” and “love” in John’s Gospel) and *strategic* topics (similar to the topic of degree). Cf. Kennedy, 20-21, and respectively in Aristotle’s *Rhetorics*, II.19; I.4-8; and II. 23.

⁵⁰ Referring to the species of rhetoric, including forensic/judicial, symbouleutic/deliberative, epideictic. “The species is judicial when the author is seeking to persuade the audience to make a *judgment* about events occurring in the *past*; it is deliberative when he seeks to persuade them to take some *action* in the *future*; it is epideictic when he seeks to persuade them to hold or reaffirm some point of *view* in the *present*, as when he celebrates or denounces some person or some quality.” Kennedy, 19. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetorics*, III.1. Italics added.

⁵¹ Kennedy, 35 claims “The critic needs to ask of what this audience consists, what the audience expects in the situation, and how the speaker or writer manipulates these expectations.” In his “Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1-5,” 296, Gitay traces the rhetorical situation of 3:1-15 from vv.3-8 where Amos is “making a special effort to influence his audience.”

⁵² Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 105.

⁵³ A similar example can be found in Brian K Blount, *A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Simon of Cyrene: Mark 15:21 and Its Parallels*, *Semeia*, 171-198.

spiral linear structure of Isa 40-55, the chiasmic/ring structure of Isa 56-66, the combination of chiasmic and linear structure of Isa 1-12.⁵⁴ Similarly, the historical setting for DI is more exilic, for TI more post-exilic while for PI more multidimensional.⁵⁵ Stromberg observes that while PI “looks forward to the role of Cyrus in rebuilding the Jewish temple (chs. 44-45)”, TI “seems to assume that the temple is already built, or that its building already under way (56:1-8; 66:1, 20).”⁵⁶

Meanwhile, also well noted, there is also literary-thematic development throughout these three sections that attest to the unity of *Isa*. *Isa* demonstrates not only redactional layers, editing and re-editing, but also a *unity* even if not in the sense of authorial unity. For the former and the latter, Clements (1982) writes respectively,

There are also many indications... to show that the contents of the book have passed through a number of *stages of ordering and redaction* and that what we now have is the *result of a process of editing and addition*.⁵⁷

When we look at the Book of Isaiah as it now exists, we can discover a considerable number of indications that it has been assembled over a long period, but with a very clear concern to group prophecies in *a thematic fashion*.⁵⁸

He illustrates his statements with the examples of “the ‘Babylon’ prophecies of Isaiah 13:1-14:23”; ch.35 as a summarized ‘digest’ of chs. 40-55; and the transitional chs. 36-39 that “assist the reader in making the transition from the ‘Assyrian’ part of the book (1-35) to the ‘Babylonian’ part (40-66);” the passages assuring the return of Yahweh’s people to Zion (11:12-15; 19:23; 27:12-13); and the theme of blindness and deafness.⁵⁹ As Clements states, the editorial unity belongs to a late stage in the book’s compilation while “the overall unity belongs more prominently to the understanding of the book as a whole rather than it being a superficial stage of development.”⁶⁰

Similarly, Sweeney in his book *Isaiah 1-4 and the Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (1988) states also that the redactional unity of *Isa* can be evidenced particularly by the role of Babylon in chs. 1-39, the transitional function of chs. 36-39, the function and position of *Isa* 35, the relationship between ch.1 and the rest of the book, and the structure and presentation of the materials in chs. 1-39.⁶¹ Besides, Laato’s book title, “*About Zion I will not be Silent*” *The Book of Isaiah as an Ideological Unity* (1998), is telling enough on the unity of *Isa*.

⁵⁴ Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah*, 14, 30-32.

⁵⁵ Laato, *Composition of the Book of Isaiah*,

⁵⁶ Stromberg, *Introduction*, 42.

⁵⁷ Clements, ‘Unity,’ 121, Italics added.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 120. Italics added.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 120-126.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 121.

⁶¹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 11-25.

In line with the above scholars and many others, this current study offers a way of understanding the unity of Isa through the (im)perception theme in the sense that its final form demonstrates a sustained reflection on this theme and its development.

1.3.4 Summary

Biblical texts have three dimensions: literary, historical and theological, hence inviting approaches which can address any one, or any two, or all three of these dimensions. In my literary-thematic study, I address mainly to the literary and theological dimensions while bearing in mind, yet not been bound by, the historical dimensions.

Regarding the mechanics of how the theme was pursued in Isa. 40-66, there have been a number of approaches, which relate in different ways to the modern tendency to read Isaiah wholistically. One example is the thesis of B. D. Sommer, who found the widespread use of allusion in those chapters, not only to Isa 1-39, but also to other prophets.⁶² Philip Stern observed the motif of “blindness” running through Isa 40-55, and also linked to earlier chapters in the book.⁶³ And Rolf Rendtorff claimed that the first readers of Isa 56-66 were also readers of those chapters.⁶⁴ We will notice examples of these, and other approaches, when we deal with chs. 40-66.

The literary-thematic approach undertaken in this study investigates how the literary structure, genre and literary devices of the selected Isaianic texts serve the development of (im)perception theme. I will conduct the investigation of the development of the (im)perception theme throughout Isa under four main sections, that is, Isa 1-12, 28-35, 40-55 and 56-66.

⁶² Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*.

⁶³ Stern, “Blind Servant”.

⁶⁴ Rendtorff, “Isaiah 56:1 as a Key to the Formation of the Book of Isaiash,” 181-189.

2 The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 1-12

In Isa 1-12, Isa 1 is the introduction to Isa, while Isa 5 and 7:1-9:6 are the close literary contexts of Isa 6 concerning the (im)perception theme. These passages are selected to demonstrate what role the (im)perception theme plays and to what other themes or motifs it is related in these Isaianic texts.

2.1 The Imperception Theme in Isa 1:2-31

The use of שמע and און in Isa 1:2, 10, ידע and בין in vv.2-3, ראה in v.12, עין and שמע in v.15, and שמע in v.19 attests a high frequency of semantic terms of “perception” in Isa 1. Besides, the reminiscence between 1:2-3 and 6:9-10, in particular, using the pair, בין ... ידע, indicates that “the main topic in the very first verses of the Book of Isaiah is the hardening and stubbornness of the people.”⁶⁵ In the analysis below, the structure and a literary-thematic analysis of 1:2-31, and how each subsection of 1:2-31 is interconnected, all pave ways to the investigation of the imperception theme in 1:2-31.

2.1.1 The Structure of Isa 1:2-31

Isa 1:2-31 can be demarcated into vv.2-9, 10-17, 18-20, 21-26 and 27-31 based on the following markers.

Firstly, the first two subsections are demarcated by the poetic parallelism between v.2a and v.10a, both of which start with two imperative verbal forms, שמעו... והאזיני, a calling to ‘hear’ and ‘give ear’ to YHWH’s word/speaking, hence seemingly resulting in two parallel panels, vv. 2-9 and 10-20.

Secondly, יהוה יאמר in v.18 and כי פי יהוה דבר in v.20 form an inclusio, enclosing four lines opened by אה, hence resulting in a further subsection, vv.18-20, in which the announcement of the cleansing of their sins (v.18) is followed by two contrasting opposite fates of the two choices.

Thirdly, איכה at the beginning of v.21 introduces a new subsection, where קרייה נאמנה of v.21 and v.26 also form an inclusio of the subsection of vv.21-26, united by the theme of the restoration of the faithful and righteous city, by the repetition of some of the themes of vv.21-23 in vv.24-26,⁶⁶ and by the chiasmic structure as follows.⁶⁷

A—v. 21a: faithful city has become a whore
B—v. 21b: once מצדק, משפט but now murderers
C—v. 22: silver turned to dross; wine diluted

⁶⁵ Laato, *Message*, 206.

⁶⁶ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 126.

⁶⁷ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 67.

D—v. 23: crimes of leaders and people
 E—v. 24a: therefore declares the Lord of hosts
 D1—v. 24b: I will punish enemies for their crimes
 C1—v. 25: I will smelt away your dross
 B1—v. 26a: and restore judges and counsellors as before
 A1—v. 26b: afterward you will be called faithful city

Finally, v.29 is linked closely to v.28 by the initial כִּי, while no conjunction or connection exists between v.26 and v.27 while Isa 2:1 marks a new literary unit, thus, 1:27-31 is left as another subsection, marked by the fronting of ‘Zion’ (v.27) which is not named in 1:21-26, and the variation on the theme of 21-26.

2.1.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 1:2-31

2.1.2.1 Isa 1:2-9

1:2-9 can be further demarcated as follows:

vv.2-3: a call to all the creation concerning YHWH’s direct accusation of Israel’s rebellion and imperception.
 v.4: a description of errant Israel: sinful yet abandoning and despising the holy God.
 vv. 5-6: a rhetorical question followed by a metaphor of Israel’s suffering as a battered body.
 vv. 7-9: a description of destroyed Israel as an abandoned field and the survivors’ exclaiming over their near extinction.

Firstly, vv.2-3 start with a calling to ארץ and שמים, which forms a merism, hence indicating all creation as the addressee, to listen and give heed to YHWH’s direct speech (v.2a) about his people Israel (vv.2b-3) in which he accused them, though they are his children, of their rebellion and imperception.

The syntax⁶⁸ of v.2b lays emphasis on the contrast between *how Israelites are treated by YHWH* with *how they treat YHWH*: YHWH raised and brought them up, but they repaid YHWH with rebellion. Besides, as Beuken observes, גדל and רום bring a maternal nuance to the image of God, while פשע is an extremely harsh word for “sin”, hence giving Isa a sombre background at the beginning.⁶⁹

Then, in v.3 the imperception of Israel is compared with the perception of two domesticated animals, the ox and the ass: while an ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s crib, Israel, YHWH’s people, do not know or understand. One verb from the category of understanding, ידע, is applied to two kinds of animals, שור and המור (v.3a), while two verbs from this category used in negative sense, לא ידע and לא התבונן, are used for the one people: Israel. That is to say, whereas the ox and ass are

⁶⁸ Note the fronting of the noun בנים and the pronoun הם, respectively the object v.2ba and the subject of v.2bβ, both referring to Israel.

⁶⁹ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 70.

characterized as ‘knowing’, Israel is portrayed as ‘not knowing’ and ‘not understanding’ - two synonyms from the ‘perception’ category in negative sense. seeming to indicate Israel has no perception at all. This contrast is even more striking if we know that:

Among animals to be studied for wisdom lessons, however, oxen and donkeys are not the ones customarily praised. On the contrary, people are exhorted against behaving like such animals (Ps 32:9; Prov 7:22; 26:3). But here these beasts of burden are declared smarter than Israel.⁷⁰

Williamson’s detailed observations on the sarcasm on Israelites’ imperception is worth quoting here.

In the first line [of 1:3], there is *a conscious decline from the ox to the ass* which is matched by the movement *from the owner* as the object of the ox's knowledge/recognition *to the master's crib or feeding trough of the ass's*; hence the '(even)' added in translation—*even the dullest of creatures is aware of the source of its sustenance*. This, then, sets the context for the introduction of the people, who are contrasted with this unflattering comparison, indicated by the addition of '(but)' in the translation. The contrast is made explicit by the use of the same verb as governed the first line, ידע, now negated. The second half of the second line, however, also takes the issue further: *'Israel' is now called 'my people', to indicate a closer relationship, making their behavior the more unnatural, startling and so reprehensible*. It is thus fully justified to see the last word of the verse as marking some kind of nadir in the downward cycle—*my people do not even have as much understanding as the ass, who at least knows which side his bread is buttered; in fact, they have no understanding 'at all'*.⁷¹

All these demonstrate that the contrast with ox and ass emphasizes the perversity of Israel’s imperception.⁷² Simultaneously, there are no objects to the verbs ידע or בין in v. 3b. The ambiguity remains as what YHWH here accuses Israelites of their not knowing or understanding, the answer to which may be revealed in the remaining of Isa 1.

Secondly, the subject of v.4 is described with four expressions, three of which are all constituted by a noun followed by a verb in participle form (v.4a), while all four terms (משהייתם, עון, חטא and מרעים) are in striking contrast with the object (קדוש ישראל). As Beuken states, the term קדוש ישראל has

both an ethical side and a side aimed at God’s direction of history. It is precisely because YHWH is holy that he has chosen to bring judgment upon Israel, since the latter has rejected him (1:4; 5:18f.24; 30:8-14; 31:1; 37:23-25). But his holiness also shines forth in his desire to move his people to acts of righteousness. "The Holy One of Israel" represents his desire and ability to purify the people and to bind them to himself anew (5:16; 6:3; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7f.; 30:15). In this title lies hidden the whole secret of his dealings with his people.⁷³

⁷⁰ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 53.

⁷¹ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 24, Italics added.

⁷² Cf. Aitken, “Hearing and Seeing”, 14, in which he writes “the perversity of Israel’s conditions is emphasized through the contrast with ox and ass.”

⁷³ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 67.

The irony is telling that the sinful Israel despises the holy YHWH. What Israel does to YHWH in v.4b, expressed through the verbs עזב, נאץ and זור, is about, as Wildberger maintains, “the overall breaking away from the daily relationship with YHWH ... the refusal to trust and be obedient.”⁷⁴

Reading v.4 after vv.2-3 even enhances the irony that YHWH, the holy one of Israel, should have the absolute right to forsake or despise the sinful Israel, yet instead, he raised and brought them up, but they forsook and despised him in return. Besides, it also enhances YHWH’s accusation of their rebellion and imperception: it is indeed *a failure of ‘understanding’ for Israel to forsake or despise YHWH*, the one who brought them up and who is the holy one of Israel.

Thirdly, in vv.5-6, the rhetorical questions, על מה תכו עוד תוסיפו סרה (v.5a) are followed by the description of a lack of soundness in their mind, heart and body (vv.5b-6). The inclusiveness is emphasized by the twofold כל (v.5b), the מכף רגל ועד ראש (v.6a), the three types of wounds (v.6c) and three types of negations of healing (v.6c). On the one hand, as Tull states, “the assumption behind the rhetorical question ... is that the power to stop this treatment is in the people’s hands if they will only change what they are doing.”⁷⁵ On the other hand, it also suggests that even having experienced so complete brokenness in their mind, heart and body, Israel have still not yet changed what they are doing, that is, they are still *imperceptive and obdurate to know the need to repent*. Once again, their root problem is seen as imperception.

Fourthly, in vv.7-9, v.7 describes with a fivefold destruction of Judah, while יתר of v.8 and שריד of v.9 both depict Judah as only a remnant, or survivors. the survivors, or remnant, of Judah. They together demonstrate that, though those who have seen Judah were almost wholly destroyed which happened נגדכם (‘in front of you’), their remaining existence is because YHWH of hosts has preserved them as a remnant. The image of vv.7-9 resonates with the Assyrian invasion of 701 BCE (Isa 36-37), attested in the Sennacherib inscription. However, it may also be applied to events of 597BCE, 587BCE and even other historical events. As Beuken maintains, while

a reference to Sennacherib’s 701 campaign against Judah and Jerusalem is often assumed (cf. v 8: "a besieged city"). Certainty cannot be reached here, but a clear reference may not be intended at all. The book's opening would then be so open and at the same time so stringent as to allude equally to the various national catastrophes that occur in the course of the book.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 23.

⁷⁵ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 56.

⁷⁶ Translated from Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 69. “Vor allem aber wird oft eine Bezugnahme auf Sanheribs Feldzug gegen Juda und Jerusalem aus dem Jahre 701 angenommen (vgl. V 8: »eine belagerte Stadt«). Sicherheit ist hier nicht zu erreichen, aber eine eindeutige Bezugnahme ist vielleicht gar nicht intendiert. Die Bucheröffnung wäre dann so offen und zugleich so stringent gestaltet, dass sie auf die verschiedenen, im Laufe des Buches auftretenden nationalen Katastrophen gleicherweise anspielt.”

It is noteworthy that the prophet who has identified himself with YHWH in the previous verses (vv.2-8) is now identifying himself with the remnant of Israel in v.9 through first person plural verbs. “If not...we would have been like...” (v.9) indicates the prophet’s perception. The comparing of them with סדם and עמרה once again emphasizes their sinful state and that they are liable to destruction on the one hand, and on the other hand their current existence is purely due to YHWH’s mercy and salvation. The perception indicated by v.9a stands strikingly in contrast with the imperception that has been accused in and shown by the previous verses.

To conclude, 1:2-9 do not specify what Israel does not know or understand, what their specific sins are, in what specific ways they abandon or despise YHWH or by what specific means they should repent, but just generally describe their stubborn and desolate situations. Meanwhile it is encouraging at the very end of this subsection that at least the prophet, if not also the perceptive group he represents, understands what YHWH is doing among Israel.

2.1.2.2 *Isa 1:10-17*

This section starts in v.10 with a similar opening calling to v.2, yet this time not to the heavens and the earth but to סדמי קציני (‘rulers of Sodom’) and עמרה (‘people of Gomorrah’). As Sodom and Gomorrah refer to Israel in v.9, the address in v.10 therefore includes both the rulers and people of Israel, the latter of which who has been referred about and to in vv.2b-9.

Then, like vv.5-6, the accusations in vv.10-17 are led by two rhetorical questions starting with למה לי (v.11) and מי (v.12b), the higher frequency of which also suggests the severity of their condition, which is further evidenced in YHWH’s speaking of their sacrifices, offerings and assemblies with שבעתי (‘I’ve had enough of,’ v.11), לא הפצתי (‘I did not delight in,’ v.11), רמס הצרי (‘trampling my court,’ v.12), תועבה היא לי (‘an abomination to me,’ v.13), שנאה נפשי (‘my soul hates,’ v.14a), נלאיתי (‘I am weary of bearing,’ v.14b). Then, the rhetorical-question sections (vv.11, 12-14) are followed by YHWH’s announcement of his response that even though they pray, YHWH will hide eyes from them, neither will he listen (v.15). It is worth noting, as Williamson notes, that אעלים עיני is

an unusual expression, not used elsewhere with God as subject ... When used of people, the expression signifies a deliberate decision to disregard something (Lev. 20.4; Ezek. 22.26; Prov. 28.27)—to turn a blind eye.... The point here is simply that, although God is aware that the people are praying, he deliberately refuses to pay attention because of their ethical guilt.”⁷⁷

Reading this unusual expression in light of imperception theme, and in the context of God’s people despising and disregarding him, and not understanding him or his commandments, this unusual

⁷⁷ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 97.

expression is a deliberate wordplay, denoting that what they will receive from God is actually what they are doing: not paying due or required attention.

Finally, this section ends up with an exhortation of ceasing evil, doing good, seeking משפט, correcting oppression, bringing משפט to the orphan, and pleading for the widow (vv.16-17).

Overall, vv.10-17 reveal what Israel and their rulers have been doing – practicing rituals and evils simultaneously – and how YHWH feels about their behavior, as well as what they should be doing. By this, their imperception of the essence of worship is revealed, hence a call to perceive the משפט and care for the weak as essential part of their worship of YHWH.

2.1.2.3 *Isa 1:18-20*

A note of polite urgency לכו נא, the cohortative ונוכחה, and the divine speech formula יאמר יהוה at v.18a and the divine speech formula כי פי יהוה דבר at v.20b all work together to attract the audience/readers' attention to what is between v.18a and v.20b, that is, the four lines opened by אם. It is noteworthy that אם is used “as concessive part., **even though, even if,**” in v.18b, while “conditional part., **if,** introducing protasis” in v.19 and v.20a.⁷⁸

Both v.18b and v.18c, by undertaking the devices of simile (through the four uses of preposition כ), contrast (scarlet/red/crimson vs white/snow/wool), the chiasmic syntax (V-N-N-V) and the use of אם in concessive sense, announce the cleansing of their sins. Vv.19-20 use the same verbal root אכל respectively used in active and passive forms, in the apodoses of the if-conditional clauses to bring out two opposite fates of the two choices. The reoccurrence of the root שמע at v.19, after its use in v.2 and v.10, sets the whole of vv.2-20 as the object of the people's hearing/perception. Besides, the offering of the two options (vv.19-20a) also depends on their perception to make the right choice, the choice of life, not the choice of death. Moreover, the use of יכח, which has been translated variously as “argue it out” (NRSV), “reach an understanding” (Tanakh), “reason together” (KJV, RSV, NIV, NASB), “consider your options” (NET), “talk this over” (NJB), “settle our differences,” also calls upon their understanding/perception, for it is “an appeal to reason”.⁷⁹

Therefore, in this short subsection, vv.18-20, the theme of perception is present.

⁷⁸ CDCH, s.v. “אם,” 22.

⁷⁹ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 65.

2.1.2.4 *Isa 1:21-26*

In the first half of the chiasmic structure of vv.21-26, vv.21-23 contrasts the current lamentable situation with the past: the opening exclamatory *איכה* again functions to attract the addressees' attention and a contrast is made between *לזונה* ('a whore') on the one hand and faithfulness, *צדקה/צדק*, and *משפט* on the other hand. In comparison, the second half, vv.24-26, announces the future will restore the past – note the verb *ואשיבה* and two כ-words (*כבראשנה* and *כבתחלה*) in v.26a. In the centre of the structure are firstly the epithets of YHWH, who is called *ישראל אביר צבאות יהוה* (v.24) – ancient terms associated with war, emphasizing YHWH's lordship, victory and mightiness, hence associating well with what YHWH is going to do in vv.24-26 – and secondly YHWH's vengeance on his foes/enemies (v.24b), and restoration of Israel that has now been purged (vv.25b-26).

The elaboration of their current degenerate situation (v.21) focuses specifically on their economic life (v.22) and political life (v.23). While it is *שריך* who are accused in v.23, the restored are *שפטיך* and *ויעציך* in v.26a. While *שריך* ('your rulers') is more a general term, *שפטיך* and *ויעציך* catches the fundamental characteristics that rulers should have had, judging justly and wisely, who are here contrasted starkly with their current rulers who are characterized as 'rebels, thieves, loving bribe and gifts, not bringing *משפט* for the fatherless or widow' in v.23.

There are no semantic terms of "(im)perception" in vv.21-26, although the exclamatory *איכה* draws the addressees' attention, hence their perception, to their degenerated situation in comparison with the past, to who YHWH is (the mighty warrior), to what the relationship is between YHWH and them (now enemies, cf. parents and children in v.2-3), and to what YHWH is going to do (refining the whole society to resume faithfulness, *צדקה/צדק*, and *משפט*).

2.1.2.5 *Isa 1:27-31*

This final section of Isa 1 announces the overall salvation of Zion (v.27) and two opposite fates for the repentant on the one hand (v.27b) and for the unrepentant on the other hand (vv.28-31): like Zion who will be redeemed by *משפט*, so will the repentant by *צדקה*, while the unrepentant will be destroyed and ashamed. The unrepentant (vv.28-31) include the rebellious, the sinful, those who forsake YHWH (*ועזבי יהוה* and *פשעים, חטאים*) – note that v.28 repeats the terms of v.4, while vv.29-30, through the *כי* at the beginning of v.29 and v.30, further identifying them with those who have desired and chosen oaks and garden, who are usually associated with idolaters – and the strong (v.31).

In terms of the theme of (im)perception, there are no lexemes falling into this category. However, it is noteworthy that *איילים* and *הגנות* mentioned here are associated with idolatry in the latter part of

Isaiah, esp. Isa 57:5; 65:3 and 66:17. Besides, the use of *המר* and *בהר* is deliberately chosen to indicate “an active and deliberate pursuit”, and that “they are fully responsible for their own fate” on the one hand,⁸⁰ and on the other hand to be contrasted strikingly and ironically with YHWH’s delight in choosing Israel as his servants in 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2; 49:7. As seen in later chapters of this dissertation, all the above passages from Isa 40-66 are related to the theme of (im)perception.

2.1.3 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 1:2-31

The literary-thematic analysis of Isa 1:2-31 above has shown that “speaker, addressees, social setting, subject of complaint, dominant metaphors, and even dominant claims shift through the course of this first speech,” which is one of the main reason why very few scholars would dispute that Isa 1 is the result of incorporation of several different speeches.⁸¹ However, I have also briefly mentioned above how the different subsections of Isa 1 are interconnected, a further detailed elaboration of which will be shown below, which will in turn demonstrate that the different subsections of Isa 1 are not simply connected with “catchwords”, but rather in Isa 1, there is “a thematic unity and forward movement that suggests intentional rhetorical development.”⁸²

2.1.3.1 *Interconnectedness of vv.2-9 and 10-17*

Vv.2-9 and 10-17 are two parallel panels, not only because of their similar openings (v.2a, v.10a), use of rhetorical questions (v.5, 11, 12) and accusation of Israel’s iniquities (*עון* in v.4 and v.13), but also because of how v.10 picks up v.9 immediately, hence linking the second panel with the first one.

When examining these two panels more closely, we find that the second panel expands, heightens and renders specific meaning or effect to the first one. While vv.2-9 start with an address to all the creatures to hear God’s accusation about Israel (vv.2-4), its addressee is then implicitly changed to Israel in vv.5-9 where Israel is no longer referred to in third person as in vv.2-4, but in second person. Then, the call to attention of v.10a is explicitly addressed to *קציני סדם* (‘rulers of Sodom’) and *עם עמרה* (‘people of Gomorrah’), inclusive of both the rulers and people of Israel. Thus, from v.2 to v.17, there is a movement of the change of addressees from all creation explicitly, to Israel implicitly and then to rulers and people of Israel explicitly. Besides, vv.2-9 do not specify what the Israelites do not know or understand, what their specific sins are, in what specific ways they abandon or despise

⁸⁰ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 160.

⁸¹ Cf. Laato, *Message*, 205, states, “Isaiah 1 is an amalgamation of several Isaianic texts which have been recomposed and edited together”. Cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 101-133; Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 7-162, gives several examples how some parts of Isa 1 can be regarded as originating (partly) from Isaiah; Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 50.

⁸² Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 50.

YHWH or by what specific means they should repent, but just generally describe their stubborn and desolate situations. However, in comparison, vv.10ff zoom in to specifically describe their inconsistency between rituals and lack of social righteousness and gives specific direction on what and how to repent. Therefore, though vv.10-17 are seemingly a parallel panel of vv.2-9, it is actually a specifying extension of it. The same is true of the imperception theme. While the first panel emphasizes Israel's imperception in terms of rebelling against YHWH and not knowing the need to repent, the second panel focuses on their imperception of what YHWH really delights in and requires.

2.1.3.2 *Interconnectedness of vv. 18-20 and 2-17*

The phrase *כי פי יהוה דבר* at the end of v.20 forms an inclusio with *יאמר יהוה* of v.18 at the smallest unit, and also with *כי יהוה דבר* of v.2 at the broader unit, bring vv.2-20 together. As Williamson states, v.18 has a role of “introducing the concluding section [vv.18-20] of the whole of vv.2-20.”⁸³

Three subsections, vv.2-9, 10-17 and 18-20 share the similarities of the same root *שמע* in vv.2, 10 and 19, and of the mention of Israel's sins/iniquities/evil (vv.4, 13, 16, 18). It is noteworthy that there is a development among them. Though the first two subsections have accusations against Israel, the second one is more specific than the first one in terms of Israel's sins, and more elaborate in YHWH's *feeling* about Israel's doing. Besides, the first one further demonstrates YHWH's judgement and mercy (vv.5-9), while the second one YHWH's exhortation (vv.16-17). Then, the third one offers cleansing of sins and the life-or-death options. Therefore, the urgency of YHWH's exhortation to Israel's response and perception is enhanced throughout the development from vv.2-9, to 10-17 and to 18-20.

2.1.3.3 *Interconnectedness of vv.21-26 with vv.2-20 and vv.27-31*

It is noteworthy that vv.21-26 are linked backward with vv.11-17 through the drawing of *ורייב אלמנה* at the last line of v.23 on the climax of vv.16-17, and that of *ועתה מרצחים* at the last line of v.21 on the climax of the indictment in vv.11-15 (*ידיכם דמים מלא*) ‘your hands are full of blood’ at the last line of v.15).⁸⁴ Similarly, vv.27-31 are linked backward to vv.2-26 in several ways. Firstly, similar to vv.21-26, v.27a is themed at the redemption of Zion through *משפט* and *צדקה*.⁸⁵ Secondly, the use of *חמד* (to choose) in v.29 also enhances the choices offered in vv.19-20. Thirdly, the division between the repentant and the unrepentant among the people highlighted by vv.27b-31 further develop from

⁸³ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*. 115.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁸⁵ Beuken, *Jeseja 1-12*, 69. Berges, *Zion*, 199.

vv.19-20 and vv.21-26. Fourthly, v.28 repeats v.4 through the use of *וּעֲזָבִי יְהוָה*, *פְּשָׁעִים*, *חַטָּאִים* and *וּעֲזָבִי יְהוָה*, hence extending its connection beyond vv.21-26 and 19-20 to vv.2-9. In such a way, vv.21-31 are interconnected with vv.2-20. Besides, vv.21-26 function as a natural transition from vv.2-20 to vv.27-31 in the sense that the former ends with a stark choice for the people to choose (vv.19-20), while the latter further develops that division among the people. Therefore, vv.21-26, standing in between vv.2-20 and vv.27-31, explain how the division is made – through YHWH's intervention.⁸⁶

2.1.4 The Imperception Theme in Isa 1:2-31

Among all the extant themes in Isa 1, it is noteworthy that after the superscription (1:1), this significant opening chapter, Isa 1, starts with a call to heavens and the earth to hear about Israel's *imperception* which is striking when their imperception is compared with the perception of the ox and donkeys. As the introduction to such an extensive work as Isa, it is advisable to consider why Isa 1 presents the themes as it presents but not other themes.

The significance of the (im)perception theme lies not least in its significant position (at the very first speech, vv.2-3) in this significant chapter, in the literary techniques of the language of vv.2-3, and also in its association with other themes, in the rest of Isa 1.

1:2-20 draws the address's attention, their physical perception, to their spiritual imperception which is demonstrated in their indulging in their sinful state, stubbornness and their false worship. This is then followed by 1:21-31, the central theme of which is the purification of Zion as the means of restoration of the faithfulness, *מִשְׁפָּט* and *צְדָקָה*. In such a way, the (im)perception theme relates to the theme of *צְדָקָה*, including the right attitude towards YHWH – choosing YHWH not idols, really honouring him rather than just executing vain rituals – and the right attitudes towards the marginalized people in the society. This is, therefore, a right relationship with YHWH and with human beings.

2.2 The Imperception Theme in Isa 5

The (im)perception theme occurs in the three out of five woe oracles of Isa 5. In the second oracle (vv.11-17), there are lexemes of both the physical perception (*נָבֵט* and *רָאָה* in v.12b) and intellectual perception (*דַּעַת* in v.13). Similarly, *רָאָה* and *עֲצָת* ('counsel') occur in v.19 in the third oracle (vv.18-19). The fifth oracle (v.21) also targets the imperceptive people "who are wise in their own eyes, and

⁸⁶ Cf. Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 127.

shrewd in their own sight.” (הוי חכמים בעיניהם ונגד פניהם נבנים). If we include the fourth oracle (v.20), then four out of five woe oracles of Isa 5 associate YHWH’s accusation or judgment towards his people with the (im)perception theme. I will show in the analysis below how each subsection of Isa 5 is interconnected, and how this interconnectedness demonstrates how the theme of (im)perception is related to other thematics in Isa 5.

2.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 5

Isa 5 can be demarcated into three major subsections: vv.1-7, 8-24, 25-30. The first subsection is marked out by the inclusio formed by כרם (“vineyard”, in vv.1 and 7), while vv.8-24 form a self-contained subsection through the series of woe calls, began by הוי. Besides, linguistically, the difference between לכן with imperfect verbal form (v 24aβ: “So their root will be like mustard, and their flower will stir up like dust”) and על-כן with perfect verbal form (v 25: “The anger of Yhwh is kindled against his people”) marked the division between v.24 and v.25. Thus, Isa 5 is made up of three subsections: the vineyard song (vv.1-7), the announcement of judgement oracles (vv.8-24), and the actualization of the judgment (vv.29-30).

2.2.1.1 Isa 5:1-7

Isa 5:1-7 is known as the song of the vineyard, which is beautifully crafted to bring out how YHWH is disappointed by his vineyard which he has looked after so well and for which he has a great hope. The repetition of the root קוה in vv.2, 4 and 7 demonstrates how YHWH’s hope for his vineyard turns out to be nothing but disappointment.

Vv.1-7 are made up of a chiasmic structure: a-b-c-b’-a’. While v.1 functions as the prologue and v.7 the epilogue, v.2 and vv.5-6 are respectively what YHWH did and will do to his vineyard. In the centre is vv.3-4, which, after addressing addressees to judge between YHWH and his vineyard, poses two rhetorical questions led by מה and מדוע respectively, both of which indicate YHWH’s despair of his vineyard, which in turn then marks the change from YHWH’s caring for his vineyard to abandoning it now and onwards. It is ironic that v.3 addresses “inhabitants of Jerusalem, men of Judah” to judge between YHWH and his vineyard, while v.7a finally reveals that the referent of the repeatedly mentioned כרם or כרמי (vv.1, 3, 4, 5) is actually בית ישראל and ואיש יהודה. Similarly, the referents of grapes and wild grapes mentioned at the end of both v.2 and v.4 are respectively revealed as צדקה/משפט and bloodshed/outcry at v.7b. Therefore, the lack of צדקה/משפט among YHWH’s people is finally revealed as the key to YHWH’s disappointment with them.

It is noteworthy that while in v.1 the “I”-figure introduces YHWH as “my beloved” (ידידי) and the song as “my love song” (שירת דודי literally “a song of my love”), vv.2-7 are all about YHWH and his vineyard the Israelites. This difference would lead us to ask what function does the love relationship between “I” and YHWH have in this context? Rhetorically, it does not simply contrast strikingly with the Israelites-and-YHWH relationship but also makes the Israelites’ disappointing response to YHWH’s care and hope bear all the deserved blame, and also justifies YHWH’s abandoning them.

2.2.1.2 *Isa 5:8-24*

Vv.5:8-24 are composed of six woe-oracles. The first woe oracle (vv.8-10) is linked back to vv.1-7 through the catchwords כרם and עשה (both at v.10) which occur seven times in vv.1-7,⁸⁷ and through its theme of “injustice leading to desolation and a low yield from the vineyard.”⁸⁸ The swearing formula אם לא (v.9a) emphasizes the irrevocability of the punishments, which in turn tells loud and clear the severity of the wickedness of the accused’s behaviour in v.8, that is, their acquisition of בית, שדה and מקום to the extent of disregarding others’ fundamental right to dwell in the land as free citizens. This behaviour is so wicked because the land itself is a great gift of God and a principle also enshrined in the Decalogue (Ex.20:17; Deut.5:33). Here, YHWH is provoked to issue punishments in such a certain way that he swears to do so. The contents of the punishments include firstly the desolation and uninhibitedness of the many large and beautiful houses (v.9b) and secondly the disproportion between the arable land and its crop yields of wine and grain (v.10). These punishments, following the accusation of v.8 concerning the accused’s acquisition of land, field and space, satirically reveal the vanity and uselessness of their greedily accumulating real estate, be they the living house or the arable land. Their unjust and unrighteous behaviour (v.8) justifies the seemingly unjust desolation and produce of the land (vv.9-10).

The second woe oracle (vv.11-17) continues the vineyard theme in the sense that both שכר and יין are made from grapes grown in a vineyard. The two parallel colons in v.11 depict the accused’s obsession with alcohol in three ways. Firstly, משכימי בבקר (‘rise up in the morning’) and מאחרי בנשף (‘tarry late in the evening’) form a merism of “the whole day”. Secondly, as Williamson comments, the verb רדף (‘to pursue’) used here with שכר “is suggestive of something which one makes the whole object of life.”⁸⁹ Thirdly, the development of alcohol from being an object (“running after strong drinks”) to being a subject (“wine inflames them”) vividly depicts that the accused are so

⁸⁷ Ibid., 349.

⁸⁸ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 144.

⁸⁹ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 370.

addicted to alcohol that they are even inflamed by it, which is tantamount to that being controlled by it.

In v.12, v.12a goes beyond the alcohol abuse more broadly to feasts in which more forms of entertainment, in particular forms of music, are added, while v.12b emphasizes what they have not looked up to or seen by fronting the objects יהוה את פעל and ומעשה ידיו, that is, their eyes paid no attention to YHWH's activity and deed. As for what activity or deed is referred to here, Williamson holds that although

creation of Israel (e.g., 45.11; 60.21; 64.7) or of Assyria (19.25), past blessing (5.4), present threat (5.19; 10.12, 23) and future promise (e.g. 29.23; 43.13; 62.11) may all be included... it is probable that we shall conclude that it is God's general care for the nation in its past history that will have been uppermost in his mind.⁹⁰

Besides, as Korpel observes, this passage contrasts strikingly with Ps.92:2-5 'Whereas the psalmist rises early in the morning (בקר) to praise his God and plays the כנור and נבל to sing about his פעל and his מעשי יד, the drunken leaders [rise early in the morning and tarry late in the evening only to seek self-pleasure but] forget the work of YHWH.'⁹¹ More than its telling of the impiety of the drunken and the self-pleasure seekers, as Beuken states,

Die Begriffe »das Tun JHWHs/das Werk (seiner Hände)« ordnen den Weheruf in den größeren Zusammenhang des Jesajabuches ein, das der Mühe Gottes mit Israel in der Geschichte und dem rechten Verständnis dafür viel Aufmerksamkeit schenkt (פעל mit Gott als Subjekt: 40,10; 41,4; 43,13; 45,9.11; 62,11; 5,4 :[מעשה]מ; 19; 9,6; 10,12.23; 12,5; 19,25; 22,11; 25,1; 28,21; 29,16.23; 33,13; 37,32; 38,15; 40,23; 41,4.20; 42,16; 43,7.19; 44,23f.; 45,7.12.18; 46,4.10; 48,3.5.11.14; 57,16; 60,21; 64,7; Porath, Sozialkritik 1994, 129f.). Vor diesem Hintergrund kommt das angeklagte Verhalten einer Leugnung Gottes gleich.⁹²

Although the originality of the sayings in vv.13-17, their order and dates are disputed,⁹³ the final form still sees some links between v.11-12 and each of vv.13-17. The word כבודו ('his nobility') in v.13, בה הדרה והמונה ושאוונה ועלזו (‘her nobles, her multitude, her revellers and her exultant ones’) in v.14, and עיני גבהים ('the eyes of the haughty') in v.15 are all in line with the drunken and self-pleasure seekers of vv.11-12. Besides, in his comments on v.13, Williamson writes, “the punishment

⁹⁰ Ibid., 371-72.

⁹¹ 'Structural Analysis', 58. Cited in Ibid., 370.

⁹² Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 150, translated: “The terms “the doing of YHWH/the work (of his hands)” place the woe cry in the larger context of the book of Isaiah, which pays much attention to God's trouble with Israel in history and the right understanding of it (פעל with God as subject: 40:10; 41:4; 43:13; 45:9, 11; 62:11; 5:4 :[מעשה]מ; 19; 9:6; 10:12, 23; 12:5; 19:25; 22:11; 25:1; 28:21; 29:16, 23; 33:13; 37:32; 38:15; 40:23; 41:4, 20; 42:16; 43:7, 19; 44:23f.; 45:7, 12, 18; 46:4, 10; 48:3, 5, 11, 14; 57:16; 60:21; 64:7; Porath, Sozialkritik 1994, 129f.). Against this background, the accused behaviour amounts to a denial of God.”

⁹³ While some regard v.17 follows more naturally to v.13 (e.g., Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 151, Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 213), some others to v.14 (e.g., Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 374).

is a reversal of the feasting and drinking of [vv.11-12.]”⁹⁴ In my view, not only the punishment of v.13, but all that of vv.13-17, is a reversal of vv.11-12, each tackling on different aspects of vv.11-12. While v.13 tackles their imperception, feasting and drinking of vv.11-12; v.14 their nobility, multitude, revelling and exulting, that is, the people and the atmosphere of the feast of vv.11-12; vv.15-16 their self-pride of engagement in pleasure all day long by humbling them yet exalting YHWH whose work they have not heeded in vv.11-12; v.17 on their feasts again by portraying the animals not as food for them in vv.11-12, but as now possessing their lands. Moreover, the לֶכֶן of v.14 following that of v.13 associates vv.14-17 not only with vv.11-12, but also with v.13, hence their lack of knowledge (v.13) accounts not only for the punishments in v.13, but also for those in vv.14-17. Furthermore, even though 5:15-16 resembles 2:9, 11, 17 so much that it is said that there must have been some literary dependence between them, it is noteworthy that 5:16 emphasizes YHWH’s exaltation⁹⁵ in מִשְׁפֹּט and צְדָקָה contrasting with Israel’s unjust and unrighteous pride and *self-pleasure*, whereas 2:9,11 focus on YHWH’s *anger* rising from Israel’s pride and *reliance on anything but YHWH*. The theme of the exaltation of YHWH is thus developed from Isa 2:6-22 to Isa 5:15-16. In the former, their pride is embodied in their reliance on anything but YHWH, while in the latter, it is embodied in their self-pleasure to the extent of disregarding מִשְׁפֹּט and צְדָקָה in which YHWH shall be exalted. Finally, sharing the same themes of 1:2-4, including heeding YHWH, knowledge and the holiness of YHWH, 5:11-17 becomes a further commentary and elaboration of 1:2-4.

The third oracle (vv.18-19) associates the iniquity and sins of the accused with their deceit, unreliable and lying behaviour and their self-defending against YHWH’s accusation in vv.12-13 through doubting YHWH’s actual intervention. The use of נִרְאֶה (‘that we may see it’) and נִדְעָה (‘that we may know it’) in v.19 links it back to vv.12, 13 in its nearest context where the same roots appear. Thus, the assumption behind their saying in v.19, in light of v.12-13, is that it is not that they did not regard YHWH’s work and deed but rather that YHWH did not work so that they could not see nor know, so that they shall be not accused of what they have been accused in vv.12-13. This saying is in fact an expression of unbelieving sarcasm, which makes them even more blameable, hence the fitting v.18. As Beuken writes, “Die Bildsprache »Stricke/Seile« bringt zum Ausdruck, dass die Zuhörerschaft das Böse fest entschlossen an sich zieht” (The imagery of “cords/ropes”

⁹⁴ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 373.

⁹⁵ Apart from 5:16, in Isa, נָגַה (‘to be high’) occurs elsewhere only in Isa 3:16 (haughty daughters of Zion); 7:11 (a sign deep as Sheol or high as heaven); 52:13 (the servant of YHWH shall be exalted); and 55:9 (‘as heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways’).

expresses the audience's firm resolve to draw evil to themselves).⁹⁶ Similarly, Williamson also writes, "The picture conjured up by the use of *drag ... along* implies that this is wilful and conscious sin; there is no possible excuse that this was in any way inadvertent. Those addressed are therefore fully responsible for the consequences that will follow."⁹⁷

The fourth woe-oracle (v.20) targets towards those who mess things up, get it upside down. האמרים continues that of v.19, targeting again on their speech or tongue.

The fifth woe-oracle (v.21) draws attention to חכמים ('the wise) and ונגד ('and the shrewd'), yet the following prepositional phrases satirize their wisdom and shrewdness, because they are so just to themselves.

The sixth oracle (vv.22-24) frames the punishment (v.24ab) with accusations led by הוי woe-cry (vv.22-23) and כי causal clauses (v.24c). In v.22, the association of גבורים with שתות יין and that of חיל with ואנשי חיל are again ironic, denoting what a waste and misuse is their might and strength to be spent only on drinking and making alcoholic drinks. Meanwhile, the accused of v.23 is more in line with the judge or political leaders. The seemingly different referents of the accused of v.22 and v.23 lead many scholars to regard v.23 as a separate woe-oracle from v.23. However, as examples elsewhere in Isaiah also demonstrate, the judges or other political leaders are usually associated with drunken or drinks to denote their insanity in undertaking their duties. Thus, it is unnecessary to attach another woe to v.23. Besides, v.24c further accuses them of rejecting the law of YHWH of hosts and despising the speech of the Holy One of Israel.

2.2.1.3 Isa 5:25-30

The על כן חרה אף יהוה בעמו at the start of 5:25 lead into the judgement oracle of 5:25-30 as YHWH's response to his people for what they have done. In v.25, its first and last lines share lexical similarities: both having YHWH's anger (אפו or אף יהוה) and his stretching out his hand (ידו or ויט ידו). The differences between the first and last lines of v.25 – at line 1, "YHWH's anger is kindled against his people", while at line 3, "his anger has *not turned away*"; similarly, "YHWH stretched out his hands" at line 1 while "his hand is stretched out *still*" at line 3 – suggests unfinishedness of YHWH's judgment, and puts the finished judgment (line 2 of v.25) in the past and present, while the judgment that follows v.25, that is, vv.26-30, in the future.

⁹⁶ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 152.

⁹⁷ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 381.

Vv.26-30 depict a terrifying image. A signal (נס) is raised and whistled to call nations מרחוק and מקצה הארץ to come (v.26), which is “metaphorical expression of God’s summoning of the nations to do his bidding for or against his people (11:10, 12; 18:3; 49:22; 62:10).”⁹⁸ In v.27, all the two negative אין phrases and four לא phrases emphasize that none of them are not ready or alert. This is followed by the fact that they are very well equipped with weapons which are ready for immediate use (v.28). Finally, they are compared to a lion roaring to seize its prey so threateningly and overwhelmingly that none can rescue (v.29), and to the growling of the sea which is related to the primordial chaos and darkness (v.30), as Beuken comments,

Das feindliche Heer heult über seine Beute Israel wie das Meer, das zusammen mit einem alles verfinsternden Dunkel immer wieder versucht, die ganze Erde ins Urchaos zurückzustürzen.⁹⁹

Both the Assyrian and Babylonian threats would fit into the depiction here. Its position before Isa 6-8 makes it fitting to refer to the Assyrian threat¹⁰⁰ while the final post-exilic redactor of the book would have also naturally envisioned the Babylonian threat.¹⁰¹ More comprehensively, Beuken claims “Damit vereinen sich die Heere von Assur, Babel und spätere mögliche Feinde Israels in einem Heereszug.”¹⁰²

2.2.2 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 5

The song of vineyard (5:1-7) is directed to the people of Israel and Judah, while the woe-oracles (5:8-24) more with the elites in the society

The woe oracles in 5:8-24 function as a commentary on 5:1-7, elaborating on the accused Israel’s lack of משפט and צדקה with more details. It is noteworthy that vv.1-7 concern the whole nation Israel-Judah, whereas each of the woe-oracles a particular aspect of the society, revealing effectively that injustice and unrighteousness have prevailed over these aspects of Israel-Judah’s society. Though some commentators argue that the people accused in vv.8-24 only include the elite people but not the whole nation, it is hard to distinguish which specific elite group is respectively referred to in each woe-oracle. Besides, עמי (v.13) and בעמו (v.25) take the whole nation into account. Thus, comparing with the task of identifying which particular group that each woe-oracle refers to, it is more

⁹⁸ Ibid., 405.

⁹⁹ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 156-57. Translated: “The enemy army howls over its prey Israel like the sea, which together with an all-eclipsing darkness tries again and again to plunge the whole earth back into primordial chaos.”

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 129-130.

¹⁰¹ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 403.

¹⁰² Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 155. Translated: “Thus, the armies of Assyria, Babylon, and later possible enemies of Israel are united in one host.”

significant to observe that so many aspects of their everyday life have been corrupted, including their accommodation, leisure activity, speech, thoughts, judgement interwoven with greed, pleasure, falsehood and bribe. Moreover, while 5:1-7 ends up with YHWH's disappointment with Israel-Judah's lack of משפט and צדקה, YHWH alone will be exalted in משפט and show himself holy in צדקה at v.16 – right in the center of 5:8-24 (note that there are seven verses both before and after v.16 in vv.8-24).

Although the term משפט or צדקה is not mentioned in 5:25-30, this final subsection in Isa 5 can be regarded as the just result of divine משפט upon Israel's unrighteous and unjust deeds, speeches and thoughts (5:8-24) which have disappointed YHWH and provoked the song of the vineyard (5:1-7).

Therefore, the three subsections of Isa 5 are interconnected, not only by catchwords but also by thematic unity.

2.2.3 The Role of the Imperception Theme in Isa 5

The significance of the imperception theme in Isa 5 is embedded in the role it plays in Isa 5 itself and how Isa 5 leads up to Isa 6.

2.2.3.1 Imperception theme in Isa 5

As analysed above, the major problem of Israel-Judah in Isa 5 is their lack of משפט and צדקה, as introduced in vv.1-7, elaborated in vv.8-24, and concluded with a summative judgment in vv.25-30.

On the one hand, it is in the woe-oracles of vv.8-24 that the key vocabulary of the imperception theme occurs. The significance of the imperception theme in vv.8-24 stands out in that the accused sins in three oracles out of all these six different woe-oracles are related to the imperception theme (the second, third and fourth oracles). This percentage is even higher than that of woe-oracles' accusation of wine-related sins (only the second and sixth oracles).¹⁰³ Therefore, overall, the imperception theme is closely related to the elaboration of their lack of משפט and צדקה. In particular, the imperception is related to their self-pleasure seeking in their drinking and feasts in the second woe-oracle (vv.11-17), with their smug speech urging YHWH's work and counsel in the third woe-oracle (vv.18-19), and with the self-deemed wise or shrewd people in the fifth woe-oracle (v.21). It is noteworthy that there is a forward movement of these three woe-oracles concerning the imperception theme in that their not heeding YHWH's deeds and work and their lack of knowledge (vv.12-13)

¹⁰³ Though 'wine' also occur in the first oracle, but it is not as accusation of sins, but as a result of their sins.

leads into their foolish urging YHWH to speed his work and counsel (v.19) and leads into the revelation of them as the self-deemed wise or shrewd people (v.21).

On the other hand, vv.1-7 shows a basic difference in perception between Israel and YHWH about the nature of Israel itself, and about the nature of משפט. This leads to the agonised cry of 5:7. But it also leads to the corruption of every part of their life, as brought out in *all* the woe-oracles. This means that the theme does not only occur in places where the key vocabulary occurs, but throughout. The key vocabulary *indicates* the centrality of the theme in the whole section. vv.19-21 are very important verses in this regard, and joined to vv. 22-23 show how imperception has its practical result in oppression and injustice. V. 15 is also very important, because its echo of ch. 2 shows that Israel has put itself among those who are liable to judgment. This also explains the pictures of judgment in 5:25-30. The devastated land in 5:30 makes a contrast with the flourishing land that YHWH had sought in vv. 1-7. And the link between Israel's imperception and judgment also help explain the *positioning* of vv. 25-30.

Therefore, the imperception theme is shown its significance in its centrality in woe-oracles in vv.8-24, which linkback to vv.1-7 by elaborating in every part of their daily life its central issue – the lack of משפט and צדקה – and forward to vv.25-30, the severity of which in turn endorses the severity of their injustice and unrighteousness.

2.2.3.2 Imperception theme in Isa 5 in relation to its literary context Isa 6

Moreover, the deliberate links between 5:8-24 and its literary context of Isa 6 prepare readers to understand why YHWH would have ever issued the harsh commission of 6:9-13 to Isaiah.

Though different from each other in style, the connections between Isa 6 and Isa 5 (esp. 5:8-24) cannot be neglected. Overall, while Isaiah the prophet laments for his people in Isa 5:8-24, he laments for himself in Isa 6, both characteristic of woe sayings (הוי in 5:8, 11, 20, 21, 22, while אוי-לי in 6:5).¹⁰⁴ Besides, in both 5:16 and 6:5, YHWH is addressed as יהוה צבאות. Furthermore, YHWH's holiness is stressed in 5:16, 24 in a comparison of Israel with God, whereas in Isa 6, "holy, holy, holy" vocalized by the Seraphim constitutes part of the vision Isaiah saw which leads him to confess of the uncleanness of his own and his people's. In addition, in both contexts, God announces his judgment towards his people (5:25-30; 6:11-13).

¹⁰⁴ Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, 136) distinguishes אוי-לי ('woe is me') from הוי ('woe!'): "'ôy is a simple ex-clamation whereas hōy appears in a number of specialized contexts including funeral laments, vocative APPEALS, ADDRESSES, warnings, and prophetic indict- ments (cf. Janzen, *Mourning Cry*, 19-20)."

In particular, each of the six woe-oracles is connected with Isa 6 in one way or the other. In the first woe-oracle (5:8-10), as Williamson notes, the phrase מעין יושב ('without inhabitant') and the root שמם ('to be desolate') appear both in 5:8-10 and 6:11. The second woe-oracle (5:11-17) clearly mentions that "my people will go to exile" in v.13, while the phrase "YHWH moves his people far away" in 6:12 is also indicative of exile. Besides, while מבלי דעת is a situation of God's people in 5:13, it is God's judgment for them in 6:9. The third woe-oracle (5:18-19) relates to Isa 6 by same terms applied. 5:18 mentions their עון and הטאה, while in 6:7 Isaiah is announced of וסר עונך והטאתך תכפר. In 5:19, these people ask God to speed his work so that they may see it and know it, and they even address God as the Holy One of Israel, whereas in 6:9 God's people will keep on seeing but not understand. The accused האמרים in the fourth woe-oracle (v.20) relates to 6:5 where Israel are men of unclean lips. Besides, it is noteworthy that the three antitheses mentioned here are good-evil, darkness-light, bitter-sweet, the first of which may relate to deeds, the second to sights, while the third to fates. The fifth woe-oracle (v.21) has two same words with 6:9, i.e., בין and עין, and indicates a wrong understanding or judging of their own, hence relating to 6:9 too. The six-oracle (5:22-24) do not share similar terms with Isa 6, although שרשם כמק יהיה in 5:24 depict a very similar picture of complete destruction of 6:13 and with the image of trees.

Therefore, even though it is widely agreed that the woe-oracles in Isa 5:8-24 have a separate origin yet were deliberately placed in their current position,¹⁰⁵ their association with Isa 6 on the imperception theme works to progress with a climax from Isa 1 to Isa 5, and provides a rationale behind God's commissioning Isaiah to harden the people in 6:9-10.

2.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 6

Isa 6 is the vital passage in investigating the theme of (im)perception in Isa, because the centre of Isaiah's mission is to proclaim their imperceptiveness and even to make them obdurate or harden them (vv.9-10).¹⁰⁶ This leads naturally to a question: why does YHWH commission Isaiah with such a task? The most obvious answer lies in v.10b, that is "lest they see ... hear... understand and returned and be healed." This indicates people's imperceptiveness, obduracy or hardening is God's judgment for them: they are due to be not healed in their obduracy so as to be judged and punished. Since destruction as God's judgement to his people pervades prophetic literature, while "obduracy as a judgment" is not common but rare and special, this in turn highlights the importance of the theme

¹⁰⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 345.

¹⁰⁶ Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, 137) holds that both Northern Kingdom Israel and Southern Kingdom Judah are embraced in "this people".

of (im)perception. As seen below, a literary-thematic analysis of Isa 6 will highlight the contrast between the prophet Isaiah's perception and this people's imperception, and the implications of this contrast. Then, I will investigate Isa 1-5 to trace the reasons why YHWH determines such a judgment for Israel, and then look into the chapters following Isa 6 to see how Isaiah executes his mission, or how Isaiah's commission is fulfilled.

2.3.1 The Structure of Isa 6

The temporal clause *בשנת מות המלך עזיהו* starts Isa 6 as a narration, differentiating itself from the previous poetic chapter Isa 5. Similarly, Isa 7:1 begins another new narrative with a temporal clause, which Isaiah has narrated in the third person versus Isaiah's first-person narration in Isa 6. Thus, Isa 6 appears here as a self-contained narrative. Structurally, Isa 6 is usually demarcated into two parts, vv.1-7 and vv.8-13, which concern respectively the vision and the commission of Isaiah. However, as far as the theme of (im)perception is concerned, Isa 6 depicts three circles of physical perception (Isaiah's seeing and hearing) and cognitive (im) perception (Isaiah's responding with *ואמר*) as structured as follows.

- 1)vv.1-5 Isaiah's seeing, hearing and response/understanding
 - 1-2 Isaiah's **seeing**.¹⁰⁷ concerning YHWH in v.1; concerning the Seraphim in v.2)
 - 3 (Isaiah's **hearing**)¹⁰⁸ the Seraphim calling
 - 4 (Isaiah's **seeing**) the effects of the Seraphim's calling in the temple
 - 5 Isaiah's **response** to what he saw and heard: exclaiming the distress of his impurity
 - 5a the impurity as caused by unclean lips relates to speaking/calling, opposite of hearing
 - 5b the impurity as caused by seeing YHWH relates to seeing
- 2)vv.6-8 Isaiah's seeing, hearing and response/understanding
 - 6-7a (Isaiah's **seeing**) the Seraphim flying with a burning coal in v.6; touching his mouth in 7a.
 - 7b (Isaiah's **hearing**) the Seraphim announcing the cleanness of his lips, guilt and sin
 - 8a Isaiah's **hearing** YHWH's calling
 - 8b Isaiah's **response** to YHWH's calling
- 3)vv.9-13 Isaiah's seeing, hearing and responding/understanding
 - 9-10 (Isaiah's **hearing**) the contents of YHWH's commissioning to him
 - 11-13 Isaiah's **response**: attempting to understand YHWH's commissioning
 - 11a Isaiah asked a question attempting to understand YHWH's commissioning
 - 11b-13 YHWH's response to Isaiah's question (a vision of the future will be **seen**)

In the first circle (vv.1-5), an inclusio is formed by the root *ראה* ('to see', in vv.1, 5), the title *המלך* ('the king', referring to Uzziah in v.1 while to YHWH in v.5), and the reference to God (*אדני* in v.1

¹⁰⁷ Even though verb *ראה* ('I saw') only occurs in v.1b α , it is undoubtedly that Isaiah continues to "see" in the whole throne vision: he sees about YHWH and about the Seraphim. It is by seeing that he knows the Seraphim took the burning coal with thongs and flied to touch his lips (v.6); it is also by seeing that he can tell the voice is from YHWH rather than anyone else in the assembly, either the Seraphim or other unmentioned spirits (vv.7-8).

¹⁰⁸ I use the parenthesis here and below because the verb itself does not occur in the Hebrew text or translations.

while יהיה in v.5) at the beginning of v.1 and the end of v.5.¹⁰⁹ Besides, the thread of the narrative of this circle is carried by three *waw-consecutive* verbs, respectively וראה in v.1, וינעו v.4 and ואמר v.5, while participials, imperfect verbs, and non-verbal nominal clauses implement the depiction of the vision. As the structure above shows, in this circle, Isaiah sees YHWH and the Seraphim, hears the Seraphim's calling, and sees the effects of their calling, and at last Isaiah responds through ואמר with a lament for himself.

In the second circle (vv.6-8), the thread of the narrative is again led by the verbs in *waw-consecutive* form, including ויער (v.6), ויגע and ויאמר (v.7) and ואשמע (v.8), all at the beginning of each verse. As the outline shows above, having seen and heard what one of the Seraphim has done and proclaimed to him, he responds to YHWH's calling.

The third circle (vv.9-13) is led by the verbal root אמר in its *waw-consecutive* form in first and third persons, the former being Isaiah and the latter YHWH. Here, having heard YHWH's commission, Isaiah responds with a further question to aid his understanding of YHWH's commission.

Therefore, there is ואמר in each of the above three circles of Isa 6, signifying Isaiah's understanding of what he sees and hears.

2.3.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 6

2.3.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 6:1-5

The temporal phrase at the beginning of v.1 locates this vision at the time of the death of king Uzziah. Some recent reconstructions of the chronologies of the kings show that Uzziah may have outlived his son Jotham (who co-re-reigned with Uzziah for the latter suffered with a skin disease in the last years of his life, 2Kgs 15:5) and died during his grandson Ahaz's reign, shortly before the Syria-Ephraimite crisis, which fits well the sequence of Isa 6-7 where the mentioning of Uzziah's death directly precedes events in Ahaz's reign.¹¹⁰ More significantly, the inclusio of v.1 and v.5 contrasts the king Uzziah's death with the fearful seeing the king YHWH of hosts. Besides, the rest of vv.1-5 presents the Seraphim, their calling concerning YHWH, and Isaiah's lament for himself. The vision in vv.1-4 leads to the lament in v.5.

¹⁰⁹ MT has אדני though in textual criticism I have argued for יהיה as the original reading in v.1.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 138. For a comparison of chronologies see Seitz, "Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah)," in *ABD* 3:479. For discussion of the issues see Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 370–71.

Isaiah's Vision of Yhwh (6:1-4)

In v.1aβ, Isaiah sees YHWH sitting on a high and lifted-up throne (אדני ישב על כסא רם ונשא). The modifiers of his throne include רם and נשא, a pair occurs earlier in 2:12, 13, 14 where these two adjectives modify what the Day of YHWH will be against, that is, any form of human hubris, in the context that YHWH alone will be exalted on that day (וּנְשַׁגְּבַ יְהוָה לְבַדּוֹ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא) in vv.11,17).¹¹¹ With Isa 2:6-22 as the literary context, this seeing serves to usher in the exaltation of YHWH into history, and to prepare the audience for the judgmental day as proclaimed in Isa 2:6-22. The second thing Isaiah sees is וְשׁוּלְיוֹ מְלֵאִים אֶת הַהֵיכָל ('and the skirts of his robe filling the temple,' v.1b). Though it is ambiguous whether the temple refers to the whole building or only the main indoor sanctuary, it still suggests the enormous size of his garment.¹¹² Besides, מלא here in v.1 (וְשׁוּלְיוֹ מְלֵאִים אֶת הַהֵיכָל) occurs later in v.3 (מלא כל הארץ כבודו) and v.4 (והבית ימלא עשן), all of which are YHWH related, because הֵיכָל (v.1) and הַבַּיִת (v.4) have similar reference in this context, and v.4 is usually regarded as relating to theophany. This triple use of מלא would naturally invite readers to read these three phrases together in line with each other. Then readers would find that their attentions are directed from 'YHWH's exaltation and greatness in the temple' (v.1) to 'his glory throughout the earth' (v.3) and then back to the house/temple full of smoke at the Seraphim's calling of his holiness and glory (v.4). What Isaiah sees in this vision is what happens inside the temple/house, but what he hears about YHWH extends beyond the confinement of the temple/house to the whole earth. The vertical רם ונשא and the horizontal מלא כל הארץ, both YHWH related, together depict YHWH as not only dwelling in the temple or Zion, but also as a lord of the whole earth.¹¹³

In vv.2-4, Isaiah perceives the Seraphim, their position, their wings, their speech, and the effect of their speech, all of which contribute to Isaiah's woe-cry in v.5. Etymologically, שרף refer to a 'fiery serpent' in all its occurrences in the OT (Num.21:6, 8; Deut.8:15; Isa.6:2, 6; 14:29; 30:6),¹¹⁴ and all its Isaianic occurrences have the 'flying' or 'winged' feature. Intertextually, a seraph is *threatening*

¹¹¹ See Williamson, *Book*, 38-41 for the importance of the pair רם and נשא in Isaiah's theology, and see idem., *Isaiah 6-12*, 50, for the exaltation of YHWH versus the doom of human hubris.

¹¹² While many commentators discern it denotes God's giant figure (thus O.H. Steck, "Bemerkung zu Jesaja 6," 194), or refer to Ancient Near East's custom of envisage a very large God (so Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 224-225 and Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 52), Clements (*Isaiah 1-39*, 74) writes "However, it might simply be a more stylised convention for asserting the 'hiddenness' of God, and his incomparable splendour, by pointing to his garments, rather than the appearance of his Person."

¹¹³ Cf. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 86, understands the temple as referring to Zion and writes "this (cosmologically) superior position of YHWH's dwelling place on the vertical axis grounds the centre position of Zion on the horizontal axis of the whole world."

¹¹⁴ Among them, Isa 6:2, 6 and Num 21:6 have the plural form, while the rest the singular.

in Num 21:6; Deut 8:15; Isa.14:29; 30:6 while *a sign of salvation* in Num.21:8. Besides, as Quinn-Miscall claims,

Seraphim is a play on ‘fiery ones’; the same root (שרף) is in 1.7; to refine (צרף) in 1.25 is a homophone; and the burning coal (רצפה) of 6.6 uses the consonants of the latter. The prophet and the people are unclean and sinful. Cleanness and innocence are achieved by burning and refining both the prophet and the people; in the process, the guilt, the dross, is removed.¹¹⁵

All these Isaianic occurrences of the root שרף (1:7; 14:29; 30:6) or its homophonic root צרף (1:25) with the threatening connotation suggests Isaiah understand the Seraphim as *threatening* to some extent.

Formally, as שרפים have wings, hands and feet, they are usually regarded as comparable to the divine *protective* spirit guiding the king, hence שרפים also guarding access to YHWH’s throne.¹¹⁶ However, as seen below, the major role of the Seraphim is not guarding access to, but serving and worshipping, YHWH. The Seraphim’s *position*, ממעל לו, is understood by Seitz as “probably not ‘above him’ (NRSV) but flanking him, guarding access to his throne,”¹¹⁷ while by Williamson as denoting they are standing *above* YHWH just like Joseph standing *before* Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46) or David before Saul (1 Sam. 16:21-22), *servicing* God, though that the preposition ממעל is used here rather than לפני (‘before’) as in later cases is “the consequence of the combination of respectful service with the unusual nature of the attendants, who fly... [and] a tension with the previous implication that the Lord is of superhuman size.”¹¹⁸ Their position does not necessarily suggest they are guarding access to YHWH or result from the assumption of a large God, but rather it contributes to *YHWH’s majesty* and for the sake of serving YHWH. The same is true of the Seraphim’s proclamation on YHWH’s *holiness* and *glory*, directing Isaiah and readers’ attention to YHWH himself. The phrase, וקרא זה אל זה (‘one call to another’), denotes they proclaim *to each other* rather than to *Isaiah*-the unclean man, which further suggests more their *worship* of YHWH rather than guarding Isaiah’s access to YHWH. Moreover, the functions of the three pairs of their *wings* may also suggest their major role. The first pair is to cover its face, to show their humbleness before YHWH. It is very unlikely that they try to frighten away Isaiah with their hidden faces. The second pair is to cover its feet, which is usually regarded as a “euphemism for the genitals” to show “the converse virtue of modesty regarding one’s own person.”¹¹⁹ The third pair is to fly, to enable its service before YHWH. Thus, they together

¹¹⁵ Quinn-Miscall, *Isaiah*, 34. Hebrew words are written as transcript in his book.

¹¹⁶ Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 74; Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 54; Uhlig, *Hardening*, 87. See Uhlig, *Hardening*, 86 fn60 for literature on various reasons of identifying the Seraphim against cherubim.

¹¹⁷ Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 54.

¹¹⁸ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 57.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

present a picture of *humble Seraphim ready to serve YHWH*. Thus, as deduced from the function of their wings, their role is again to *serve* YHWH rather than to guard Isaiah's access. Finally, the sound of the Seraphim's calling leads into the shaking of the threshold of the temple and the smoke filling the temple (v.4), which, as some scholars demonstrate, is threatening.¹²⁰ Thus, the major role of the Seraphim in 6:2-4 is to worship and serve YHWH, with the effect of highlighting and enhancing YHWH's majesty and holiness which has already been indicated in v.1.

Therefore, Isaiah perceives in this vision YHWH's exaltation, holiness and glory, and how the Seraphim humbly worship, praise and serve YHWH. It is his ultimate holiness and his omnipresent glory that is in the centre of their praise, and it is their praise of his holiness and glory that shakes the temple itself, which will definitely explain Isaiah's cognitive perception in v.5 to which our attention should turn now.

Isaiah's Spiritual Perception: Self-woe cry (6:5)

Isaiah's woe-cry in v.5 (אוי לי)¹²¹ is introduced by ואמר, and followed by three כי clauses, though the first כי clause (כי נדמייתי) is a paraphrase to אוי לי, while the other two should be counted as the reasons for this cry. In כי נדמייתי, the verb דמה "bespeaks a sense of being totally ruined and coming to an end; it induces terror at the prospect of destruction."¹²²

In the second כי clause (כי איש טמא שפתים אנכי ובחורך עם טמא שפתים אנכי יושב), the repetition of the subject אנכי, an omittable pronoun yet occurring twice here, together with the fronted איש/עם טמא, clearly emphasize the nature of Isaiah and the people among whom he lives: who are all men of unclean lips.

The phrase טמא שפתים does not occur anywhere else in OT, hence it is impossible to take an intertextual exegesis on this phrase. I will evaluate how טמא and שפתים are used in Isaiah. The word טָמָא, "unclean" or "ceremonially unclean,"¹²³ occurs elsewhere in Isaiah in 35:8; 52:1,12; 64:5. In these occurrences, טָמָא is paralleled with 'uncircumcised' (52:1), like 'polluted' or 'iniquities' (64:5), and not allowed on the way of holiness (35:8) or on their home-returning (65:4). Besides, both 52:1 and 52:11 are callings to the addressee. That is to say, טָמָא is used to embracing both the *factual and ceremonial uncleanness* and is an issue that has to be dealt with in YHWH's calling to his people.

¹²⁰ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 89 fn 69, 73.

¹²¹ BDB, 17, defines אוי as 'an impassioned expression of grief and despair.' Mobberley ("Holy, Holy, Holy", 127) writes: "Isaiah's response to what he sees and hears is a cry of anguish."

¹²² Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 63. See Landy, 'Strategies', 65, for a comment on the paradox of such a confession in a speech: 'The self becomes self-aware only at the point of extinction'.

¹²³ HALOT, 376.

Moreover, as shown in the table below, in Isaiah, שפתים is mainly an ‘organ of speech’ (28:11; 29:13; 33:19; 59:3), used in parallel with ‘tongue’. It means ‘language’ or ‘words’ respectively in 19:18 and 36:5. It is a symbol of ‘judgment’ in 11:4; 30:27 and 37:29, while its use in 57:19 symbolizes ‘salvation’. Here in 6:5, only lips are mentioned, while in its close literary context 6:7, Isaiah’s lips are in parallel with, or specifies, his mouth.

		Use of ‘lips’
6:7	And he touched my <u>mouth</u> and said: “Behold, this has touched your <i>lips</i> ; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”	
11:4	but with צדק he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his <i>lips</i> , he shall kill the wicked.	judgment
19:18	In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the <i>language</i> of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord of hosts. One of these will be called the City of Destruction	Language/words
28:11	For by people of strange <i>lips</i> , and with a foreign <u>tongue</u> , the Lord will <u>speak</u> to this people,	Organ of speech
29:13	And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their <u>mouth</u> , and honor me with their <i>lips</i> , while their <u>hearts</u> are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,	Organ of speech
30:27	Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke; his <i>lips</i> are full of fury, and his <u>tongue</u> is like a devouring fire	judgment
33:19	You will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure <i>speech</i> that you cannot comprehend, stammering in a <u>tongue</u> that you cannot understand	Organ of speech
36:5	Do you think that mere <i>words</i> are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust that you have rebelled against me?	Words/speech
37:29	Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your <i>lips</i> , and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.’	Judgment
57:19	[18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners,] 19 creating the fruit of the <i>lips</i> . ‘Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will heal him.’	salvation
59:3	For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your <i>lips</i> have spoken lies; your <u>tongue</u> mutters wickedness.	Organ of speech

Therefore, the use of טמא and שפתים elsewhere in Isa would naturally lead into understanding of the ‘unclean lips’ in relation to lips as *an organ of speech* that is *morally and ceremonially unclean*. Then, it is still worth asking why Isaiah would highlight that he *is* a man of unclean lips, rather than he has unclean lips or he is an unclean man.

The emphasis on “unclean lips” has attracted scholarly attention.¹²⁴ Lind observes that Sennacherib’s lips are targeted as the *climactic judgment* (37:29) upon his lip behavior of mockery against קדוש ישראל (‘the holy one of Israel’; 37:23; cf. Isa 6:3) – the mockery is highlighted by words חרף (‘mocked’), גדף (‘reviled’), רום (‘raised your voice’) of v.23, and by repeating חרף before אומר introducing the quote of his saying in v.24.¹²⁵ Lind further maintains that Sennacherib’s lips violate the sphere of the Holy One through his mocking of YHWH; Similarly, Isaiah and people have unclean lips because they also transgress the rule of the Holy One by joining in Near Eastern arrogance against the Holy One through distrusting in YHWH but participating in Near Eastern military politics (7:1-8:18) on the one hand and on the other hand by their domestic relationships (2:1-5:30).¹²⁶ Uhlig observes the relevance of 3:8-10 (where tongue, holiness, and און are mentioned in close proximity) and 5:18-20 as leading up to 6:5.¹²⁷ While Hurowitz argues that the unclean lips of Isaiah and the means for their purification in v. 7 are analogous with the Mesopotamian ‘mouth washing’ ceremony,¹²⁸ Williamson has made a persuasive argument against Hurowitz’s proposal.¹²⁹ Williamson himself believes the emphasis on ‘unclean lips’ is well glossed by 29:13 which is in line with 1:11-17.¹³⁰ Moberly mentions two possible reasons why Isaiah highlights this aspect in particular, one being “the context with the hearing of the words of the Seraphim” and the other “the assumption that lips should express the content of heart and mind.”¹³¹ Moberly further notes v.5 is the key to understanding vv.9-13 which is to solve the problem of the people of unclean lips while vv.6-8 solves the problem of Isaiah as a man of unclean lips, so he writes,

The seraph with the glowing coal relates to Isaiah, as Isaiah with his message relates to the people. Isaiah’s purification by the coal is parallel to, and is the means towards, the people’s purification

¹²⁴ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 64-66 for i) how lips are used as “the organ of speech and hence in the figurative sense of speech itself” in Isaiah; and ii) his argument against Hurowitz’s proposal of purification of Isaiah’s unclean lips as analogous to Mesopotamian ‘mouth washing’ ceremony.” See Lind, “Political Implications of Isaiah 6”, 322-8 for a wider discussion in the light of the use of ‘lips’ in Sennacherib’s boast in 37:21-29. See Uhlig, *Hardening*, 91-92 for how 3:8-10 (where tongue, holiness, and און are mentioned in close proximity) and 5:18-20 offer close literary context to 6:5.

¹²⁵ Lind, “Political Implications,” 322-3.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 323-8.

¹²⁷ See Uhlig, *Hardening*, 91-2.

¹²⁸ Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips,” 39-89.

¹²⁹ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 65-66: “(i) There is *no parallel whatever between mouth washing* (occasionally with the use of other agents as well) *and the touching of the lips with a burning coal*, as in v. 7. (ii) The emphasis in our verse and also in the operative part of v. 7 is the *lips*, with the mouth being referred to only in the introductory element in v. 7; it is not at all the focus of attention there. Conversely, in the Mesopotamian texts, it is very clearly the *mouth* that is washed, and there are only very exceptional and secondary references to lips in these contexts. (iii) The *mouth washing is only part of a more elaborate series of processes*; it does not function on its own. In the present chapter, however, there is no indication of any other act of preparation than that which is found in v. 7. (iv) In most of the texts which Hurowitz analyses the mouth washing is *self-administered* (clearly, in the case of idols this is different, but they are hardly so relevant to the present case). Isaiah’s cry of woe arises precisely from the realization that he is beyond any form of self-help.” Italics added.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³¹ Moberly, “‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’” 129.

by the prophetic message -with the goal for each that there should be response to God commensurate with the *trisagion* of the Seraphim.¹³²

The third כִּי clause (כִּי אֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי) is striking in its inverted word order (Object-Verb-Subject), in the use of the combination of two divine titles, and in the additional subject עֵינַי which is already indicated by the verb רָאָה. Uhlig maintains that the background of this third reason for Isaiah's cry is not necessarily the OT passages that speak about the danger or impossibility of seeing YHWH and living, but those (Pss. 11:7; 17:15; 27:4, 13; 42:2-3; 63:3; 84:11-13) which refer to the wish to see YHWH and which are often related to the image of YHWH as king who is to implement צְדָקָה, hence v.5c Isaiah's awareness that the king YHWH of hosts will also judge him who is a man of unclean lips.¹³³ That יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ occurs elsewhere in OT only in Jer 46:18; 48:15; 51:57 while מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת in Isa 24:23; Zech 14:16, 17, all in a context of judgement, support Uhlig's understanding. The co-existence of the organ and the perceptive verb of Isaiah here (רָאוּ עֵינַי) may "strengthen the enormity" of Isaiah's perilous situation in light of the Seraphim's covering their faces hence not gazing directly upon YHWH,¹³⁴ but more significantly, it prepares for the comparison between Isaiah's seeing with eyes and this people's seeing with eyes later in 6:9-10.

2.3.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 6:6-8

In the second circle (vv.6-8), a seraph offers and proclaims YHWH's provision of purification and atonement to Isaiah (v.7). It is then when God started to take an active role,¹³⁵ asking whom they could send for them (v.8a).

There are three aspects that are noteworthy in Isaiah's *purification* in vv.6-7 for his understanding of purification in his ministry. Firstly, his purification is not earned, but offered *freely*. Secondly, his purification is offered *immediately*, not delayed. It is right after his desperate and disastrous woe-cry which is intensified by the triple כִּי that a seraph reacts. Thirdly, when the seraph touches Isaiah's lips, his lips might get burned by the burning coal.¹³⁶ That is to say, Isaiah himself goes through the refining judgment before the cleansing of his guilts and sins. It is probably this personal experience

¹³² Ibid, 132.

¹³³ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 92.

¹³⁴ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 66.

¹³⁵ It is worth noting that YHWH is depicted as rather passive before v.8 where the key figures seem to be the Seraphim. Shaking is used to be a characteristic of YHWH's theophany in other OT texts, however, here in Isa 6, the shaking was not caused by YHWH's theophany but by the Seraphim's calling. Besides, when Isaiah responded to such a vision with a lament for himself, there is no response from YHWH but from the Seraphim. It is not until Isaiah's being announced of purity that YHWH started to speak (v.8).

¹³⁶ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 94 and fn 101 for further literature on this.

of his which accounts for his emphasis of the necessity of Zion's refining judgment prior to her purification as later reflected in Isa 1:21-26.

YHWH's question in v.8, *את מי אשלה ומי ילך לנו*, is not necessarily directed to Isaiah in particular.¹³⁷ Isaiah's response *הנני שלחני* itself is unique in the whole OT, yet the closest parallel to *הנני* in the whole OT is Isa 65:1.¹³⁸

2.3.2.3 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 6:9-13

The third circle (vv.9-13) begins with a typical commissioning formula followed by an indication of the addressee, *לך ואמרת לעם הזה* ('go and say to this people'), and the contents of God's commandment to this people (v.9).

Vv.9-10 are two difficult verses, because ancient versions have different renderings for them, which have been studied thoroughly by Evans¹³⁹ who concludes that all ancient versions are interpretive and inferior to MT, for they, except Vulgate, have "a marked tendency to move away from the harsh, telic understanding of the Hebrew text."¹⁴⁰ To make it worse, in v.10, three *hiphil* imperative verbs emphasize a causative force of the obduracy. In other words, God commissions Isaiah to make people obdurate in their eyes, ears and hearts. The *פן* clause denotes the effect of Isaiah's mission, by which this people's eyes, ears and hearts will fail functioning, so that they will not return or get healed. Thus, the *hiphil* imperative verbs and the *פן* clause together indicate that the obduracy of 'this people' is actually a judgement that God set for his people.

In v.11, Isaiah raises a question not about 'why', but about 'how long'. It seems Isaiah knows the reason of this judgment for 'this people', just as he knows *לי ארי* in v.5. What concerns him is how long this judgement will last. God's answer indicates this judgment will last until their destruction (v.12) and deportation (v.13).

¹³⁷ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 144; McConville, *Isaiah*, 108-109.

¹³⁸ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 145 observes that even though *הנני* also occurs as Abraham (Gen 22:1, 11), Jacob (Gen 46:2), Moses (Exod 3:4), and Samuel (1 Sam 3:4-6)'s responses to YHWH's calling, they are all called explicitly and repeatedly by name whereas Isaiah is not.

¹³⁹ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*; see idem., "The Text of Isaiah 6:9-10", 415-8, and cf. Hartley, *Wisdom Background*, 215-27. On the LXX, see also previously Lust, 'Demonic Character', cited by Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 24, see also his 24-25 on 1QIsa^a.

¹⁴⁰ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 163.

2.3.3 The (Im)perception theme in Isa 6

Isa 6 is regarded traditionally as the prophet Isaiah's *inaugural call into his prophetic mission*, like Jer 1 for the prophet Jeremiah, and Ezek 1-3 for the prophet Ezekiel. However, the position of Isa 6, not at the beginning of Isa, but here between Isa 5 and Isa 7, and is followed by Isa 7-8 which is closely related to a specific historical event. Its close parallel with Micaiah's vision in 1 Kgs 22¹⁴¹ have led some scholars like Blenkinsopp to view Isa 6 as more *a call narrative to a specific political mission*, rather than an inaugurate call, and that Isaiah's prophetic vocations have been established before this throne vision;¹⁴² Wildberger and many others regard Isa 6 as a "throne vision";¹⁴³ some others view it as the reflection of Isaiah's failure in his mission.¹⁴⁴ I follow Williamson in viewing it as a combination of

a vision report... a call... a commission to a specific political task ...[though] the subsequent growth of the book has led to a shift in emphasis between these elements especially from that of a specific commissioning to that of a call to a lifetime of ministry and indeed, within the book as a whole, into something even more extended.¹⁴⁵

It is in this form and position that Isa 6 depicts Isaiah's *vision of Yhwh* in which his cognitive perception is rooted – he sees, hears, and responds. His seeing Yhwh as an exalted king and as one who is praised for his holiness and glory by the humble Seraphim at his presence (vv.1-4) contributes to his perception of his fatal nature and situation (v.5). This perception is responded to by the Seraphim (who are doing service to Yhwh) with atonement given freely and immediately (vv.6-7). His responding to Yhwh's calling (v.8) indicates he now perceives (and trusts in) the Seraphim's proclamation of his new status (v.7b).

Besides, Isa 6 also depicts a contrast between Isaiah's perception and the people's imperception (i.e., their lack of understanding). This is particularly shown through the use of the same perceptive verbs together with the organ of the perception in vv.1-8 for Isaiah and vv.9-10 for the people. The former

¹⁴¹ The lexical similarities between these two visions are laid out as follows.

Isa 6			1 Kgs 22:19-23
v.1	ואראה את אדני ישב על כסא	ראיתי את יהוה ישב על כסא	v.19
v.2	שרפים עמדים ממעל לו	וכל צבא השמים עמד עליו	v.19
v.8	קול אדני אמר את מי אשלח ומי ילך לבו	ויאמר יהוה מי יפתה את אחאב	v.20

Many commentators note the similarities between Isaiah's and Micaiah's vision (e.g., Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 252. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 135). See McLaughlin, "Their Hearts Were Hardened" for nuanced differences between Isaiah's and Micaiah's vision.

¹⁴² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 223.

¹⁴³ Hurowitz, "Impure Lips", 41.

¹⁴⁴ This view varies whether it is Isaiah's self-reflection (Kaplan, "Isaiah 6:1-11", 251-259) or later narrator's reflection of Isaiah's failure (Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 123).

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 38-41, eps. 41.

sees, hears and responds, while the later will see and hear, but do not understand. Besides, the duration of the obduracy of 'this people' lasts from Isaiah's ministering time to their being destroyed and deported, which also contrasts with the immediacy of Isaiah's being purified in vv.5-7. It is rather more interesting to note that Isaiah repents immediately on seeing God and the Seraphim (vv.1-2), hearing the Seraphim's praising (v.3) and seeing the effect of the Seraphim's praising (v.4). If Isaiah's immediate response with repentance accounts for his being purified immediately, then the long duration of the obduracy, of the inability to repent, commanded by YHWH for Judah, is, on the one hand, set for Judah so that they will not repent hence not being purified, hence making 6:9-10 a commission of judgement. On the other hand, the contrasts and relationships between Isaiah and the people might also indicate that Isaiah's response and purification is symbolic of the same possibility for Israel. That is to say, this people will get purified after this judgment of 6:9-13. This also leads into the prediction role of 6:9-13, that is, YHWH knows they will not perceive with understanding until they are exiled.

2.4 The (Im)Perception Theme in Isa 7-9:6

The "mismatch between intention and effect"¹⁴⁶ in Isaiah's prophetic proclamation (6:9-10) is immediately seen in king Ahaz's response to prophet Isaiah's proclamation in Isa 7, which embodies the application of the imperception theme, the historical realization of 6:9-10. In response to Ahaz' unbelief reaction to Isaiah's proclamation, further judgmental oracles are announced in Isa 7-8 to be followed by another passage on how Isaiah and the people react to the situation of the preclusion of perception with further consequences (8:16-22). Like Isa 6, 7:1-9:6 also ends up with a note of hope (8:23-9:6; cf. 6:13) despite all the imperceptive responses and judgments in 7:1-8:22.

The (im)perception theme in 7:1-9:6 is manifest in Israel's (dis-)trust in YHWH, knowing whether they shall fear their national enemies or fear YHWH. There is a striking contrast between Ahaz/Judahites and Isaiah/the faithful ones. Besides, the (im)perception theme is also related to the motif of darkness and light, which are respectively images for judgment and salvation in the concluding subsections of 7-9:6.

2.4.1 The Structure of Isa 7-9:6

7-9:6 is bound together as a unit following Isa 6 mainly by three features. Firstly, the same historical background, the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (735-733 BCE), runs throughout Isa 7-8, because both Isa 7

¹⁴⁶ McConville, *Isaiah*, 110.

and 8 mention Rezin and son of Ramaliah (7:1, 4, 8-9, 16; 8:6); Damascus and Samaria (7:8-9; 8:4) and the Assyrian threat (7:17-25; 8:6-8). Secondly, naming of a son with a special name runs throughout 7-9:6 (7:14; 8:3; 9:5). Thirdly, the salvation oracle (8:23-9:6) finishes off 7:1-9:6 with a glimpse of hope after serious judgments, in a way similar to how the end of 6:13 finishes off 6:9-13.

Overall, in 7-9:6, there are three major subdivisions, that is, 7:1-25; 8:1-22 and 8:23-9:6. The demarcation of the first two subsections is easy and is based on the distinction between the third person narrative and the first-person narrative. By contrast, the demarcation of the final two subsections is debated over whether the split should be done before or after 8:23a. The contrast between v.23a and v.22 has led some commentators to read v.23a with the preceding unit, not with the following unit.¹⁴⁷ I argue that v.23a belongs to 8:23-9:6. Since 8:21-22 is characterized by both of ‘distress/anguish’ and ‘gloom/darkness,’ while 8:23a and 9:1 mentions an antithesis of ‘gloom/darkness’ and 9:2 emphasizes ‘joy’, an antithesis of ‘distress/anguish,’ it is more the case that 8:23a belongs together with the following verses. The third subdivision distinguishes itself from the previous two in that it depicts a contrasting picture from them: salvation versus judgment.

A closer look at the structure of 7:1-9:6 would lead into the observation, firstly, of the interactive communications between YHWH and his addressees, Ahaz/Isaiah, in 7:3-8:22 which is threaded by YHWH’s and his addressees’ sayings, as the table below demonstrates; and secondly, 7:1-2 can serve as a prologue, offering introductory notes on the historical background of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (7:1) and on king Ahaz and people’s reaction to that crisis (7:2), while 8:23-9:6 as an epilogue, concluding a long series of judgmental oracles with a salvation oracle.

	7:1-2	Introductory notes: national crisis	
ויאמר יהוה אל ישעיהו ואמרת אליו כה אמר אדני יהוה	7:3 7:4 7:7	YHWH told Isaiah to speak to Ahaz Divine speech formular	Isaiah responded to YHWH with obedience: he delivered YHWH’s speech/ <i>exhortation to Ahaz</i> , but no response from Ahaz.
ויוסף יהוה דבר אל אחז לאמר ויאמר אחז ויאמר	7:10 7:12 7:13	YHWH spoke to Ahaz Ahaz said Isaiah said ¹⁴⁸	Ahaz did respond this time, but with two ‘א’ – his response is a disobedience of YHWH’s command, then YHWH gave <i>a sign and judgments</i> .
ויאמר יהוה אלי ויאמר יהוה אלי ויסף יהוה דבר אלי עוד לאמר רעו... והאזינו... כי עמנו אל	8:1 8:3b 8:5 8:9-10	YHWH said to Isaiah YHWH said to Isaiah YHWH said to Isaiah again Isaiah’s speech	A series of YHWH’s speech to Isaiah concerning <i>a sign and judgments</i> (8:1-8) is responded with <i>Isaiah’s proclamation of faith in YHWH against nations</i> (8:9-10)

¹⁴⁷ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 354; McConville, *Isaiah*, 142.

¹⁴⁸ All these three are shorthand of Isaiah as intermediate spokesman between YHWH and Ahaz.

כי כה אמר יהוה אלי צור ... התום... והכיתי	8:11 8:16,17	YHWH said Isaiah's speech	YHWH's speech/ <i>exhortation to Isaiah</i> is responded with <i>Isaiah's proclamation</i> <i>of faith in YHWH against the people</i> (8:16-22)
	8:23- 9:6	concluding notes: salvation oracles	

Therefore, 7:1-9:6 can be structured as follows.

A	7:1-2 introductory notes
B	7:3-9 <i>YHWH's exhortation to Ahaz</i>
C	7:10-25 <i>YHWH giving a sign and judgment</i>
C'	8:1-8 <i>YHWH giving a sign and judgment</i>
	8:9-10 <i>Isaiah's proclamation of faith in YHWH against nations</i>
B'	8:11-15 <i>YHWH's exhortation to Isaiah and faithful ones</i>
	8:16-22 <i>Isaiah's proclamation of faith in YHWH against the unfaithful</i>
A'	8:23-9:6 concluding notes

Overall, 7:3-8:22 consists of progressing *responses from YHWH in relation to Ahaz/people/Isaiah's reactions to this crisis*, including his guidance with symbolism to Isaiah (7:3, 8:1-4) and his teachings to Ahaz through Isaiah (7:4-25: exhortation to Ahaz in vv.4-9, giving Immanuel sign despite Ahaz' refusal in vv.10-17, followed by three ויהיה ביום ההוא oracles: vv.18-20, 21-22, 23-25) and his teachings to Isaiah (8: 5-8, 11-15) – intertwined with Isaiah's faith proclamation in YHWH against the nations (8:9-10) and against the unfaithful people of God (8:16-23).

This leads into further *comparisons* between Isa 7 and Isa 8. They both mention Rezin and son of Ramaliah (7:1, 4, 8-9, 16; 8:6); Damascus and Samaria (7:8-9; 8:4); and exhort about 'fear not' (root ירא in 7:4 with its synonym רכך; in 8:12, 13 with its synonyms ערץ), though the exhortation is directed towards Ahaz in 7:3-9, while towards Isaiah and the faithful in 8:11-15 (note that the object of YHWH's saying and warning in 8:11 is the first person singular 'me' while the imperative and imperfect verbs in 8:12-13 is the second person plural 'you'). However, while in Isa 7, we only see YHWH calls for Ahaz' faith in him but not Ahaz's response with faith, in Isa 8, twice we see Isaiah's proclamation of faith in YHWH (vv.9-10, 16-23). Besides, while it is Ahaz and the house of David who play the key role in their fear of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition (7:2-3) and who are the main addressees of YHWH's exhortations of having faith in YHWH and of listening (7:9, 13), it is 'this people' who is targeted at in Isa 8. As shown in the table above, the parallel yet un-neat structure between Isa 7 and 8 has contrasted Ahaz and Isaiah in their responses to YHWH, while Isa 8 itself has also contrasted Isaiah response (8:9-10, 17) with 'this people' (8:6, 19).

Overall, Isa 7-8 both have the Syro-Israel crisis in the background and concern about Judah's fate in the aftermath of this crisis, that is, the Assyrian threat, yet Isa 7 focuses more on Ahaz and the house

of David, while Isa 8 more on ‘this people.’ By contrast, 8:23-9:6 brings both people and king together, thus 7:1-9:6 can be demarcated into three main subsections, that is, 7:1-25; 8:1-22; 8:23-9:6.

2.4.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 7:1-9:6

I will show below how YHWH attempts to call upon Ahaz and his people’s perception, which is related to their trust in him, during their national crisis in Isa 7-8, with Isa 7 specializing on Ahaz, while Isa 8 on the people. However, their distrust in YHWH, a manifestation of their imperception, brings them into further judgment and national crisis, which is finally metaphorized as ‘darkness’ with several synonymous terms in 8:21-22, while the salvation comes in a metaphor of light shining into the darkness (8:23-9:6).

2.4.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 7:1-25

Introductory notes (7:1-2)

Isa 7:1, the introductory and summative note, identifies the historical background of this section with Judah’s Syro-Ephraimite crisis (735-733 BCE)¹⁴⁹ which happened when Judah had refused to join in their anti-Assyrian alliance, and also summarizes that the Syro-Ephraimite alliance fails in their war against Judah.

Then, v.2 introduces king Ahaz and his people’s reaction (וינע לבבו ולבב עמו כנוע עצי יער מפני רוח) on being told of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance. The repetition of לבב emphasizes that both the king and his people have the same response: their hearts all shook on hearing the news. Besides, the same root נוע from 6:4 is used twice here in 7:2.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the shaking of their hearts is compared to the shaking of trees in a forest in the wind which is irresistible and natural. As Quinn-Miscall notes, this simile “denotes human frailty”.¹⁵¹ This picture, together with their being addressed as לבית דוד (the house of David), is ironic, especially when comparing with David’s faith-grounded-in-YHWH courage against the fearful Goliath (1Sam 17), and when noting that David was promised that ונאמן ביתך וממלכתך עד עולם לפניך (“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me” in 2 Sam 7:16a).

¹⁴⁹ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 108-110 for the challenges against this consensus and Williamson’s argumentations against these challenges.

¹⁵⁰ While in 6:4 נוע is used to describe the foundation of threshold of the temple shook at the Seraphim’s calling of holiness and glory of God, or more generally, the majesty of YHWH, here in 7:2 it was used to describe the hearts of Ahaz and his people before the news and the forest before the wind.

¹⁵¹ Quinn-Miscall, *Isaiah*, 48.

YHWH's exhortations to Ahaz (7:3-9)

Then comes vv.3f where YHWH instructs Isaiah to encounter Ahaz and to deliver him his message. Following v.3 that instructs who should go (אתה ושאר ישוב בנך) and where (אל קצה תעלת הברכה העליונה) (אל מסלת שדה כובס) they shall meet Ahaz,¹⁵² vv.4-9 is enclosed by two exhortations to Ahaz – not to fear (v.4), but to trust in YHWH (v.9b) – with reasons in between (v.4b-9a). Thus, the message that YHWH delivers through Isaiah to Ahaz (vv.4-9) is intended to persuade Ahaz not to fear the illusory perceived Syro-Ephraimite threat, but to trust in YHWH.

In the exhortation of v.4, the four imperatives and the characterization of Israel and Syria as שני זנבות (‘these two stumps of smouldering firebrands’) intensify dissuading him from fearing them. Concerning the four imperatives, it is noteworthy that they start from what they should do (השמר והשקט) and proceed to what they should not do (אל תירא ולבבך אל ירך). The choice of words has already reflected God’s perception of Ahaz and Judahites’ shaking heart and his calling out for their proper perception of the current crisis. The sequence of these four imperatives also reflects that the premise of not fearing is to watch out and be quiet, and the aftermath of not fearing is that their heart would not be faint. Each step in this process is God’s response to their shaking heart. As for characterization of Israel and Syria, as Williamson comments, האודים “refers to a brand that has been pulled out of the fire... quickly die down and then become extinguished ... smouldering ...” and זנבות “a colourful image for the mere stump of the original log or stick.”¹⁵³ Therefore, the exhortation of v.4 itself has already included with a reason for not-to-fear (v.4b).

Then, vv.5-9 further elaborates the reasons for God’s exhortation to Ahaz. Vv.5-6 indicate that YHWH knows very clearly what lies behind Ahaz’ fear is that the alliance has plotted/planned/purposed (יעץ)¹⁵⁴ to replace his kingship with someone else, בן טבאל (son of Tabeel).¹⁵⁵ As Beuken states, “Dieser Plan steht im Widerspruch zu der Tatsache, dass es JHWH allein zusteht, Könige über sein Volk einzusetzen”¹⁵⁶ Then, with the speech formula כה אמר אדני יהוה

¹⁵² Both who and where are symbolic, though both are left unexecuted here hence usually considered as probably belonging to the original narrative. The ambiguity of the name of Isaiah’s son שאר ישוב is widely noted by scholars, e.g., Liss, *Die unerhörte Prophetie*, 79-82.

¹⁵³ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 126-127.

¹⁵⁴ The same verb יעץ, here used as their plotting against Ahaz, is used in Isa in 14:24, 26, 27; 19:12, 17; 23:8, 9 as YHWH’s purpose in the oracles against Assyria, Egypt and Tyre respectively. The verbal form of יעץ is also used in 32:7-8 and 45:21 to refer to human planning/plotting while divine planning/counselling in 40:14.

¹⁵⁵ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 128-130 for textual variants and different identification of this name.

¹⁵⁶ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 198. Translated: “this plan contradicts the fact that it is YHWH alone who appoints kings over his people.” Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 120-21 claims, in light of the centrality of Zion’s in YHWH’s plan in the vision of 2:2-4 and the significance of Davidic covenant in Isa 7, Syro-Ephraimite counter-YHWH plan of replacing Davidic king with someone else intends not just “to obtain a strategic advantage but to obliterate all that Jerusalem signified”.

validating God's message, v.7 leads into YHWH's further speech to Ahaz (vv.7b-9). Two לֹא phrases (לֹא תִקוּם וְלֹא תִהְיֶה) are used to ensure Ahaz that their plan is doomed to fail. Then, כִּי at the outset of vv.8-9 makes vv.8-9a a reason for v.7. In other words, vv.8-9a, explains why the conspiracy of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition will not stand and come to pass (v.7). The parallel v.8a and v.9a that undertake a sequence of nation-city-man¹⁵⁷ could be indicative of the *fearlessness* of these mortals albeit usurpers they are.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the use of a standard contrasting pair זְנוּבוֹת ('tail') and רֹאשׁ ('head') respectively in v.4 and vv.8-9 referring to the same referee also carries the satirical tone and disdainful intent of this threat: these two kingdoms whose coalition is frightening to Ahaz and Judah are actually not frightening at all because they are almost burnt up; and although Pekah and Rezin are both רֹאשׁ of their kingdoms, they are merely זְנוּבוֹת in God's view. All these mean that the response of the king Ahaz and the people Judahites to the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, that is, fear of them, is not a correct response.

The second exhortation (v.9b), לֹא תִאֲמִינוּ כִּי לֹא תִאֲמִנוּ ('if you do not stand firm in faith, you will surely not stand at all'),¹⁵⁹ plays on the root אָמַן with a clear allusion to God's ancient promise to David and his house (2 Sam 7:16: וְנִאֲמַן בֵּיתְךָ וּמַמְלַכְתְּךָ עַד עוֹלָם).¹⁶⁰ Besides, v.9b also relates back to Ahaz and Judahites' fear in vv.2, 6 concerning the very existence of Ahaz as king and Judah as a kingdom and to v.7 in that קוּם and אָמַן often occur together (Deut 27:26; 1 Sam 2:35; Jer 11:5; 28:6; Job 24:22; Neh 5:13; 9:8).¹⁶¹ That means, YHWH's exhortation of v.9b responds directly to their current situation. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, both the protasis and apodosis of the conditional clause of v.9b formulated *negatively* rather than positively, seem to predict that Ahaz will respond with unbelief, or at least doubt, towards God's comfort to him through Isaiah on the one hand, yet on the other hand, this double negation is even more powerful rhetorically: do not distrust YHWH. Thus, this clause not only leaves open the possibility of, but also expects Ahaz's hearing and obeying.

This subsection is left without explicating Ahaz's response to God's exhortations. We see here God's perception of Ahaz and Judahites' fear and the reasons behind their fear, and God's attempt to call

¹⁵⁷ As Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, notes, the term 'king' is even held back here for Rezin and 'son of Ramaliah' here

¹⁵⁸ Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 85; McConville, *Isaiah*, 121. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 132 further claims that "Ahaz, by contrast, is designated by God as his *chosen head* over the equally divinely *chosen Jerusalem*." (Italics added). Roberts, *Frist Isaiah*, 119-20 argues, this royal theology is even more obvious when considering the parallelism between 7:8-9 and Ps. 2.

¹⁵⁹ This translation is from McConville, *Isaiah*, 121 attempting to catch the wordplay in Hebrew.

¹⁶⁰ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 200. See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 135, fn.129. Roberts, *Frist Isaiah*, 120. This royal theology is well supported by the reference to David's house in v.2 (already noted above), here (v.9b) and v.13.

¹⁶¹ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 200-1.

upon their proper perception of their current situation, the nature of their enemies, and that the correct response is not to fear but to stand firm in faith.

YHWH giving a sign and judgment oracles (7:10-25)

The invitation to Ahaz to ask for a sign (שאל לך אות) is unique in the whole OT, for in the other sign-passages in the OT, it is either YHWH who offers signs directly to the recipients, like Moses (Ex 4:1-9) and Saul (1 Sam 10:1-7), or it is the recipient that requires a sign for the sake of faith, like Gideon (Judg 6:15-18, 36-40) and Hezekiah (19:29).¹⁶² The introductory clause, ויוסף יהוה דבר אל אהז ('again YHWH speaks to Ahaz, saying'), not mentioning, yet is surely a shorthand of Isaiah's intermediate role between them, embodies the *nearness* of YHWH to Ahaz, while its ending with the scope of הגבה למעלה או הגבמה למטה (v.11b) highlights God as the ruler over the cosmos and that Ahaz can ask *whatever* he wants. Moreover, the uses of שאל which occurs usually in the setting of believers praying to God,¹⁶³ of לך with the singular 'you', of יהוה אלהיך ('your God', with also singular 'you'), altogether function to engage Ahaz personally in his relationship with, and praying to, God. However, Ahaz declines this invitation with a seemingly pious reason: לא אשאל ולא אנסה את יהוה ('I will not ask, neither will I test YHWH').¹⁶⁴

Ahaz' response is noteworthy in several aspects. Firstly, by addressing God only as YHWH, but not 'my God', he does not respond to the relational and intimate God. Secondly, his לא אשאל is a direct refusal of God's offer of לך שאל. Thirdly, his understanding of asking God for a God-offered-and-permitted sign as *testing* God, for whatever reasons,¹⁶⁵ is surely a misunderstanding. The shift from 2mp תאמינו and תאמנו referring the whole Judah (v.9b) to 2ms שאל לך targeting Ahaz personally (v.11) indicates that this offer of God's to Ahaz is to re-assure him personally of his exhortation and promise that he made earlier in vv.4-9. This is because Davidic Covenant, the kingdom's fate is closely linked with its king's choice. Fourthly, the co-occurrence of roots אמן and אות and נסה, in vv.9-12 brings us back to Num 14¹⁶⁶ where the unbelief in YHWH after all his signs in Egypt and

¹⁶² See Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 202 and S. Bakon, "Sign – אות", 241-50 for various functions of a sign in its various occurrences; see F. J. Helfmeyer, *ThWAT* 1: 182–205 = *TDOT* 1: 167–88 for other bibliography on the subject. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 147.

¹⁶³ See Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 202 for the scripture references.

¹⁶⁴ Testing God is prohibited in Deut 6:16 (cf. Ps.78:18).

¹⁶⁵ It is usually believed that Ahaz's response is a brush-off disguise of his alternative plan in mind, that is, to seek for Assyria's help. However, Williamson (*Isaiah 6-12*, 148) maintains that the text itself shows no indication of it at all, thus he claims Ahaz of doubt rather than disguise. Roberts (*Frist Isaiah*, 118) states that Ahaz refuses the invitation so as not to be forced into a limited freedom.

¹⁶⁶ Num 14:11 has both roots אמן and אות ("And how long will they *not believe in me*, in spite of all the *signs* that I have done among them?") while v.22 roots אות and נסה ("none of the men who have seen my glory and my *signs* that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the *test* these ten times and have not obeyed my voice.")

wilderness is accounted as testing YHWH. In this light, we can confidently deduce that Ahaz has already known that he cannot test YHWH, and that if he disbelieves in YHWH after the sign, he would be counted as testing YHWH. Therefore, his interpretation of his asking God for a sign as testing God has already indicated that he will respond with unbelief. This reading can also be supported by the location of this meeting, אל קצה תעלת הברכה העליונה אל מסלת שדה כובס, a factor introduced in v.3 but left untreated explicitly in Isa 7, and by Isaiah's accusation of the house of David's wearying men (v.13a),¹⁶⁷ because this location tells of their preparation for warfare and the labouring construction work would weary men. Therefore, Ahaz' response shows nothing but his stubbornness in unbelief under the veil of misperceiving the offer granted by a God who wants to have a personal relationship with him and to strengthen his faith in the challenging situation of political threat at his very existence and kingship.

In response to Ahaz' refusal, Isaiah calls the whole Davidic house to hear (v.13a): a rhetorical question (v.13b) followed by consequential speech led by לכן (v.14-25). The former denotes they have not only wearied man but also God (v.13b) – the shifting from אלהיך ('your God,' v.11) to אלהי ('my God,' v.13) has distanced from Ahaz God's personal relationship, which God offered, but has been refused by, Ahaz. The later announces YHWH granting לכם (no longer לך as in v.11) a sign which concerns not only the birth of a son called Immanuel (v.14) but also relating Judah's fate to the child's understanding and choosing of good from evil (vv.15-25).

In vv.15-25, vv.15-16 lay an emphasis on the child's *knowing* to reject evil and to choose good through the almost verbatim phrase, vv.16-17 concern the desolation of Syria and Israel and the rising of Assyria, while the further triple elaborations (vv.18-20, 21-22, 23-25) of the unprecedented days that God will bring (v.17) concern a *disaster*. This disaster's inclusiveness of *everyone* in Judah is expressed through the triple prepositional phrases (עליך ועל עמך ועל בית אביך, v.17), not just upon Ahaz personally or the people collectively, but also בית אביך, that is, 'house of David', the bearer of Davidic covenant, while its unprecedented seriousness is highlighted by מים אשר לא באו למיום סור ('days that have not come since the day the Ephraim departed Judah,' v.17). That is to say, the days brought about by מלך אשור ('king Assyria') will be comparable to the split of Ephraim from Judah, causing turmoil and divisions. The first oracle (vv.18-20) outlines how God

¹⁶⁷ Noteworthy, the house of David also occurs in v.2, just right before the location v.3.

musters enemy armies through the metaphor of a swarm of insects (v.18);¹⁶⁸ the enemies' prevalent invasion among Judah (v.19); and Judahites' head, feet and beards being shaved bald which symbolizes conventionally their subjugation of Judah to Assyria (v.20).¹⁶⁹ The second oracle (vv.21-22) seems to depict a prosperous picture,¹⁷⁰ but actually not – it is at most a glimpse of hope. The abundance of milk in v.22 is later in the third oracle (vv.23-25) ascribed to the fact that the agricultural lands have become “briers and thorns” (a phrase that occurs in each of vv.23-25, hence triple) so that they can *only* be used as pastoral/shepherding lands for cattle and sheep (v.25) which would produce abundant milk naturally. This in turn suggests that v.22 means milk and honey are the *only* available food for the remnant. This negative understanding of milk fits with the fact that honey is grown wildly or naturally.¹⁷¹ This means the milk and honey in v.15 also carry the negative connotation. As Williamson notes, “המאה ודבש” in Isa 7:15, 22 is not the same as הלב ודבש that features the promised land (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev.20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; 16:13; 16:14; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh 5:6; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Ezek. 20:6, 15).”¹⁷² Besides, noteworthy, both v.15 and v.16 have the *definite* article in both בָּרַעַ and בְּטוֹב, thus differentiating from other occurrences of ‘good and evil’ and also its most parallel phrases in Gen 2-3 where ‘to know’/‘knowledge’ co-occurs with ‘good and evil’.¹⁷³ This means the Immanuel’s knowing to reject the evil and to choose the good is neither about general ethical choice, nor about food choice, but about a particular choice in relation to the rise of Assyria – choosing to reject a political alliance and to choose believing in YHWH. Since the child Immanuel in its historical context refers most likely to Hezekiah,¹⁷⁴ this Immanuel sign (vv.14-25) concerns the significance of Hezekiah’s perception in the rising threat of Assyria.

¹⁶⁸ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 184 claims that the unique use of the infrequent words זָבוּב (‘fly’) and דְּבוּרָה (‘bee’) in singular form in v.18 rhetorically and metaphorically refer to the two kings, Egyptian and Assyrian kings. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 144 states that “the mention of Egypt as well as Assyria takes the meaning beyond the immediate Assyrian invasion. V.17 speaks particularly of a new and different era. V.18 defines it as one characterized by big-power conflict in which Judah will continually be involved...Hezekiah becomes an active participant in the struggle (cf. chps. 29-33).”

¹⁶⁹ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 208.

¹⁷⁰ Wagner, *Gottes Herrschaft*, 263-265, and Weißflog, *Zeichen und Sinnbilder*, 143-147.

¹⁷¹ McConville, *Isaiah*, 125 also claims that honey is what occurs naturally while milk/curds is what has been preserved in the wake of a destruction.

¹⁷² Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 165-166.

¹⁷³ Gen 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22.

¹⁷⁴ Some, e.g., Wegner, *Messianic Expectation*, 117-8; Clements, “Immanuel Prophecy,” 232, deny the possibility of ‘Immanuel’ being identified as Hezekiah on chronological grounds. However, it is often acknowledged that there is confusion in the chronology in Kings regarding Hezekiah (see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 234; Laato, *Immanuel*, 142-3; Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 160), and it is quite possible that Hezekiah was 15 rather than 25 at his accession and thus born 734/33 BCE (see Hammershaimb, *Old Testament Prophecy*, 26; cf. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 118).

Overall, the positive invitation of ‘asking for a sign’ to Ahaz so as to encourage his faith in God only turns out to be refused which provokes God himself to give a sign anyway. In this sign, while the term עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים (‘God is with us’) seems a positive term,¹⁷⁵ it is linked with an upcoming and imminent greater threat from Assyria (vv.15-25) as God’s response to Ahaz’ stubbornness in unbelief, hence also a negative connotation. This ambiguity, together with a glimpse of salvation hinted at the desolation of Syria and Israel (v.16b), the survival of remnants after the Assyrian threat (v.22) seems to create some cognitive difficulty to its audience, which seems to be an example of the hardening aspect of 6:9-10 on the one hand, but on the other hand, it provokes even more urgently for a correct response from Ahaz: to ask for God’s mercy and to believe in him. This is exactly what Hezekiah does at the Assyrian threat – though overwhelmed by powerful enemy with hopelessness, he prays to God. As Williamson states, though it is probably an exilic reflection on the fall of Davidic house in 597/587 BCE, the Immanuel saying is in its final form now “an interpretation of the hardening saying of 6.9-10 as far as the institution of the monarchy is concerned: they were offered every encouragement and help to act in faith according to God’s promises to David; in rejecting that, they sealed their own fate in the severe terms that that saying outlines.”¹⁷⁶

Summary

To conclude, Isa 7 begins with a setting in which Ahaz heard and thus was frightened of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and in which he also heard the words and promises from God and was given an invitation to see the sign of this promise. As distinguished from all other sign passages in the OT, here an invitation of asking for a sign is offered to Ahaz. Whatever reason might have led Ahaz to refuse this invitation, this invitation itself, on the one hand, attempts to reassure Ahaz of God’s promise – which itself suggests that YHWH is indeed aware of what a difficult situation Ahaz is in and of how difficult it is for Ahaz to have faith in Him in such a situation. On the other hand, it opens up rhetorically an opportunity to issue God’s judgement towards his people, as proclaimed in 6:9-13. Besides, different from its best commentary, 2 Chron 20:20, which applies a positive saying of 7:9c, the negative saying in 7:9c here foretells Ahaz and his nation’s fate: not to be established. As the

¹⁷⁵ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 198, 205 states עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים is a contrast to טַבְאֵל which also has אֱלֹהִים ending, which was ‘good is God’ but is ‘good-for-nothing’ when being verbalized to Tabeal. To quote: “Wenn überhaupt eine historische Notiz vorliegt, so darf man davon ausgehen, dass der Name des Vasallen Tabeäl »gut ist Gott«, gelautet hat. Dieser wurde dann zu Tabeal, »Taugenichts«, verballhornt. Damit kontrastiert er noch mehr mit der Person, dessen Name erst später fällt und den Schutz JHWHs auf ganz besondere Weise verkörpert: Immanuel = »mit uns ist Gott« (V 14).” “Dass der Name in der Erzähldynamik verankert ist, wird auch aus dem Folgenden deutlich. Immanuel, wörtlich »mit uns (ist) Gott«, bildet einen Gegensatz zum Namen des Usurpators, den die Könige von Aram und Efraim in Jerusalem einsetzen wollen: Tabeal = »Taugenichts«, wahrscheinlich eine Verballhornung von Tabeäl = »gut (ist) Gott« (V 6).”

¹⁷⁶ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 161.

final form of 7:10-25 shows, Ahaz, in rejecting the sign, which indicates his unbelief and refusal of God's promise to him (7:10-12), was then given an ambiguous sign (7:13-14): a very brief promise of the falls of Aram and Ephraim, followed by a much longer description of the judgement upon Judah (7:15-25). This chapter, therefore, exemplifies Isa 6:9-10: Isaiah's exhortation message with a sign (7:1-11) does not provoke a positive response or belief from the king Ahaz (7:12-13), exemplifying that the king saw yet did not understand, and heard yet did not know. As the same as how a king affects the whole nation's fate in Israelites' history, here, the application of 6:9-10 starts from the king Ahaz, whose heart as hardened brought the whole nation under God's judgment.

2.4.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 8:1-22

As noted in 3.5.1, Isa 8 is arranged by the intertwining of YHWH's saying (vv.1-8; 11-15) and Isaiah's faith proclamations (vv.9-10; 16-22). The first few subunits are chained together: vv.1-2 and vv.3-4 by מהר שלל הש בז; vv.3-4 and vv.5-8 by מלך אשור (vv.4, 7); vv.5-8 and vv.9-10 by עמנו אל (vv.8, 10). Then, vv.11-15 is linked back to vv.5-8, not to vv.9-10, with העם הזה (vv.6, 11, 12), while vv.16-22 has no similar semantic links with the preceding subunits. Since both v.5-8 and v.11-15 start with divine speech formula, and refer to העם הזה, while vv.9-10 which lies in-between them is more Isaiah's proclamation of faith in YHWH against nations,¹⁷⁷ vv.9-10 thus seems like an intrusion incorporated here.¹⁷⁸ However, either the seemingly intrusive vv.9-10, or the seemingly disconnected vv.16-22, they both have their rhetorical function in Isa 8. I will demonstrate in the following how the sequel of the subunits in Isa 8 brings out the role of imperception theme in Isa 8 while reading Isa 6 literary-thematically.

Sign and judgment oracles (8:1-8)

In vv.1-8, while vv.1-4 is about the fate of Damascus and Samaria, in relation to failure of the Syro-Ephraimite plan as introduced in 7:1-9, 15-16, implying hope for Judah, 8:5-8 Judah's suffering Assyrians' invasion, similar to 7:17-25. Though vv.5-8 are said to be "originally independent and free standing and not composed specifically for the present setting,"¹⁷⁹ the joining of contrasting

¹⁷⁷ 8:9-10 is closely related to Psalms of Zion, such as Pss 2, 46, 48 and 76, similar in the confidence in God's protection against attack by other nations. Zion theology is also visible in v.6, because 'waters flow joyfully' is related to the notion 'waters bring joy to the people' which clearly expressed in Ps 46:5: 'there is a river whose streams make glad (ישמחו) the city of God' (cf. Ps.36:9; Isa. 12:3; 33:21).

¹⁷⁸ As for why vv.9-10 is incorporated here, Oswalt (*Isaiah 1-39*) holds that Isaiah takes a long-term hope to balance the short-term crisis; Ollenburger (*Zion*, 120-24) states that it provides the underlying basis of Isaiah's call for faith; whereas Williamson (*Isaiah 6-12*, 267) proposes that "the author intended to project the circumscribed promises given in the original historical circumstances on to a universal canvass, thus drawing out the fundamental principles of divine commitment to Zion that he celebrated in the temple cult." Judah's particular privilege by contrast with nations in vv.9-10 satirizes their response to God in the midst of God's judgment as vv.16-20 indicates.

¹⁷⁹ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 234.

vv.1-4 and vv.5-8 makes vv.1-8 in line with 7:15-25, both having a message of hope and encouragement followed by a threatening message for Judah.

In vv.1-4, its sequence (vv.3-4 following vv.1-2), and the very existence of vv.1-2, are all noteworthy, and play a significant role in addressing God's attempts to draw the people's perception in 8:1-4. In v.1, Isaiah is commanded to take גליון גדול ('a large tablet,' that is, visible enough) and to write upon it בהרט אנוש (lit. 'with stylus of a human,' that is, with clear writing) the words למהר שלל חש בז ('concerning spoil speeds – booty hastes'). In v.2, the two witnesses, Uriah (known as high priest in 2 Kgs 16) and Zechariah (Hezekiah's grandfather Zechariah is the only Zechariah known in Ahaz' time, 2 Kgs 18:2), are highlighted as 'reliable', trustworthy both to God and people. Besides, apart from that they are respectively from priesthood and royal family, their names have piety indicators: Uriah, אוריה, might mean 'YHWH is light;' Zechariah, זכריהו, 'YHWH remembered;' and even his father Jeberechiah, יברכיהו, 'may YHWH bless'. These aspects that these names tell about God could function to be encouraging and inspiring for their current situation. Thus, in vv.1-2, apart from aiming to record and await the fulfilment of the prophecy, this visible tablet with clear writing of an interesting phrase, attested by the two reliable witnesses, must also have aimed to, and should have functioned to, attract people's attention to wonder what this is all about. Then, v.3-4 narrates that after Isaiah's wife have conceived and born a son, he is told to name him חש בז, the same phrase that has previously been written on the large tablet with two witnesses (vv.1-2), and it is only now that what this phrase signifies is explained. This sequence – the phrase written on large tablet first, and then a name of prophet and prophetess' son with an interpretation of this name—is rhetorically more effective in attracting people's curiosity. However, just as Isa 7 ends without Ahaz's respond to YHWH's exhortation (vv.4-9) and to YHWH's Immanuel sign (vv.10-25), so does 8:1-4 without people's response.

In vv.5-8, ויסף יהוה דבר אלי עוד לאמר (v.5) introduces YHWH's speech of a typical judgment oracle (vv.6-8)¹⁸⁰ with accusation and judgment led respectively by יען כי (v.6) and ולכן הנה (v.7a). The exegetical difficulty raised by the juxtaposition of העם הזה and ובן רמליהו is notable, which has led into different interpretations, emendation or divisions of v.6.¹⁸¹ For example, some commentators view v.6 as against the northern kingdom Israel's rejection of the house of David – the river that flows gently – and their rejoicing over Rezin and son of Ramaliah,¹⁸² while some others

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 169–76.

¹⁸¹ See Sweeney "On *ûmesôš* in Isaiah 8.6," 42-54, for a survey of ancient versions and modern opinions. See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 227-230.

¹⁸² Motyer, *the Prophecy of Isaiah*, 91; Robert, *First Isaiah*, 133-4.

regard v.6 as against those in Judah who reject YHWH's protection but delight in Rezin and the son of Ramaliah's coalition against Assyria.¹⁸³ These two interpretations are both problematic with the immediate literary context, where the mentioning of העם הזה in 8:6 and יהודה in 8:8, and the echoing of העם הזה in 8:6 to 6:9 would suggest העם הזה to be Judahites, hence neither partial Judahites, nor northern kingdom.¹⁸⁴ The emendation of ומשׁוּשׁ to ומסוס ('and melt in fear')¹⁸⁵ would solve the exegetical problem and fit the context very well. However, the reading of ומשׁוּשׁ is attested in Qumran texts¹⁸⁶ and in translations like LXX, Targum and Syriac, and is a more difficult reading, thus more likely the original. It is noteworthy that as the table below shows, in all the occurrences of שׁוּשׁ in Hebrew Bible, when an object follows the verbal root שׁוּשׁ, the preposition will always be על or ב; none of its occurrences uses the direct object marker את. The only other co-emergence of שׁוּשׁ and את besides Isa 8:6 is Isa 66:10 where את is not direct object marker but preposition ('with'). Thus, the relationship between משׁוּשׁ and its following את-phrase is very unlikely that of a verb and its object.

שׁוּשׁ+objects (using preposition על or ב)	שׁוּשׁ...על...	Deut 28:63; 30:9; 62:5; Jer 32:41; Zeph 3:17; Ps 119:162
	שׁוּשׁ...ב...	Is 61:10; Ps 35:9; 68:4[3]; Job 39:21
שׁוּשׁ followed by את	שׁוּשׁ את	Isa 66:10 rejoice with
שׁוּשׁ as an intransitive verb	שׁוּשׁ	Is 35:1; 64:5; 65:18, 19; 66:14; Ezek 21:15[10]; Ps 19:6[5]; 40:17 [16]; 70:5[4]; 119:14; Job 3:22; Lam 1:21; 4:21

Thus, Williamson proposes a different division of v.6 (divided after ומשׁוּשׁ) from MT (a division is marked by *athnach* at לאט, hence before ומשׁוּשׁ)¹⁸⁷ and reading ומשׁוּשׁ as "a noun used adverbially" (hence) to reserve parallel structure of v.6 and v.7 as the table below shows.

γ	β	α	
את רצין ובן רמליהו	את מי השלח ההלכים לאט ומשׁוּשׁ	יען כי מאס העם הזה	v.6
את מלך אשור ואת כל כבודו	את מי הנהר העצומים והרבים	ולכן הנה אדני מעלה	v.7a

The table above shows the structurally neat parallels: v.6αβγ//v.7aαβγ.¹⁸⁸ In v.6α and v.7aα, יען כי parallels to ולכן הנה, and העם הזה to אדני, and מאס to מעלה. Then, both v.6βγ and v.7aβγ are made of two object-marker את. In v.6β and v.7aβ, 'the waters of Shiloah that goes gently and joyfully' parallels to 'the waters of the mighty and many river,' in both of which there are two descriptive terms – though לאט ומשׁוּשׁ (v.6β) are used adverbially while העצומים והרבים (v.7aβ) adjectively. Besides, v.6γ and v.7aγ both mention a leading king followed by a waw-conjunction phrase. את-

¹⁸³ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 224; McConville, *Isaiah*, 133.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 249 claims "there is no justification for arguing for Israel alone from the nearer context."

¹⁸⁵ Thus in RSV; NRSV; Childs, *Isaiah*, 70, 72.

¹⁸⁶ So in 4QIsa^c and 4QIsa^f, while interestingly ומשׁוּשׁ in 1QIsa^a.

¹⁸⁷ BHS does not follow MT division either.

¹⁸⁸ Klein, "Freude an Rezin," cited in Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 228.

Faith proclamation against nations (8:9-10)

The choice of words in 8:9-10 is noteworthy. On the one hand, Aram and the Northern Kingdom Israel are two of the accused עמים and כל מרחקי ארץ, as manifested by the fact that אפרים is referred to as in relation to עם in 7:8 while its plural form עמים is addressed to in 8:9. More similar words used in 7:5-9 and 8:9-10 as highlighted in the table below would suggest there is a deliberate link between these two chapters, and that 8:9-10 is not out of its context of Isa 8 and merely incorporated here. The noun רעה (7:5) and the root רעע (8:9) are cognate words; the root יעץ (7:5) reoccurs in 8:10 with its cognate noun עצה. Besides, לאמר at the end of 7:5 introduces Rezin-Pekah's speech of plotting against Judah (7:6), which is then announced by God as לא תקום ולא תהיה (7:7). This is clearly alluded to in "דברו דבר ולא יקום כי עמנו אל" in 8:10. Furthermore, the root חתת that occurs three times in 8:9-10 occurs earlier in 7:8 in relation to Ephraim's being shattered as a people. Lastly, though the repetitive root אזר (8:9b) does not occur in 7:4-9, the concept of the readiness and determination to war as denoted by אזר is already present in 7:6. Therefore, in light of all these similarities between these two small units, 8:9-10 functions as Isaiah's faith proclamation against nations which include Aram and Israel.

Isa 7:5-9	Isa 8:9-10
יען כי יעץ עליך ארם רעה אפרים ובן רמליהו לאמר כה אמר אדני יהוה לא תקום ולא תהיה יהת אפרים מעם	רעו עמים והתו והאזינו כל מרחקי ארץ התאזרו והתו התאזרו והתו עצו עצה ותפר דברו דבר ולא יקום כי עמנו אל ס

On the other hand, as vv.9-10 immediately follows vv.5-8, in which Assyria is the daunting and threatening nation to Judah, and the repetition of "עמנו אל" at v.8,10, naturally brings Assyria into the accused, and switched the ambiguous "עמנו אל" (v.8) into a more salvation-affirmative proclamation in v.10.

Therefore, vv.9-10 functions as Isaiah's faith proclamation against nations in the midst of the contemporary Syro-Ephraimite crisis and the forthcoming Assyrian threat. The application of similar terms in 7:5-9a to 8:9-10 strikingly contrast Isaiah's faith with Ahaz's lack of faith.

YHWH's exhortation to Isaiah and the faithful (8:11-15)

Following a divine speech formula, it is 'me' that is spoken to and warned in v.11, while the addressee of YHWH's speech in v.12-13 is second person plural, including Isaiah and those who he represents – later referred to by the prophet as למדי in v.16 – in contrast with the twofold העם הזה. The twofold קָשָׁר in v.12, the very first thing spoken in YHWH's speech here, inevitably lays an emphasis on קָשָׁר. Wildberger maintains that קָשָׁר "describes a political conspiracy which has the goal of

overthrowing a ruler, inciting to rebellion.”¹⁹³ A word study shows that, in its 16 occurrences in OT, the majority are indeed related to deposing or slaying the reigning king (2 Sam 15:12; 1 Kgs 16:20; 2 Kgs 11:14 [*2]; 12:21; 14:19; 15:15, 30; 17:4; 2 Chr. 23:13 [*2]; 25:27) – among which, 2 Kgs 17:4 mentions Hoshea’s conspiracy against Assyrian king by not paying tribute to him and allying with Egypt – while *למקדש* in Jer 11:9 refers to their conspiracy against YHWH himself by following other gods, and *למקדש* in Ezek 22:25 refers to the prophets’ conspiracy for their own interest by exploiting that of other people’s. It is usually considered that the first sense among these three is applicable in Isa 8:12a in that the Syro-Ephraimite coalition was conspiring against Assyria, which would also provoke Ahaz and his people either to join their conspiracy against Assyria or to conspire against the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. However, as Beuken maintains, “Nun bezeichnet »Verschwörung« meistens das Zerbrechen eines bereits bestehenden Verhältnisses...Das macht es unwahrscheinlich, dass der Vorwurf auf eine Kollaboration mit fremdländischen Mächten abzielt.”¹⁹⁴ As the fronting of objects and the applying of the same verbal roots *למקדש* and *למקדש* in v.12b and v.13a show, it is the contrast between *למקדש* and *למקדש* that is highlighted in YHWH’s speech. the latter of which is associated with. Besides, *למקדש* naturally recalls YHWH’s mightiness and ultimate victory in warfare; and its use with *למקדש* here also recalls the Seraphim’s address in 6:3 (*למקדש*). In such a way, YHWH tells Isaiah not to call conspiracy whatever this people call conspiracy, or to fear whatever they fear should (v.12), but rather to honour God himself as holy, and to fear Him alone (v.13).

Concerning vv.14-15, many commentators suggest emendation of MT’s reading of *למקדש* in v.14 to *למקדש* due to the tension between the positive *למקדש* and the negative tone in the rest of v.14 while the emended *למקדש* would carry the similar thought throughout vv.14-15 very well, and on the account that the scribal error here is easy to explain.¹⁹⁵ However, not only textual witnesses but also the syntax would support MT’s reading.

והיה למקדש	v.14a
ולאבן נגף ולצור מכשול לשני בתי ישראל	v.14b
לפה ולמוקש ליושב ירושלם	v.14c

When we divide v.14 in a way that the table above shows, v.14b and v.14c are in neat parallel: two terms on what YHWH will be (in v.14b, each term is made of two words, while in v.14c, each term one word), followed by for ‘whom’. If *למקדש* or highly-suggested *למקדש* falls together with v.14b,

¹⁹³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 6-12*, 357.

¹⁹⁴ Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 229. Translated: “Now ‘conspiracy’ usually denotes the breaking of a pre-existing relationship... This makes it unlikely that the accusation is aimed at collaboration with foreign powers.”

¹⁹⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 278-280; McConville, *Isaiah*, 137 fn22.

then it will result in a pattern of 1-2-2 and 1-1 concerning what YHWH will be, hence destroying the above 2-2 and 1-1 parallel. Besides, as an adverbial-*waw*, necessary and un-omittable, the *waw* at the beginning of v.14b not only does not destroy the parallel but rather strengthens it. Another reason for not emending to לְמִקְשֵׁי (YHWH as a conspirator) is that it would contradict v.12 (YHWH exhorts people not to say conspiracy).¹⁹⁶ It is YHWH's being a sanctuary, the nature of which is holiness, that makes him "a stone of offence, a rock of stumbling rock... a snare and a trap..." for Israel and Judah. The choice of these images for YHWH in relation to Israel and Judah in v.14 is striking because it overturns their memory of the associations of YHWH with אֶבֶן and with צוּר,¹⁹⁷ and the use of פָּח and מוֹקֵשׁ in the OT.¹⁹⁸ In v.15, the subject רַבִּים is described with five verbs, from stumbling on it to falling to being broken to being snared and to being taken, which depict the doomed destiny of the many. Thus, vv.14-15 seem a harsh judgment on both Israel and Judah, and carries the judgmental note of 6:9-13ab. However, it is noteworthy that the subject is רַבִּים but not כָּל, which still implicitly hints at the possibility of the alternative.

Faith proclamation against 'this people' (8:16-22)

The original unity of 8:16-22 or 8:19-22 is debated among commentators and scholars,¹⁹⁹ though there is a thematic unity in the final form of vv.16-22. Overall, these verses portray an era that the house of Jacob is prevented from perceiving, because the testimony is bound up, the teaching is sealed (v.16), and YHWH hides his face from them (v.17). When people seek mediums and necromancers (v.19), they only find more overwhelming darkness (vv.21-22). By contrast, Isaiah waits for and hopes in the same self-hidden God, knowing that he and his children are signs and portents from YHWH (vv. 17-18). The resumed first-person narrative in vv.17-18 let it read like Isaiah's faith proclamation. Thus, 8:16-22 depicts a contrast between people and Isaiah's response to their contemporary situation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ How could a God exhort others not to say conspiracy while he himself become a conspirator?

¹⁹⁷ "צוּר" is YHWH's epithet in Deut 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37 where mention the Rock (YHWH) bore, save and never give up Israel, and is their refuge. These associations of YHWH with can also be seen in 1 Sam 2:2; 2Sam 23:3 and in many Psalms. See the list in Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 229-230.

¹⁹⁸ It is usually their enemies (e.g., Josh 23:13) who are their פָּח and מוֹקֵשׁ from which God who usually save them (e.g., Ps 141:9). However, now God himself will become their פָּח and מוֹקֵשׁ (Isa 8:14).

¹⁹⁹ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 329-330, in particular, see 329, fn 15 for bibliography on scholars who defend its original compositional unity, while 330-331 for Williamson's persuasive arguments for the discontinuity of vv.19-20 with the preceding and the following. The former includes (i) the un-antecedent plural subject of v.19 (כִּי יֹאמְרוּ), (ii) the unattachment of the plural indirect object (אֵלֵיכֶם); (iii) two echoing terms in v.20 and v.16 (תַּעֲוֹדָה and תּוֹרָה) having different meaning; (iv) first-person narrative clumsily not carried on in v.19 onwards. The latter includes (i) the 3ms verb וַעֲבַר (v.21), (ii) the 3fs suffix in בָּהּ (v.21) and (iii) vv.19-20 in prose form while vv.21-22 more poetic.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Williamson views this juxtaposition of two contrasting response as a post-exilic effort (Ibid., 331).

The command of v.16 echoes back v.2 because in the latter God said וְאֶעֱיִדָה לִי עֵדִים נְאֻמִּים ('I will get reliable witnesses') while in the former Isaiah commands צֹרֵר תְּעוּדָה ('bind up testimony') – the verb root עוּד and the nouns עֵד and תְּעוּדָה are cognate words. This inclusio (8:2, 16) functions to frame 8:1-15, parallel to Isa 7, as the testimony. This means, תְּעוּדָה concerns the related crisis in Isa 7-8, while תּוֹרָה refers to the words YHWH says through Isaiah in the context of this crisis.²⁰¹ This command of צֹרֵר תְּעוּדָה הַתּוֹמָה "is a glimpse of one stage of a process by which initially oral prophetic messages could become written texts."²⁰² On the one hand, the command of v.16 and the hiding of YHWH's face from his people (v.17) again appear harsh, carrying forward the judgmental note of 6:9-10. On the other hand, בְּלִמְדֵי ('among the taught by me')²⁰³ indicates that there are among Judahites those who have been taught and persuaded by Isaiah, that is, Isaiah's teaching is by no means a secret. Similarly, הִנֵּה at the beginning, and the syntax, of v.18. direct readers' attention to Isaiah and his sons whom the Lord who is has given (אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לִי יְהוָה) to be signs and portents in Israel (לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹפְתִים) (בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל), and God is called "יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַשֹּׁכֵן בְּהַר צִיּוֹן". It is emphasized in v.18 of God's initiative, God's dwelling in Zion and the existence of signs and portents, who are "even if silent ... a testimony to what God had said and what the people had rejected."²⁰⁴ Moreover, in v.17 וְחִכִּיתִי לַיהוָה (הַמְסַתִּיר פְּנֵי מִבֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְקוֹיֹתֵי לוֹ), Isaiah's expression of his waiting for and hoping in God with two synonymous phrases which embraces v.17 highlights its importance. Therefore, vv.16-18 indicate that while God's teaching and testimony has been sealed up and he has hidden his face, there is still among Israel a group through whom the people, if attentive enough, can still gain some understanding of God's teaching, and Isaiah himself has set them an example concerning what they should do.

However, vv.19-20 depict people's response in the time of YHWH's hiddenness in that they²⁰⁵ turn to seek spirits, to be followed by vv.21-22, the consequence of their response. The people here are very similar to Saul, who had not heard anything from YHWH, inquired of a medium for Samuel (1

²⁰¹ Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 140.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁰³ English translation of this word into "disciples" is misleading. McConville holds that "all that is really required by it is a reference to those who had allowed themselves to be persuaded by the prophet's teaching." (*Ibid.*)

²⁰⁴ See Williamson, after a survey of the uses of *sign* and *portent*, concludes "that the plural form in the MT is secondary." Besides, he points out that the emphasis of the text is that "the children, not the names, will be a sign and portent."

²⁰⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 331 is right in maintaining that the subject of the 3mp predicate verb (יִאֲמְרוּ) is unattached in the context, and cannot refer to either לְמַדֵּי of v.16 or הַיְלִידִים in v.18 on grounds of sense, but a perfectly a general 'anyone'. However, his understanding (*Ibid.*, 330) that the unspecified 2mp pronoun indirect object (אֵלֵיכֶם) could not be לְמַדֵּי of v.16 or הַיְלִידִים in v.18 either, on the ground that they are the least to be tempted by necromancy is not persuasive, because the spirits-seeker's speech in vv.19-20, but it is likely that it is in line with the addressee that Isaiah is speaking to with his commands of v.16.

Sam 28). It is debatable where the spirits-seekers' speech ends (is v.19b part of their speech?) and how should v.19 be understood. The translation in the table below takes (i) all of v.19 as spirits-seekers' speech;²⁰⁶ (ii) אלהיו in v.19 as their ancestors;²⁰⁷ (iii) אשר אין לו שחר as the relative clause to דבר הזה which refers to v.19;²⁰⁸ and (iv) שחר not in its usual meaning 'dawn', a meaning similar to the שחר in Isa 47:11, 'to charm away' – in the context of inquiring of spirits, hence 'counter-spell',²⁰⁹ with the sense that their spirits-seeking does not have the magic power to charm away the consequences of their refusal to trust in the Lord. The beginning of v.20 (לתורה ולתעודה) is usually translated as "To the teaching and the testimony!"²¹⁰ with the sense that they shall not turn to spirits but turn to the teaching and the testimony. However, this usual translation/sense would make v.20a adversarial to both v.19 and v.20b, then there lacks at least an adversarial waw before אם to make the contrast between v.20a and v.21b, and to link v.20b back to v.19 more naturally, hence this usual translation not making perfect sense.²¹¹ Instead, in the translation below, לתורה ולתעודה serves as an endorsement between v.19 and v.20, and between their speech (v.19, 20) and its consequence (vv.21-22).

In vv.21-22, the subject again becomes 3ms, an indefinite 'one'. In the immediate context, it is similar to 'the people' themselves in v.19b where 3ms is used for the collective עם, different from v.19a and v.20b where 3mp is used for the speakers proposing seeking-spirits.²¹² Thus, vv.21-22 concern broadly and generally the people themselves who do not wait for and hope in God as Isaiah and the faithful ones do but seek the dead ancestral spirits, who have turned from YHWH to other sources, and become hungry, angry (v.21) and lost in distress and darkness (v.22). Literary stylistic devices are intensively used to denote their desperation: (i) wordplay in the enclosure of v.21a (עבר...רעב) – they are oppressed and hungry wherever they roam through in the land; (ii) chiasmic

²⁰⁶ Cf. the Chinese Union Bible translation reads "Should not a people seek their God; should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?" This reading adds 'you shall say' before הלווא so that v.19b is *not* part of the spirit-seekers' speech, and at the same time in v.19bβ carries the interrogative ה and verb יִדְרֹשׁ from v.19bα, but not the negative לווא as in הלווא, which is syntactically weird.

²⁰⁷ As Williamson (*Isaiah 6-12*, 346) maintains, this reading is supported by the most relevant parallel of the present text 1 Sam 28 where the ghost of Sammuēl is described in v.13 by the medium as an עלים מן הארץ... אלהים.

²⁰⁸ The 3ms שחר coincides with דבר הזה, not with the 3mp יאמרו. Besides, noteworthy, in 1 Sam 28, when the woman of medium accuses the spirits-seeker (Saul) of his causing her to disobey the king Saul's command of cutting off necromancy from the land of Israel, Saul swore by YHWH: אם יקרר עון בדבר הזה. Moreover, the 3mp יאמרו in both v.19 and v.20b also links these two verses together.

²⁰⁹ See the discussion in Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 328-329.

²¹⁰ See English Bible translations and commentaries.

²¹¹ This translation ('To the teaching and to the testimony') could make a good sense only when v.20b is translated as "if they do not speak according to this word, they will have no ..." which understands אם and אשר as leading respectively the protasis and the apodosis of a conditional clause. However, this is problematic in that the verb in the protasis is 3mp but that in the apodosis is 3ms, while the subject in the protasis and apodosis is the same.

²¹² Cf. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 242. The 'people' is broader than the speakers, so is spirits-seekers.

Additional translation and exegetical note on 8:23.

Firstly, while it is usually understood that *הראשון* qualifies *כעת* (hence ‘in the former time’) and that there is an ellipse *כעת* before *והאחרון* (hence ‘in the later time’), the gender discrepancy between *עת* (usually a feminine noun)²¹³ and *הראשון* and *והאחרון* (masculine adjectives) has led some to understand the noun and the adjectives separately, not in a qualified-qualifying relationship – Blenkinsopp, for an example, understands the two adjectives as referring respectively to ‘the earlier ruler’ and ‘the later one’, not qualifying the noun.²¹⁴ However, as Young notes, there is a firm example of the masculine *עת* in the pre-exilic Lachish Letters.²¹⁵ Besides, he also concludes from a study on how *הראשון* and *והאחרון* are used together in the Hebrew Bible that they never refer to two different kings,²¹⁶ hence against Blenkinsopp’s interpretation. Thus, I follow the traditional approach to view *הראשון* and *והאחרון* as qualifying *כעת*.

Secondly, while v.23bβ is usually understood as a contrast to v.23bα and v.23bβ by treating the hiphil *הכביד* as ‘to make glorious’ and by treating the two parallel perfect verbs, *הקל* and *הכביד*, respectively as the real past and the prophetic perfect, these two treatments are problematic. For the first treatment, it is noteworthy that in the whole Hebrew Bible, only here and Jer 30:19 have translated the hiphil form of *כבד* as ‘to make glorious’, this sense of which is more reserved for its piel form. For the second treatment, as Williamson maintains, ‘the close parallel’ between v.23bα and v.23bβ indicate ‘the two verbs must surely be construed alike.’²¹⁷ Taking into consideration that 8:23a and 9:1-2 contrast with 8:21-22, and that the comparison clause ‘...לא...כ...’ (‘not...like...’) indicates 8:23b and 8:23a are also in a contrasting relationship, I argue that the two halves of v.23b must be similar in a parallel way, not contrasting, relationship.²¹⁸ Thus, *הכביד* should be in a similar negative sense and perfect tense with *הקל*, hence *הכביד* ‘he dealt heavily with.’

Thirdly, concerning the reference of the geographical regions, I follow Blenkinsopp’s view that v.23bα refers to the arena of the Syrian-Israel struggle in the ninth and eighth century BC while v.23bβ ‘the annexation of Israelite territory during Tiglath-pileser’s campaign of 732 BCE. resulting in the formation of the Assyrian provinces of Duru (Dor, “the way of the sea”), Gal’azu (Gilead, “the land across the Jordan”) and Magidu (Megiddo, “Galilee of the nations”).’²¹⁹

Therefore, the sense of v.23 overall is that ‘there will be no gloom for the land where there was distress like what earlier the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali experienced in the 9th/8th century BCE, or what later the Way of the Sea, Trans-Jordan, Galilee of the Nations experienced after 732 BCE.’

The last three *כי* (9:3-6) explicates the announcement of ‘light’ and ‘joy’ in 8:23-9:2. The first two reasons each takes up one verse (9:3, 4), while the third reason covers two verses (9:5-6).

²¹³ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 357-8 for a survey of the gender of *עת* in Hebrew Bible, after which he concludes “wherever the singular is used to note a point in time...the noun is always feminine.”

²¹⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 245.

²¹⁵ Young, *Hezekiah*, 154 fn.11, cited in Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 358.

²¹⁶ Young, *Hezekiah*, 153-4, cited Ibid.

²¹⁷ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 360.

²¹⁸ This reading is actually also supported by how Matthew 4:15-16 quotes Isaiah: regarding the geographical regions in v.23bα and v.23bβ all in the situation of darkness and gloom.

²¹⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 247. See also Thompson, *Ideal King*, 84; cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 147. Cf. 2 Kgs 15:29

In the first reason (9:3), as Blenkinsopp observes, על סבלו ('the yoke of his burden'), מטה שכמו ('the bar of his shoulder') and שבט הנגש בו ('the rod of the one oppressing him') are all images of *servitude*, while כיום מדין recalls God's miraculous intervention in Judg 6-7 where a reduction of Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 freed so many Israelite soldiers from war,²²⁰ hence 9:3 concerns the end of oppression through YHWH's intervention.

The second reason (9:4), burning of warfare clothing, resonates with earlier 2:4 where military weapons are visioned to be turned into agricultural tools, and later 11:6-9.²²¹

The third reason (9:5) concerns the birth and naming of a royal child. As Williamson observes, at the beginning of v.5aα, יָלַד יְלֵדָה וְנָתַן בְּנֵי with alliterative effect is unique in comparison to other birth announcements (e.g., יָלַד-לָהּ בֶן in Jer 20:15; יָלַד-בֶּן in Ruth 4:17; וְהִזְלִידִים אֶשְׂרַר נְתַן-לִי יְהוָה in Isa 8:18). He further maintains the effect is "to combine the joyful announcement of what might be called a successful natural event with a sense of gratitude for the recognition of divine grace in this particular case."²²² The repetition of לָנוּ in v.5aα highlights this child's significance to 'us', While it is debated whether the royal child has four or five names,²²³ hence different or similar to Egyptian royal accession,²²⁴ my translation above reads only one name to the royal child: he is a wonder that the mighty God, eternal Father, is planning – a ruler of peace,²²⁵ a reading of which would fit well the literary, historical and messianic dimensions. The connection between פלא and יועץ is attested in 28:29 (הפליא עצוה, 'he is wonderful in counsel') and 25:1b (כי עשית פלא עצות מרחוק אמונה אמן), 'for you have done wonders, plans of old, faithful and sure'.²²⁶ Besides, while פלא denotes something that is beyond human being's understanding and imagination,²²⁷ the root יועץ is used to refer to YHWH's planning in a positive way in 14:24, 26-27; 19:12, 17; 23:8-9; 40:14 and 45:21,²²⁸ hence YHWH's planning is a major theme in Isaiah. Furthermore, אל גבור ('mighty God') and אביעד ('eternal father')

²²⁰ Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 249.

²²¹ All these falls into a major theme in Isaiah, that is, the eschatological horizon of the abolition of war. *Ibid.*, 250.

²²² Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 395.

²²³ This difference lies in taking פלא and יועץ together as one name ('a wonderful counsellor/planner', thus *Ibid.*, 398-9; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 248; Childs, *Isaiah*, 81) or separately as two names ('wonder', 'counsellor/planner.')

²²⁴ A. Alt, "Jesaja 8,23-9,6. Befreiungsnacht und Krönungstag," 206-25.

²²⁵ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 398 for two alternative interpretations of the child's name, one proposed by Luzzatoo, another by Holladay, Wegner and Goldingay, which Williamson himself also follow.

²²⁶ Here the plural עצות is an apposition to the singular פלא for פלא usually takes a singular form to mean plural, thus consistent with the plural עצות in number.

²²⁷ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 399.

²²⁸ Cf. it is used in 7:5; 32:8-9; 32:7-9 to refer to human being's plotting in a negative way.

would be unfitting names for a human king,²²⁹ Even in Christianity, ‘Father’ is usually a term applied to God the Father, not to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, for he is God the son. Moreover, the term *שר שלום* picks up from *המשרה* in v.5aβ, and is picked up in *המשרה ולשלום* in v.6. That the naming of the child (v.5b) ending up with *שר שלום* is framed by the mentioning of *המשרה* (v.5aβ) and *המשרה ולשלום* (v.6a) would support that *שר שלום* is the key element in the naming of this child. Taking into all these into consideration, my translation fits well (i) how *פלא* and *יעץ* are usually separately and relatedly in Isaiah, (ii) the more natural use of *אל גבור* and *אביעד* as referring to God himself, and (iii) *שר שלום* as the key name in the literary context of vv.5-6. Besides, this translation would be applicable both to the historical Hezekiah and the messianic Jesus Christ too. Historically, Hezekiah could be a fitting referee of the child of vv.5-6, because (i) the release from Assyrian oppression and the resume of peace in Judah afterwards as narrated in Isa 36-37 is indeed a wonder that the mighty God and eternal father has planned; and (ii) as 7:17-25 and 8:7-8 are judgements upon Judah through Assyria because of their disbelief in God, so the darkness in 8:22-9:1 can well be their time under Assyrian oppression, while the light, joy, or the release of the oppression under God’s work upon Hezekiah.

Though Childs claims that “the description of his reign [9:6] makes it absolutely clear that his role is messianic,”²³⁰ the language here could well be historically relevant in a rhetorical sense, as either in the west or the east, in ancient and nowadays, it is wished that a king’s reign or his kingdom might be ‘now and forever’.

Among all these three reasons, Williamson argues that the first two were part of the original core 9:1-4 on the ground that the two images, namely, agriculture and military, are picked up and elaborated respectively in v.3 and v.4, while the third reason (vv.5-6) is not introduced by v.2.²³¹ However, as Roberts points out, ‘darkness’ and ‘light’ are traditionally used respectively as a metaphor for political oppression and for political release from such oppression of Ancient Near East, where ‘kings often employed to contrast their just rule to the oppression characteristic of the preceding era’.²³² Therefore, the ‘no gloom’ but ‘light’ and ‘joy’ as promised in 8:23-9:2 is unpacked through the release from oppression (9:3) and wars (9:4), and also through the birth and authority of

²²⁹ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 397 refers to 10:21 and Jer 32:18 where *אל גבור* is understood as God himself; and in terms of ANE parallels of the rhetoric of court-language, he refers to Wildberger’s acknowledgement that ‘Isaiah used formulations which surpassed what was commonly used in the palace – which also went beyond what was generally accepted in Israel.’

²³⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 81.

²³¹ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 376-7.

²³² Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 148.

the child (9:5-6). Besides, the catchword שכמו applied both in ואת מטה שכמו ('the bar upon his [the people's] shoulder' v.3) and in ותהי המשרה על שכמו ('authority will be upon his [the child's] shoulder,' v.5) seem to indicate that "the security from foreign aggression is included in the benefits of this child's reign,"²³³ which would mean that the third reason is actually a climax of the three reasons, on which the former two reasons should depend. The climax of the third reason can also be supported by the extremely significant names of this child, the expansion of this child into v.6 – especially connecting him with 'the throne of David', judging 'with משפט and צדקה', with a government – עד-עלום. Therefore, it makes the force that it is the reign of this child with משפט and צדקה (v.6) that removes oppression hence bringing joy (v.3), and it is the reign of this child of 'prince of peace' (שר שלום) that makes the cancelation of war possible (v.4). At the end of 9:6, קנאת יהוה תעשה זאת ('the zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this') denotes 8:23-9:6 is all said to be the accomplishment of יהוה צבאות. In other words, the substitution of darkness with light, of gloom and anguish with joy, of oppression with joy, of war with peace, and the birth of a child, are all initiated by YHWH of hosts. Therefore, 8:23-9:6 becomes an aversion of the judgment in its nearest context.

2.4.3 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 7:1-9:6

The three subsections of 7:1-9:6, that is, 7:1-25; 8:1-22 and 8:23-9:6, are interconnected in mainly three ways.

Firstly, historical background. I have shown in 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2 that while the current threat of Judah that lies behind Isa 7 and Isa 8 is the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (735-733 BCE), the further greater threat for Judah would be from Assyria. By contrast, as shown in 2.4.2.3, the Assyrian threat is the historical background against which the promises of 8:23-9:6 is announced.

Secondly, literary parallels and contrasts. As shown in 2.4.1, contrasts are made between Isa 7 and Isa 8 through their parallels. YHWH's exhortations to Ahaz (7:3-9) and invitation to him to ask for a sign (7:10-12) are respectively not responded to or responded to with refusal. By contrast, YHWH's words/guidance to Isaiah is responded with obedience (8:1-4) and with faith in YHWH (8:5-10); his exhortation to Isaiah together with the faithful (8:11-15) is also reacted to with faith in YHWH as he waits for and hopes in the self-hidden YHWH (8:17). Besides, while Isa 7 focuses more on the imperception or disbelief of Ahaz and the house of David, Isa 8 more on that of the people in general, both are contrasted with Isaiah and the faithful's belief in YHWH. This nuanced focus is in

²³³ Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 395.

line with the tradition of the royal king and family's decisive role in determining the fate of the nation and the people on the one hand, while on the other hand it also makes it clear that each individual of the people themselves has to be responsible for their disbelief. As shown in 2.4.2.3, the use of same root/cognate words in 8:21-22 and 8:23-9:2 has deliberately put 8:23-9:2 in a contrasting relationship with what precede them. The contrasting picture of 8:23-9:6 from 7:1-8:22 is depicted through 'light' against 'darkness'; 'joy' against 'anguish'; 'abolition of war' against 'war'; 'harvest' against 'destitution.'²³⁴

Thirdly, the motif of the birth and naming of a child. The child עִמְנוּ אֵל (7:14) occurs in a literary context which tells about both Judah's temporary salvation from the contemporary Syro-Ephraimite threat (7:15-16) and about the further greater Assyrian threat (7:17-25), denoting ambiguous connotations of this name. This term is picked up later in 8:8 and 8:10 which further strengthen its ambiguity. The child מֵהָר שְׁלֵל חֵשׁ בּוֹ (8:3-4) is a child of the prophet Isaiah to be a sign for the people concerning the imminence of the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria being carried away by Assyrian king. I have shown in 2.4.2.1 that the child עִמְנוּ אֵל and the child מֵהָר שְׁלֵל חֵשׁ בּוֹ cannot be the same one. Despite the fact that these are both in relation to the imminent decline of Damascus and Samaria or their kings under Assyria, the child מֵהָר שְׁלֵל חֵשׁ בּוֹ and the event in 8:3-4 come earlier than the child עִמְנוּ אֵל and the event in 7:14-16, because בְּטָרֵם יָדַע הַנֶּעֶר קָרָא אֲבִי וְאֲמִי (8:4) will be around his age too while יָדַע הַנֶּעֶר מֵאֵס בָּרַע וּבָחַר בְּטוֹב (7:15-16) refer not to what happens in childhood like choosing from food or moral choice, but to the specific good and the specific evil as denoted by the use of definite article in בָּרַע and בְּטוֹב. In a historical context, this child עִמְנוּ אֵל (7:14) can refer to Hezekiah, and what 7:15b and 7:16b refer to historically is Hezekiah's choosing to believe in YHWH and rejecting political alliance with Egypt at the time of the Assyrian threat. This also fits the picture depicted in 8:6-10, for in Hezekiah's time, Judah did suffer from great threat yet also salvation. Similarly, as shown in 2.4.2.3, the child פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גְּבוּר אֲבִיעַד שֵׁר שְׁלוֹם (9:6) can also refer historically to Hezekiah.

2.4.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 7:1-9:6

The (im)perception theme in Isa 7-8 is much associated with the motif of true fear and faith in YHWH in the time of national crisis and of YHWH's hiddenness.

²³⁴ 7:21-25 where vines and arable land will become briars and thorns and thus can only be for pastoral purpose; the people will only be able to have curd and honey, but not proper solid food.

As shown in 2.4.2.1, it is YHWH who takes the initiative to send Isaiah to meet Ahaz in order to exhort him, for his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. His first speech starts and ends with exhortations of ‘not to fear the enemy’ (7:4) but ‘to trust YHWH’ (7:9b) which enclose elaborate reasons within (7:5-9a). He also understands it is uneasy for Ahaz to purely trust YHWH in this time when he himself may be replaced and his throne usurped. Thus he invites Ahaz to ask for a sign to help with his belief. However, unfortunately, Ahaz refused this invitation with “a demeanor of piety.”²³⁵ His refusal of the invitation demonstrates his stubbornness in unbelief, and thus he becomes the first example of the condition of the imperception announced in 6:9-10. The fact that YHWH still gives a sign despite of Ahaz’s incorrect response further satirizes Ahaz’s unbelief. Besides, following YHWH’s giving a sign is a short passage on Judah’s release from Syro-Ephraimite threat (7:15-16) and a much longer passage on judgment upon Judah through the further greater Assyrian threat (7:17-25). They together confirm that YHWH’s promise of Judah’s release from Syro-Ephraimite threat in 7:4-9 is meant to come true, and YHWH himself is the only one that Ahaz and the house of David should fear (7:9b).

As shown in 2.4.2.2, the sequence of, and the existence of signs in 8:1-4 function to provoke people’s curiosity to understand. The judgmental oracle in vv.6-8 points out the foolishness of the people’s rejecting YHWH, and YHWH’s initiative and sovereignty behind worldly great power. Isaiah’s proclamation against the nations (vv.9-10), together with YHWH’s exhortation with warning (vv.11-15) further enhances the significance of trust in and fear of YHWH. Isaiah’s faith proclamation against the people (8:16-22) shows that while Isaiah lives at the same time of YHWH’s hiddenness as the people do, their choices in facing it are different: Isaiah still believes and waits for the Lord, while the people seek ancestral spirits. Overall, though God gave them signs, teaching and testimony, their rejection of fear and trusting in YHWH results in the sealing up of his teaching and testimony, and YHWH hiding himself from them. In turn, instead of waiting for YHWH, and seeking to understand his teaching and testimony, they justify seeking ancestral spirits, which only results in going further down into more comprehensive distress and darkness; their seeking ancestral spirits does not help at all.

As shown in 2.4.2.3, the third reason (9:5-6) is the climactic reason on which the other two reasons should depend. In contrast to Ahaz and the house of David who suffer from war and not being established because of their unbelief in Isa 7, here in 9:5-6 this royal child’s extent of government

²³⁵ McConville, *Isaiah*, 122.

and peace will have no end, and his kingdom will be established forever, and be characterized by greatness, peace, צדקה and משפט. The (im)perception theme in Isa 7-8 is not the same as that in 8:23-9:6, but because salvation is depicted through ‘light shining forth upon those living in the darkness’ in 8:23-9:6 while ‘light’ itself is also an image about the possibility to perceive, 8:23-9:6 is an extension of the imperception theme in Isa 7-8 in a different and contrasting way.

2.4.5 Summary

As seen above, Isa 6:9:6 is a unit in its final form, by the striking structure surrounding it, and by the theme inside it.

On the one hand, in Isa 7-8, we have seen the applications of Isa 6:9-10. In Isa 7, Isaiah’s message with signs to Ahaz so that he can listen and see, does not provoke Ahaz’s correct response, which indicates king Ahaz bears the hardening judgment of 6:9-10. This results in the destruction on the whole people. Similarly, in Isa 8, the people did not respond to God’s messages with signs and portents correctly either, which also suggests their hardened senses, and which also brings them under judgment. Ahaz and the people’s imperception are depicted through their incorrect fear (fearing worldly enemies such as Syro-Ephraimite coalition, not YHWH himself), their distrust in YHWH and their rejection of YHWH in their national crisis, and their seeking of spirits when YHWH hides himself. By contrast, Isa 7-8 also depicts Isaiah’s perception through his fearing of, trusting in, waiting hopefully for, YHWH. As a contrast is made between Isaiah’s perception and this people’s imperception in Isa 6, so the contrast is also made between Isaiah’s perception and the king Ahaz and his people’s imperception in Isa 7-8.

On the other hand, the conclusion, 8:23-9:6, in 7:1-9:6 is like 6:13c in 6:9-13, providing a note of hope amid severe judgments. In contrast to 6:9-13ab where ‘this people’ cannot perceive and understand, here in 8:23-9:6 the people in darkness will see a great light. In Isa 6, it is the prophet Isaiah that sees YHWH sitting on his throne, here in 8:23-9:6 the people will see a royal child sitting on the throne of David. Besides, just as Isaiah’s sin is being purified by the burned coal offered by God through the Seraphim, here in 8:23-9:6 the people destined to be obdurate will once again live in light through the child born and the son given to them, which is only made possible because of the zeal of hosts of YHWH.

Overall, in Isa 6 there is a movement from Isaiah’s perception (vv.1-8 to this people’s imperception in 6:9-13, whereas in 7:1-9:6 there is a movement from the king and people’s imperception and Isaiah waiting for YHWH who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob (7:1-8:22) to the people’s seeing

the great light (8:23-9:6). These are parallel movements within the composition. Besides, from Isa 6 to 9:6, there is a movement from past (Isaiah's vision in the temple) to future (the vision of future salvation). Between this past and future is Isaiah and those who learned from him, who wait and hope. It makes a connection between the prophetic vision of YHWH and the vision, by faith, of what YHWH plans to do in the world. In it, the role of the prophet, and those who 'see' as he does, plays a crucial role.

2.5 Conclusion

The final form of Isa presents Isaiah's call narrative, vision report or mission not in Isa 1 but Isa 6, so that Isa 1-5 rationalizes why YHWH commissions Isaiah to harden the people, Israel (6:9-10), despite the fact that Isa 1 is unanimously agreed by commentators and scholars to be a late composition. In Isa 1-5, the perception theme is not a major theme in the judgment oracles, nor in the salvation oracles of 2:2-4 and 4:2-6, though it is still an obvious theme in 1:2-20, 2:5-4:1 and 5:8-24 where the sins and iniquities, as accused of Israel, including their rebellion and irrepentance despite being seriously punished (1:2-9), their unrighteousness and injustice despite observing rituals (1:10-31), their arrogance and self-pleasure (5:8-24), etc., may be rooted in their seeing/hearing without proper understanding and response, that is, in their imperception. The significance of their imperception is strikingly highlighted in 1:2-3 (ישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן) and 5:13 (לכן גלה עמי מבלי (דעת)). When Isa 6:9-10 is viewed in the literary context of Isa 1-5, it is no longer an abrupt, unusual or unjust, but a just, judgment from YHWH upon Israel as well as an endorsement.

The text of Isa 6 contrasts Isaiah's perception with this people's imperception. Besides, the fact that Isaiah is cleansed straight away after his perception of YHWH's holiness and his own sinfulness indicates that as long as a person perceives his sinful nature and genuinely prays for YHWH's forgiveness, the atonement would be ready for them. The clause at the end of v.10, פן יראה בעיניו, and v.11-12 state that the state of imperception will last until the fall of the country, which indicates that not until then would they reflect, perceive, or repent like Isaiah did. Therefore, the hardening mission of 6:9-10 is simultaneously YHWH's just judgement upon his people and a prediction of their constant hardening which has already existed among them. Isa 7:1-8:22 witnesses the application of Isa 6:9-10. Isaiah's message with signs to Ahaz so that he can listen and see does not provoke his correct response (7:1-12), which indicates king Ahaz bears the hardening judgment of 6:9-10, which results in the destruction on the whole people (7:17-25). Similarly, the people also did not respond to God's message with a sign correctly (8:1-4, 6a), which also suggests their hardened senses, and which too

brings them under judgment (8:7-8a). Similar patterns also go through the rest of the Isa 8. However, finally, in Isa 8:23-9:6, YHWH promises that light will shine on those who walk in darkness, with the announcement of the birth of a royal child as particularly related to the light. In other words, in the section of Isa 6:1-9:6, Isaiah's sin is purified through the burned coal offered by God through the Seraphim in Isa 6. Here at the end of this section, 8:23-9:6, Judah who were destined to be obdurate will once again live in light through the child born and the son given to them. As the end of 9:6 says, all these become possible because of the zeal of hosts of YHWH.

The imperception theme is applied to Assyrians in Isa 10:5-32, and in particular in 10:5-15. In the verbatim direct speeches of the Assyrian king, he invites people to see the fate of Calno, Carchmish, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria and Damascus albeit their gods and idols so as to make the point that Judah will not avoid being destroyed by him; he invites people to see how easily he has removed the boundaries of people through comparing himself to a bull, his hands as nests and nations as eggs. However, the comment of v.12 with a direct announcement of God's judgment upon them, and the satirizing comment of v.15 undertaking metaphors and rhetorical questions all underscore of the Assyrian's folly in their arrogance. Besides, the implicit and explicit articulation of Assyria as YHWH's instrument (vv.5-6); the announcement that judgement will be upon Assyria after YHWH finishes his work at Jerusalem and judgment (v.12); the details of judgment with the imagery of deforestation (vv.16-19, 33-34) following the ironic comment of v.15 against Assyria's boasting and following the military itineraries of Assyria (vv.28-32), and the promise of salvation for the remnant of Judah (vv.20-27) all condemn against Assyria's arrogance and misunderstanding. Therefore, this passage is rhetorically aiming to denote that a true understanding of oneself is not shown by one's success, but by one's role in God's plan, to warn against arrogance, and to keep obedience to God.

After the imperception of Judah's king Ahaz and the Judahites demonstrated in their lack of faith at national crisis and misplaced fear in 7:1-8:22, and the imperception of Assyrian king and Assyrians demonstrated in their arrogance in 10:5-34, Isa 11-12, echoing the question 'how long' of 6:11 (that is, 'how long will the time of punishment last? How long will the people of Israel/Judah be condemned to not hear or see or understand?'), look forward to a time when all this will be over. The royal figure "from the stump of Jesse" will have wisdom, understanding and knowledge, and will lead the people accordingly. There will be הַקִּיּוֹן and faithfulness. The paradisaical picture in vv.6-9 contrasts with the pictures of devastation in 6:11-13. The earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH – the time of terrible ignorance will be over, and true knowledge will spread out from Zion to the world. 11:10-16 also look beyond the time of punishment to one of restoration and reunification. Isa 12 opens with the people themselves looking back on the time of punishment and

giving thanks that YHWH has now “comforted” them (i.e., saved them, cf. 40:1). This is now the voice of the people that is not only saved but also restored to a true vision: they can “trust and not be afraid” (contrast the fear and lack of trust in King Ahaz; 7:2, cf. 7:9). Their true knowledge of YHWH is expressed in the very form of the songs of praise in Isa 12. And importantly, they can now make known the deeds of YHWH to all the nations. They have come out of their ignorance and can now fulfil their mission to draw nations to YHWH (cf. 2:2–4). Rhetorically, it might function to encourage a late-exilic audience that is on the verge of restoration; and/or it might aim to persuade such an audience, or even one that has already been restored to Jerusalem, to fulfil its mission of bringing the knowledge of YHWH to the nations.

Therefore, in Isa 1-12, the hardening mission stands in Isa 6, the centre of Isa 1-12. Isa 1-5 provides a rationale for YHWH’s hardening commission to Isaiah, making the hardening mission in Isa 6:9-10 both a just judgment and a prediction of their constant hardening which is not caused by YHWH but rather has already existed among Judahites. Isa 7 and 8 witness the judgment of 6:9-10 come true respectively upon Judah king Ahaz and upon Judahites in relation to their misplaced trust and fear. These result in further judgments that the Assyrians who they relied on to tackle the Syro-Ephraimite crisis will wage war against Judahites, and that YHWH’s teaching will be sealed. However, just like a glimpse of hope and salvation is offered to the hardened Judahites in 6:13, 8:23-9:6 also offer hope and salvation to Judahites. The Assyrian king and the Assyrians’ arrogance and boasting of their destruction of Judahites like other nations *misperceives* the source of their success and their role before YHWH, provoking YHWH’s judgment towards them too. This prepares for the promises of salvation and perception for Judahites in Isa 11-12.

3 The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 28-35

3.1 Introduction

As shown in sections 2.4 and 2.5, the imperception theme occurs as a key element in Isaiah's mission in Isa 6 and later in Isa 7-8 in relation to the historical event of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (732 BCE). In this chapter, I will show that the imperception theme is picked up in the new situation of the Assyrian threat (701BCE) in Isa 28-31 and in the salvation oracles for Judah in 33-35. Moreover, the theme dominates in Isa 28 and 29, less so, yet still significantly in Isa 30 and 31 – while it only occurs sparsely in 32:3; 33:17-20 and 35:5 in the context of salvation. This nuanced difference in the role of this theme in these Isaianic chapters is reflected in my varied structuring of my analyses in these chapters.

3.2 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 28

Isa 28 is abounding in terminology of (im-)perception: שגו בראה ('reel in vision,' v.7), יבין דעה and יבין שמועה (v.9), ולא אבוא שמוע, ... אמר אליהם ('God said to them...but they were not willing to hear,' v.12), הבין שמועה ('understand the hearing/message,' v.19), האזינו ושמעו קולי הקשיבו ושמעו אמרתי ('listen, and hear my voice; pay attention, and hear my speech,' v.23), and הפליא עצה הגדיל תושיה ('he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom,' v.29). This makes Isa 28 an important chapter to investigate the (im)perception theme.

3.2.1 The Structure of Isa 28

Literarily, Isa 28 is usually subdivided into vv.1-6, 7-13, 14-22 and 23-29,²³⁶ while others like Webb group vv.1-6 and 7-13 together,²³⁷ and Roberts group vv.7-13 together with vv.14-22.²³⁸

Vv.14-22 and 23-29 are two subunits widely agreed and easily demarcated. Firstly, the same root appearing in noun form, לצון, and in the verb form, תתלוצצו, respectively in v.14 and v.22 forms an inclusio of the subunit vv.14-22. Secondly, the similar calling to hear YHWH's words in v.14 (שמעו דבר יהוה) and v.23 (האזינו ושמעו קולי הקשיבו ושמעו אמרתי) also makes vv.14-22 and vv.23-29 two paralleling subunits. However, vv.14-22 refer to the arrogant ruler of Jerusalem, while vv.23-29 do

²³⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 1-26; Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 209; Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 419-432.

²³⁷ Webb, *Isaiah*, 118.

²³⁸ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 348-360.

not specify the addressee, which may be the case that vv.23-29 continue the addressee of vv.14-22. Therefore, vv.14-22 and vv.23-29 are separated yet also related.

By comparison, there is no clear indication of separation of vv.7-13 (or vv.7-8) from vv.1-6,²³⁹ but there are hints connecting vv.7-13 (or vv.7-8) with vv.1-6. Firstly, וגם אלה ('and these also') in the beginning of v.7 link v.7f with the preceding, though it is form-critically regarded together with vv.5-6 as redactional links.²⁴⁰ Secondly, the drunkenness of prophets and priests in vv.7-8 parallels with the drunkenness of the leaders of Ephraim in vv.1-4. While they do not specify what is wrong with drunkenness in vv.1-4, vv.7-8 point out the problem of drunkenness is the reeling in vision and staggering in making decisions, that is, the lack of clear perception and judgment. Thirdly, vv.1-6 and vv.7-13 are strikingly compared: the contrast lies in the descriptions of drunkards (who are described with 'proud crown...glorious beauty...fertile valley...first-ripe fig' in vv.1-4 while 'to reel and stagger...vomit and filth' in vv.7-8), while similarity lies in the referees' similar end (- they are 'cast down to the earth ... trampled underfoot...swallowed up' in vv.2-4 and similarly 'stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken' in v.13). These comparisons suggest that either magnificent or repugnant terms are applied to describe them, and they will experience a similar fate, as long as they are drunk, not wary in perceiving. Therefore, vv.1-6 and vv.7-13 are closely linked with each other and shall constitute one subunit.

The woe-oracle at Ephraim in v.1, the address to 'the rulers in Jerusalem' in v.14, and the wisdom theme and agricultural imagery seem to indicate that these three subunits are discrete and unrelated. However, from v.1 to v.14, the focus has moved from Ephraim to Judah with ambiguity (as in 'the remnant' in v.6 and in 'priest and prophet' in v.7-8)²⁴¹ to Judah with certainty (v.14), and the whole of vv.1-13 serve as a warning against Judah. Besides, all these three subunits are threaded by the theme of (im)perception.

Therefore, Isa 28 can be demarcated into three literary subunits, vv.1-13, 14-22, 23-29, and vv.14-22 lies in the centre of this structure, surrounded by both a bad and a good example, as follows.

A. Not seeing or hearing: proud and drunken leaders (vv.1-13)

²³⁹ An indication of time occurs in v.5, not v.7. Besides, though the time indication in v.5 may separate vv.5-6 from vv.1-4, the picking up of same terms in v.5 from vv.1-4 undoubtedly binds together vv.1-6.

²⁴⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 19.

²⁴¹ Deliberate ambiguity is a key literary device in vv.1-13. It is debated whether 'priest and prophet' in v.7-8 is from the Northern Kingdom (Webb, *Isaiah*, 118) or Southern Kingdom (Roberts, *Frist Isaiah*, 348-360), or deliberately ambiguous. Beuken ("Isaiah 28," 20) holds, "the ambiguity of perspective serves, from here on, the steering of the readers." Reading from v.1 up till v.13, the audience/readers may be impressed that these priests and prophets are of the northern kingdom. However, the link of v.14f with the preceding by the theme of 'scoffing' disarms this impression and makes the point: "the readers have been mistaken: the tableau just painted does not take place in Ephraim but in Jerusalem." (Ibid, 20-21).

B. Oracles addressed to scoffing rulers of Jerusalem (vv.14-22)
A'. Seeing and hearing: farmers heed YHWH's instruction (vv.23-29)

Despite the emerging consensus about the composition of Isa 28, there remains some ongoing debate namely that vv.1-4, 7-22 are sayings of Isaiah of Jerusalem, that vv.23-29 is a seventh-century Assyrian-Josianic redaction, and that vv.5-6 are an exilic/post-exilic gloss.²⁴² However, while acknowledging the redaction history of Isa 28, the structure as described above shows Isa 28 as a thematic unity.

3.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 28

3.2.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 28:1-13

28:1-4 is the first smallest definable literary subunit because the subjects of the woe-oracle in v.1a (עטרת גאות שכרי אפרים, 'proud crown of drunkards of Ephraim,') and v.1aβ (וציץ נבל צבי תפארתו אשר) (על ראש גיא שמנים, 'fading flower of its glorious beauty upon the top of the fertile valley') are later repeated and expanded in vv.3-4 ('trampled underfoot will be the proud crown of drunkards of Ephraim; the fading flower ...on the top of fertile land will be like the first-ripe fig before summer: whoever sees it would swallow it up as it is in his hand,²⁴³) and v.2 introduced by an exclamatory הנה explains what has resulted in this expansion from v.1 to vv.3-4: it is due to YHWH's work through his agent who is described as חזק ואמץ, and compared to כזרם מים and כזרם ברד שער קטב. As McConville observes, "The language of storm and overwhelming flood recalls the 'river' of Assyria that was set to inundate Judah in (8:7).²⁴⁴

Vv.5-6 is usually regarded as a later addition to vv.1-4 on the grounds that the former concerns salvation for the remnant while the later judgment for Ephraim,²⁴⁵ and that it breaks the coherence between the drunkenness theme in vv.1-4 and v.7, and that it seems to shift to an eschatological perspective similar to 4:2-6.²⁴⁶ However, in the final form, vv.1-6 does form a unity, in that it deliberately contrasts Ephraim with YHWH, as in two phrases describing YHWH in v.5, לעטרת צבי and ולצפירת תפארה, three words (עטרת, צבי and תפארה) are from the repeated phrase concerning Ephraim in vv.1, 3-4. In such a way, while Ephraim's crown will be trampled down, and its beauty is fading, YHWH himself is the real beautiful and glorious crown. Besides, v.6 helps identify the

²⁴² see Stansell, "Isaiah 28-33," 68-69.

²⁴³ This translation tries to preserve the Hebrew word order with a structure of 'result – repeated phrase – result.'

²⁴⁴ McConville, *Isaiah*, 321.

²⁴⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 5.

²⁴⁶ McConville, *Isaiah*, 321.

drunkards of Ephraim as the ruling elite of Ephraim.²⁴⁷ As vv.5-6 contrasts with vv.1-4, the attributes of YHWH as emphasized in vv.5-6 ('the crown for the remnant of his people, the משפט for the one sitting in judgment, the strength for those who come back from the battle') would be what is lacking from the subject of v.1., then the subject of v.1 may be better read as the ruling elite of Ephraim. Nevertheless, in vv.1-6, the deliberate vagueness of the identity of 'drunkard of Ephraim' (v.1), 'the powerful enemy' (v.2), and 'the remnant' (v.6) in comparison to the clear identity of YHWH (לאדני in v.2, and יהוה in v.5) highlight YHWH as "the one who presides over the course of the history in which arrogance collapses, and משפט and security fall to the lot of a suppressed minority."²⁴⁸

Vv.7-8 introduces other people who also reel in שכר and יין (these two nouns occur respectively three and two times in v.7 alone, while their first occurrence in chs. 28 is in שכרי אפרים and יין הלומי in v.1). These people are firstly introduced as אלה (v.7a) and later elaborated as כהן ונביא ('priest and prophet,' v.7bα), whose major tasks are respectively פליליה ('priestly judicial decisions') and ראה ('prophetic vision'), but v.7bβ emphasizes they are malfunctioning in these roles. What drunkenness pictures (like staggering) and what it stands for (including lack of clear mind, vision and judgment) is not spelt out in vv.1-4, but in v.7. The alliterative play on שגו and שכר (three times in v.7) and on פקו and פליליה evoke the drunkard's slurred speech, while the climactic progression from שגו ('to reel') and תעו ('to stagger') to פקו ('to totter') reflects their increasing levels of misbehaviour.

In vv.9-13, the two interrogatives in v.9a, introduced without a speaker, together with the repetition of v.10 in v.13, have provoked further questions: who is the speaker and who is 'he'-the teacher of v.9; would vv.12-13 parallels with and be a further explanation of vv.9-10, or would it be a transformed outcome of vv.9-10?

Some (like Blenkinsopp and Seitz), regard Isaiah as the speaker, and 'he' as priest and prophets. Blenkinsopp holds that Isaiah makes the point that priest and prophets do not have anything, apart from baby talks, to teach.²⁴⁹ Similarly, Seitz writes: the priests and prophets' "baby talk (28:10) will soon be turned to another sort of gibberish: the foreign speech of the invader (28:11). Having rejected their role as leaders in Israel, the word of God likewise becomes for them a sort of gibberish

²⁴⁷ One key exegetical issue concerning vv.1 is who/what are metaphorized as drunkards, proud crown and fading flower in vv.1-4? Tull (*Isaiah 1-39*, 420) views these as metaphors of Ephraim's leaders, Wildberger (*Isaiah 28-39*, 8) the city Samaria, Roberts (*First Isaiah*, 343) following Rolf A. Jacobson ("A Rose by Other Name") regard the crown as referring to the king of Ephraim. By contrast, Beuken (*Isaiah 28-39*, 24-25) regards 'crown' as Samaria, the capital of Northern Kingdom, while 'drunkards' as the ruling class of Northern Kingdom.

²⁴⁸ Beuken, *Isaiah 28-39*, 17.

²⁴⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 389.

(28:13).”²⁵⁰ While this reading ironically indicates the incapability of priests and prophets in their functions,²⁵¹ what I find difficult with this view is why would priests and prophets be referred to in singular verbal form in v.9 while the verbs for them are all plural in vv.7-8?

By contrast, some others regard *the speaker as priests and prophets, and ‘he’ as Isaiah*, hence denoting that priests and prophets object and despise Isaiah’s message because they think Isaiah is treating them like children,²⁵² as the sound effect of *tsaw lātsāw tsaw lātsāw qaw lāqāw qaw lāqāw*, *ze ‘er sham ze ‘er sham* would suggest the knowledge (דעה) and the hearing (שמועה) is so simple that they are for babies. While this reading would connect their drunkenness with arrogance in vv.7-10, a connection that occurs earlier in v.1, the difficulty I find with this view is that there is no indication of the shift of speaker from ‘Isaiah’ in vv.1-7 to ‘priests and prophets’ in v.9. If v.9 were spoken by priest and prophets about Isaiah, why would it have not indicated the quotation more directly, as Isaiah does in 5:19 (האמרים); 10:8-10 (כי יאמר), 13-14 (כי אמר), and 28:15 (כי אמרתם) where he quotes his opponents’ speeches directly to make his point?

Different from them, Exum offers another proposal, reading Isaiah as the speaker, and ‘he’ YHWH: since Ephraim’ ruling leaders (vv.1-4) and priests and prophets (vv.7-8) are not teachable, whom else then can YHWH teach? “Perhaps infants just weaned from milk, who have not yet had the occasion to succumb to wine or beer as the Ephraimites, priests, and prophets have.”²⁵³ With infants as those to whom YHWH will teach, he has to teach in an infants-comprehensible way, that is, according to infants’ level. That is why YHWH’s message would be *tsaw lātsāw tsaw lātsāw qaw lāqāw qaw lāqāw*, *ze ‘er sham ze ‘er sham* – because sound effect helps infants learn to speak.

In vv.11-13, an example of YHWH’s past speech to this people who were not willing to hear (אשר וולא אבוא שמוע v.12) is enclosed by the speech formula ידבר אל העם הזה (‘he will speak to this people’ v.11) and והיה להם דבר יהוה (‘the word of YHWH will be to them,’ v.13). This enclosure, that is, YHWH’s speaking manner (בלעגי שפה ובלשון אחרת), ‘with a mocking lip and with a foreign tongue,’ v.11) and what YHWH’s speech will be to them (*tsaw lātsāw tsaw lātsāw qaw lāqāw qaw lāqāw*, *ze ‘er sham ze ‘er sham*, v.13) are in line with each other – as both foreign language and gibberish baby talks are making no sense, are incomprehensible, unintelligible and/hence soporific to

²⁵⁰ Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 209.

²⁵¹ Exum (“Who Will,” 121) mentions ‘teach’ and ‘cause to understand the message’ are the functions of prophets. He also references to Drive, “Another Little Talk”, 55, who suggests the echoing of וצו and קו of v.9 with צאה and קיא of v.8, for the point that ‘the befuddled speech of the priests and prophets is being compared to the nonsense talk of infant.’

²⁵² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 22-23.

²⁵³ Exum, “Who Will,” 120-121.

others, so YHWH's speech will be to this people, which will lead naturally to their destruction (v.13b). The example inside the enclosure (v.12) forms a striking contrast with the enclosure itself (vv.11, 13). In v.12, YHWH has clearly said to them: "This is the rest, give rest to the weary, and this is the repose" – a chiasmic structure gives emphasis on the command of 'giving rest to the weary.'²⁵⁴ Ironically, the leaders, both political (vv.1-4), and religious (vv.7-8), have already drunken themselves to a state of lethargy, how could they then give rest to the weary? Their own lethargy-rest is not the real rest meant by YHWH. This then brings us to the question of what the true rest is, which relates forward to the question of what the true security is in vv.14-22.

Therefore, vv.1-13 shows firstly there are neither political leaders nor religious ones in sober status to be teachable except the infants whose level of comprehension is very low, and secondly since this people has rejected YHWH's previous comprehensible instruction, there is only incomprehensible and soporific instruction for them which will lead them into their destruction, hence emphasizing the importance of being willing to hear God. In such a way, vv.1-13 functions as a warning against Judah.

3.2.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 28:14-22

The cognate לצון (noun, 'scoffer') and תתלוצצו (verb, 'do not scoff') have enclosed vv.14-22 as a contained subunit. V.14b identifies the addressee 'scoffers' (v.14a) clearly as 'rulers of this people in Jerusalem,' which contrasts strikingly with the vagueness of the identity in vv.1, 7.

V.15 seems like a quotation of the scoffing leaders' saying concerning their arrangement of security. It is noteworthy that, as Exum maintains, the quotation of the scoffers' speech in v.15 could not be a direct quote of something that these Jerusalem leaders would say with their mouths,²⁵⁵ but rather more the *ironic attribution* in Good's term, who writes:

"The prophet parodies the commiqué from Judah's state department about a mutual assistance pact with Egypt, which might have said: 'We have made a covenant with Egypt, with Pharaoh we made an agreement. Assyria's invasion therefore will not trouble us, for we have protection with Egypt and security with Pharaoh.' By substituting words, the prophet *ironically criticizes* the treaty-making..."²⁵⁶

Besides, as McConville observes, "the people of YHWH should be exclusively in covenant with YHWH, a covenant reaching all the way back to Moses and Mount Sinai," and in Psalms, it is

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 122.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 125, writes "the fact that they say they have made a lie their refuge and have hidden themselves in falsehood indicates that this is not a direct quote."

²⁵⁶ Good, *Irony*, 119-20.

YHWH who is their refuge and in whom they hide themselves.²⁵⁷ However, here YHWH occurs in none of these relationships of Judah. The relationships Judah have are with ‘Death,’ ‘Sheol,’ ‘lies’ and ‘falsehoods’, which cannot be what they really say, but what really represents the real essence/nature of their situation.²⁵⁸ Moreover, in vv.17b-19, YHWH announces the ineffectiveness of their arrangement of security through picking up מות את מות (v.15, v.18), שאיל (v.15, v.18) and עבר (v.15, v.18, v.19) from v.15 but now using them all in an antithetical sense.²⁵⁹ The positions of בבקר בבקר (‘morning by morning’) and ביום ובלילה (‘by day and by night’) highlight the overwhelming scourge and terror. Simultaneously, שמועה (‘the message/hearing,’ at the end of v.19) is further explained into vv.20-21 which is led by the relative כי clauses: v.20 is an indication of disaster time,²⁶⁰ and v.21 spells out its reason. In Israel’s memory of the past, YHWH fought for Israel in Mount Perazim (2 Sam 5:17-21) and the valley of Gibeon (2 Sam 5:12-25; Jos 10:8-14). Now, YHWH’s action as such will be “strange” and “alien”, which suggests not of salvation as they experienced before, but rather of judgment – YHWH’s judgment on Zion is ‘strange’ because he has committed himself to protect it. As Roberts writes, “in the light of the Zion tradition’s promise of YHWH’s presence and protection of Zion.... The implication is that this time *YHWH will fight against Jerusalem*, not for it.”²⁶¹ V.22 concludes this subunit with a final exhortation (v.22a) with a warning (v.22b).

A chiasmic structure of vv.14-22 shows the central position of vv.16-17a which takes up the stone and construction image: אבן (‘stone’) occurs three times; root יסד (v. to lay a foundation; n. foundation) three times; and the occurrence of measuring tools קו and משקלת (respectively ‘measuring line’ for measuring length and ‘plummet’ for measuring weight). The description of v.15 including ‘a tested stone,’ ‘a precious cornerstone,’ ‘a foundation firmly founded,’ and ‘those who trust in it will not hasten’ all point to the reliability, stability and security of this building, while as the measuring tools of the building, ‘צדקה’ and ‘משפט’ are decisive in how this building is constructed. Thus, the centre of vv.14-22 gives emphasis to *trusting in the tested precious stone*, and to *משפט and צדקה*.

In vv.14-22, people are exhorted not to rely on their arrangement of security, which is falsehood and lies, but to trust in the security that God has prepared for them which is righteous and just. As ‘the

²⁵⁷ McConville, *Isaiah*, 325-6, and fn 35. Though I do not think it is necessary to link ‘death’ to the god Mot here.

²⁵⁸ E.g., ‘Death,’ ‘Sheol’ are the real essence/nature of their covenant and agreement with Egypt and Pharaoh, which are doomed; similarly, their refuge in Egypt or Pharaoh is essentially merely ‘lies’ and ‘falsehoods’.

²⁵⁹ The word עבר first occurs in rulers’ claiming יבואנו שוטף כי יעבר לא (‘when the overwhelming scourge passes through, it will not come to us’, v.15), and second in YHWH’s refutation of their claim, שוטף כי יעבר והייתם לו למרמס (‘when the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be its trampling place,’ v.18) and now twice in v.19

²⁶⁰ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 355, regards it as a prophetic prediction of Sennacherib’s devastation of Judah in 701 BCE.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* Italics added.

covenant with death’, and ‘agreement with Sheol” may refer to a foreign alliance ratified by cultic worship, the rhetorical situation that invites the discourse of vv.14-22 may be that in national crisis, the people and especially the royal leaders of Judah relied on other nations or idols for security, rather than on YHWH their God, and that they have not yet experienced the alien work of YHWH, which may mean that Zion was at that time still existing.

Therefore, vv.14-22 is a rhetorically persuasive subunit to talk the scoffing rulers out of their self-arrangement of security and into trusting in YHWH who holds the key to the fate of the whole earth. It does so by addressing rulers as scoffers both at the beginning and the end, quoting their speech in an ironic way, and after revealing the true security, it not only invalidates what they have trusted and sheltered in, but also expands their consequence more comprehensively.

3.2.2.3 *A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 28:23-29*

Blenkinsopp mentions the views of various scholars about the dating of vv.23-29, for example in Isaiah’s period, in the Assyrian-Josian period or in the Second Temple Period.²⁶² However, since there is no indication of the historical situation in vv.23-29, none of these dates can be decided with any certainty from within the text itself. I will show below how this subsection relates to the perception theme.

After the attention-catching call to hear in v.23, there are two stanzas (vv.24-25, vv.27-28) respectively concerning how to sow (vv.24-25) and how to harvest (vv.27-28), followed by a similar refrain (v.26, v.29a) commenting on the source of this knowledge. Therefore, vv. 23-29 is a poem with a very neat structure as follows.

Prologue: calling to hear (v.23)

Parable One: how to sow + a comment (v.24-26)

Parable Two: how to harvest + a comment on (vv.27-29a)

Epilogue: the wonder and magnificence of YHWH’s counsel and wisdom (v.29b)

These two parables resort to the farmer’s experience of how to sow and harvest, which is a factual experience, hence the text is concerning a fact. Two comments (v.26, 29a) and the epilogue (v.29b) together indicate that the farmer’s knowledge of sowing and harvesting come from YHWH his God, and these knowledge/counsel/wisdoms are wonderful and magnified. Besides, in both parables, it is emphasized that different treatments should be applied for different crops, either in sowing or harvesting. Scholars widely agree that these parables demonstrate that YHWH is a God who

²⁶² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 398.

“performs tasks that are tailored to specific circumstances”,²⁶³ taking “quite different but equally appropriate actions at different stages in dealing with his people”.²⁶⁴ Therefore, it indicates “Isaiah’s audience wants God to always act in a consistent manner, always rescuing his chosen Davidic king and Zion, his royal city, from threatening enemies.”²⁶⁵ That is to say, the rhetorical situation of vv.23-29 may be that God was not acting in a consistent manner, which, in light of vv.14-22, means God was not protecting Zion,²⁶⁶ in which situation the audience was doubting God’s wisdom. Moreover, both parables suggest, as Beuken writes, “there is a relationship between the farmer and his God, he accepts his instruction.”²⁶⁷ As said, this acceptance is done through being observant. In this way, vv.23-29 functions as a positive example of obtaining understanding because of seeing/hearing.

Therefore, though vv.23-29 may have a separate *historical* origin, its *rhetorical* significance is to show how God appears to be acting in an alien manner towards Judah, that is not protecting its the royal city Zion. This therefore is an admonition, and a positive example following up vv.14-22 to help the addressees to make a wise choice, like the observant farmers who listened to YHWH’s teaching.

3.2.3 The Interconnectedness of Subsections, and the (Im)perception Theme, of Isa 28

First, there is a vivid contrast between vv.1-13 and vv.23-29 concerning (im)perception: the former heeds YHWH’s teaching, while the latter refuses. Meanwhile, vv.1-6 and 7-8 also form a vivid contrast with vv.23-29, because neither the leaders in vv.1-6, nor prophets and priests in vv.7-8 are good observers, while the farmers in vv.23-29 are. As Roberts writes, “there is no indication that the farmer learned these farming techniques through the revelatory mediation of priests or prophets. Presumably he learned from other farmers and from his own observations in the process of farming.”²⁶⁸ Therefore, vv.1-13 contrasts with vv.23-29 in at least two senses: 1) the leaders in the former are not observant while the farmer in the latter is; and 2) people in the former do not hear YHWH’s instruction while the farmer in the latter does.

²⁶³ Stulac, *History and Hope*, 82. Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 62.

²⁶⁴ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 358.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 359.

²⁶⁶ As Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 398, reads, vv.23-29 is “a kind of exegetical reflection in parabolic form on the preceding words of judgment.”

²⁶⁷ Beuken, *Isaiah 28-39*, 26.

²⁶⁸ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 359.

Besides, the progression from vv.1-13 to vv.14-22 and vv.23-29 in relation to the theme of (im)perception enhances the centrality of vv.14-22. In Isa 28:1-13, the arrogance, drunkenness and refusal of YHWH's message which are castigated all relate closely to improper perception. Firstly, their arrogance is based on seeing their glorious beauty as being on the head of the rich valley (v.1c). However, they did not recognise they are just *fading* flowers (v.1a), nor did they see that YHWH himself is the true crown of beauty (v.5).²⁶⁹ That is to say, their seeing is not trustworthy; this is the root of their arrogance. Interestingly, the consequence of their improper or untrustworthy seeing is that they will be swallowed up once others *see* them as the metaphor of v.4d shows. In v.4d, the Ephraimite leaders are metaphorized as 'the first-ripe fruit'. By using יראה הראה (the one who sees it sees it), the emphasis on 'seeing' is indicated. Here, their fate is related to seeing, or more exactly, being seen. It is thus an irony that the thoughtless 'seeing' (of the fruit) becomes a metaphor for their thoughtless vision. Secondly, the drunkenness of prophets and priests makes them reel in vision, not being able to see properly (vv.7-8). It is somewhat ironic to read v.4d together with vv.7-8: being seen, they will be swallowed up, while they themselves cannot see properly. Thirdly, their contempt of YHWH's teaching (vv.9-10) leads them to refuse to hear YHWH's message (v.12) and inability to hear and understand (v.13). This subunit as a whole portrays a picture of leaders whose arrogance and drunkenness leads to improper seeing, together with their unwillingness to hear God's teaching and knowledge will face the consequence of their inability to understand God's words.

As the theme develops into vv.14-22, esp. as והיה רק זועה הבין שמועה ('it will be sole terror to understand the message') in v.19 and כי כלה ונחרצה שמעתי ('For I have heard destruction being decreed') in v.22 where the root שמע occurs denote the message they will hear will solely be a terror because it is a decree of destruction. Therefore, in the progression from vv.1-13 to vv.14-22, things seem to get worse for the addressee. However, the exhortation in v.22, ועתה אל תתלוצצו, makes readers wonder what if I listen to this exhortation? Would I be exempted from the destruction as depicted in vv.18-21 if I obey this exhortation?

The parable in vv.23-29 then seems to answer this question. As said above, farming knowledge is learned through seeing and hearing. Through observation, farmers learn the knowledge for farming from YHWH who teaches justly. Different crops will be sown and harvested differently. Likewise, God is still teaching his people, and different reactions to God's teaching bring out different results.

²⁶⁹ It is noted that there is no verb for 'seeing' in vv. 1-3. I am making this observation based on 'seeing' as a key concept for ch. 28.

In this way, Isa 28 starts with examples of Ephraimite leaders whose arrogance and drunkenness has disabled them from seeing properly, and prevented them from hearing YHWH's instruction willingly, resulting in their inability to understand. Then, it addresses its Judahite audience, who were similarly arrogant, bragging about their own arrangement of security. However, the theme of imperception is here developed into that 'it will be solely a terror to understand the message they will hear which is a message of destruction'. The echo of v.22 with the beginning of v.14 opens up a choice for them: to listen to YHWH's word or not? It is then followed by vv.23-29 where the observant farmers get farming knowledge which YHWH has revealed in nature, hence inviting the addressee of vv.14-22 to follow the farmers' example in the choice that v.22 opens up for them.

3.2.4 Summary

The final form of Isa 28 is neatly structured with vv.14-22 in the centre. It is preceded by the arrogant and drunken Ephraimite leaders, priests and prophets who cannot see properly and are not willing to hear YHWH's teaching as a warning against Judah, who is Isaiah's addressee, and thus the addressee in Isa 28. Besides, it also followed by vv.23-29 in which farmers heed YHWH's teaching through their observations, seeing and hearing, and in which the point is made that YHWH will treat different crops (people) differently. All these are aiming to help the addressee of vv.14-22 to choose wisely from the choices that vv.14-22 gives, that is, whether to continue scoffing and trusting in falsehoods/lies or to stop scoffing but to trust in the security YHWH established for Zion. Therefore, ch. 28, as a rhetorical unit, invites its audience to see and hear properly, being observant so as to gain insights.

3.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 29

The imperception theme also dominates Isa 29, which is a further development from the imperception theme in Isa 28. Firstly, while the imperception theme preoccupied both chs. 28 and 29, the reversal from imperception to perception only occurs at the end of ch. 29. Whereas 28:7-8 attribute the religious leaders' imperception to their drunkenness with wine or strong drinks, 29:9-10 make a sharp distinction from ch. 28 by saying it loud and clear that their imperception and drunkenness are not caused by wine or strong drinks as in 28:7-8 (שכרו ולא יין נעו ולא שכר), but rather by God's own doing. It is because God poured a deep sleep among them and closed their eyes that they are drunk and stagger. Again, whereas 28:9-13 (where Isaiah talks about YHWH) indicates there is no one in sober status or teachable to whom YHWH may teach, 29:11-12 say no one can read the book of God's vision, neither the literate nor the illiterate. Secondly, the woe oracle targeted

at Ephraim in 28:1 is reapplied to speak to Jerusalem, whereas 29:1 makes it explicit that the woe is against Jerusalem. Among them, both chapters target especially the elites in Jerusalem (prophets and priests in 28:7-8; prophets and seers in 29:9-10; scoffers in 28:14,22; 29:20). They both contrast human plans with YHWH's plans (28:14-22; 29:15-16). The contrasts and parallels between these two chapters are numerous. A detailed analysis of how the imperception theme develops in Isa 29 will be provided in this section.

3.3.1 The Structure of Isa 29

The woe-oracles at 29:1 and 30:1 separate ch. 29 from 28 and 30. Though there is another woe-oracle in 29:15, it does not divide 29 into vv.1-14 and vv.15-27, because vv.15-16 (with the imperception theme) belongs together with vv. 9-14 and the woe-oracle here is more a rhetorical device to bring this theme to its climax and conclusion.²⁷⁰ Thus, Isa 29 can be demarcated into three subsections: vv.1-8, 9-16, 17-24.

The prologue (vv.1-8) attracts the audience's attention with a woe-oracle which is then instantly changed into salvation, hence introducing us to the theme of delusion at the very end (vv.7-8) – the woe can be a delusion because YHWH can intervene to turn woe to weal.

The thesis (vv.9-16) illustrates how imperceptive the whole society is, which is attributed to YHWH's judgment (vv.9-10) upon their wilful heedlessness (vv.11-12), their insincere piety (vv.13-14) which can be summarized as self-deceiving reliance on, and disregard for, YHWH as their holy maker-God (vv.15-16).

In response to this, the epilogue, vv.17-24, depicts a reversed future and shows them the way to get perception, that is, to treat YHWH as their Holy One.

3.3.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 29

Isa 29 is full of rhetorical techniques, especially repetition, similes, contrasts and sound rhythm.²⁷¹

3.3.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 29:1-8

I will firstly address two debated issues before coming into the literary devices used in vv.1-8.

²⁷⁰ Note that RSV and others translate הוּ as 'Ho', a neutral call to attention, and not as 'woe'. This may be another way of recognizing this point.

²⁷¹ Exum ("Of Broken Pots," 340-41) has carefully observed the use of "Repetition of the Same or Similar Word in a Stichos", "Repetition of Similar Sounding Words in a Stichos", "Similar Word or Sound at the Beginning and End of a Distich", "Repetition of the Same Word or Root in Successive Stichoï", and "Alliteration or Assonance in a Distich".

Debated issues concerning vv.1-8

Concerning vv.1-8, scholars dispute over whether there is a transition from a woe oracle against Ariel, namely Jerusalem, to the deliverance of them. If so, where does the transition start, from v.5a, or from v.5bβ? The first dispute relates to the question of whether we read פקד in v.6 as favourable or unfavourable, while the second dispute concerns whether in v.5 we should take the MT reading (המון זר) or the 1QIsa^a one (המון זר) attested in LXX and Syria manuscripts as well. I will at first answer the second question and then the first one.

Regarding the second question, Exum, from “intratextual witness”, that is, the המון כל הגוים in vv.7-8 which refers to attackers of Ariel, argues for the MT reading; she further views the ambiguity of המון together with that of פקד as deliberate to “create suspense and effect the transition to vv. 7-8 where their meaning is resolved.”²⁷² Wildberger reads with 1QIsa^a, LXX and Syriac and views v.5ab referring to the insolent rulers of Jerusalem.²⁷³ I find it hard to agree with his reasoning that “זר (foreigner, stranger) itself forms a poor parallel word for עריץ (powerful)”, because the then foreigner Assyrians were indeed powerful.²⁷⁴ The witness that I think may support the זר reading (insolent Jerusalem leaders) is rather in v.20 where its parallel, namely, עריץ occurs together with the scoffer (לץ) which in 28:14 refers to Jerusalem leaders. Bearing in mind the close relationship between ch. 28 and ch.29, the לץ in 29:20 can mean the same as that in 28:16. If this assumption is correct, and if in the reversal passage, the עריץ and לץ refer to Jerusalem leaders, then it is very probably that the pre-reversal passage mentions the Jerusalem leaders as זר and עריץ. Besides, in the next sub-section, prophets and seers (v.10), the wise and the discerning (vv.14) are picked out as among the judged. It would be fitting if here the Jerusalem leaders stand out as the judged in this section.

As for the first question, G. C. I. Wong writes, “I am aware of no passage which speaks of a favourable ‘visitation’ of YHWH that is accompanied by these ominous elements.”²⁷⁵ He carefully examines and then rules out the similarity with YHWH’s descent on Mount Sinai, which according to him

does not employ the verb פקד. In addition, the description of his appearing [on Mount Sinai] does not use the same elements as in Isa. xxxix 5, except for the very general words qôl (but lacking the adjective gādôl in Ex. xix 19) and ’ēš (but without the threatening adjective ’ôkēlâ in both Ex. xix and Deut. v).²⁷⁶

²⁷² Exum, “Of Broken Pots,” 344.

²⁷³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 66.

²⁷⁴ Interesting, another occurrence of the parallelism of זר and עריץ in 25:5 is also attested as זר and עריץ in LXX.

²⁷⁵ Wong, “On ‘Visits’ and ‘Visions’,” 371.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, fn4.

Thus, he concludes that “its [the visitation’s] association here with thunder, earthquake and devouring fire demands an ominous interpretation.”²⁷⁷ For him, the whole vv.1-8 are a threat against Jerusalem. He argues in a very persuasive and tempting way. However, the major difficulty I find with this reading is that if vv.1-8 are all about a threat against Ariel, they do not fit into and relate to the whole Isa 29, especially, the reversal section (vv.17-24).²⁷⁸ I then re-examined the Ex 19:18ff and the word פקד, and prefer to take v.6 as a theophany scene. Firstly, it is right that אש אוכלה is threatening and does not appear in the narrative in Ex 19. However, Ex 24:17 writes ומראה כבוד יהוה כאש אכלת בראש ההר לעיני בני ישראל (“now the appearance of the glory of YHWH is like a devouring fire in the top of the mountain in the eyes of the people of Israel”). Here, אש אוכלה is provoking Israelites’ fear of God rather than destroying them. Secondly, though the elements for the theophany scene in Ex 19 are not the same as here in Isa 29:6, Ex 19, especially vv.21-24, does express the need of fear of God in the theophany. Thirdly, as Blenkinsopp observes, “After the near-death experience of 3-4 it would make no sense to speak of punishment suddenly being visited on the city.”²⁷⁹ Therefore, I would prefer taking the elements in v.6 as of a theophany scene, the nature of which is neutral by itself but would be a deliverance for Ariel in the context of Isa 29:5-8.²⁸⁰ In v.5bβ, והיה ׀ לפתע פתאם emphasizes the ‘immediacy’. The immediacy is also very vivid in the two similes in v.8: what one dreams in the night gets changed when he awakes, and this change is immediate. It is unclear whether v.7 denotes immediacy or nightmare. However, it is noteworthy that the omittable verb והיה is not omitted in v.5bβ, v.7 or v.8. If this indicates these verses are closely related, then we can read v.7 as denoting ‘immediacy’ in the light of v.5bβ and v.8 and read the immediacy in v.5bβ as ‘change’ in the light of v.8. Therefore, v.5bβ announces an immediacy which is initiated by YHWH’s intervention in his theophany and which is then revealed as an immediacy of change, that is, the nations’ attack/besiege on Ariel would just be a vision in the night – the threat/nightmare will soon be lifted. This fits what we were told in 37:36: the besieged city was reprieved in a single night. To conclude, I am inclined to take vv.1-5aα as the threat against Ariel, while v.5bβ starts a change, which is made instantly, and the threat as pronounced in vv.1-5aα would pass away soon by the intervention of YHWH in his theophany. It is such a reading that shares similarity with the reversal from the accused imperception (vv.9-16) to the promised perception (vv.17-24): it is because of YHWH alone that things will get changed. Besides, as will be shown below, though vv. 1-5aα

²⁷⁷ Wong, “On ‘Visits’ and ‘Visions’,” 371.

²⁷⁸ He does mention in 374 that “it allows a coherent redactional reading of verses 1-14, which pronounces a “woe” over Ariel”. However, this still does not answer how it relates with vv.17-24.

²⁷⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 401.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 76-77; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 402.

presents a very frightening threat against Jerusalem, the ability and power of YHWH to change it instantly into deliverance makes the destruction of Jerusalem a delusion for both Judahites and for Assyrians. This in turn introduces us into the imperception theme and calls for having faith and hope in YHWH.

Literary Devices Used in vv.1-8.

Firstly, instead of addressing the woe oracle directly to Jerusalem, its epithet אַרְיֵאל ('Ariel') is used five times. Not until v.8 is this Ariel revealed as Mount Zion. This is doubtless deliberate, for in v.2 Ariel is compared to an ariel which has several connotations: (i) it is related to the altar hearth (Ezek 43:15-16); (ii) it literarily means "lion of El"/"mighty lion" and in Gen 49:9 the lion is emblematic of Judah; (iii) it also associates with the Akkadian word *arallu*, the abode of the dead.²⁸¹ All of these seem to be fitting in the context. Even though the 'woe to the lion' may seem ironic and fitting in v.1, it will not fit v.2 (וְהִצִּיקוֹתִי לְאַרְיֵאל וְהִיתָה תְּאֵנִיָּה וְהִיתָה לִּי כְאַרְיֵאל) 'I will distress Ariel, and it shall be moaning and lamentation, and it shall be to me like ariel') where the first אַרְיֵאל is the name of a city like that in v.1, while the second ariel is a condition after distressing, moaning and lamentation. Judah in the context of vv.1-5bα is by no means 'a strong lion', but more likely as the first and third connotations denote, that is, 'a place of sacrifice or slaughter', that is, 'the sacrifices of their enemies', and to be the abode of the dead, which "accords well with the woe cry and lamentation (v.2) and muted cries מֵאַרְיֵאל (v.4)."²⁸² Wildberger further states that by contrast with the names Jerusalem or Zion which are known as both religious and political centre, the name Ariel can call to mind more precisely Jerusalem/Zion as a religious and cultic centre.²⁸³

Secondly, the threefold repetition of עֲלֶיךָ (against you) underscores how hostile YHWH is against Ariel.

Thirdly, there is a contrast between v.1 and vv.2-4. The same key verb חָנָה (vv.1, 3) links two contrasting thoughts – David's encampment of Jerusalem was a victory and protection for them, whereas YHWH's encampment now against them is a threat against them.²⁸⁴ Besides, the festival as mentioned in v.1 contrasts vividly with the mourning, moaning and whispering in vv.2, 4.

²⁸¹ Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 400; Childs, *Isaiah*, 217; Blenkinsopp, 401; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 71; Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 437.

²⁸² Exum, "Of Broken Pots," 343.

²⁸³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 72; cf. Webb, *Isaiah*, 124.

²⁸⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 74 regards the חָנָה here as a double entendre, meaning both threat and protection, because the threat aims to protect. However, the threefold עֲלֶיךָ would rather indicate of threat in this context.

Fourthly, the repetition of thoughts in v.4 reveals Ariel's lowliness and weakness.²⁸⁵ According to Blenkinsopp, the simile of comparing Ariel's voice to a ghost's does not mean "the death or extinction of Jerusalem but a near-death experience."²⁸⁶

Fifthly, the comparison of Ariel's insolent and powerful ones to dust and to chaff in v.5 reveals the reality of their mortal frailty.

Sixthly, the theophany is described with visual elements in v.6, while the attack and siege of Sennacherib in vv.7-8 is compared to a vision or dream; the former carries weight while the latter is just an illusion. Exum maintains the dream in v.7 is the dream/nightmare of Ariel/Jerusalem, while the dream in v.8 is that of the attackers', and they both refer to Sennacherib's siege of Judah in 701BCE.²⁸⁷

3.3.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 29:9-16

The four sayings themed 'imperception' are deliberately arranged in the current order to reveal what kinds of imperception exist in the then Israelites society.

In vv. 9-16, several rhetorical strategies are chosen to underscore that the key problem of the addressee is their imperception. They start with vv. 9-10 which attributes to YHWH the cause of the people's imperception which in turn is a form of YHWH's judgment upon them. As we read on, we find an increasingly obvious tendency that it is this people themselves whose perception is totally wrong and deserves all the blame. This in turn locates them in a position deserving YHWH's judgment in vv.9-10, and ironically indicates YHWH judges them exactly according to their own action. I will show in this section how the literary devices are integrated to effect this deliberate tendency²⁸⁸ and rhetorical force.

Firstly, vv.9-10 present the theme of "imperception" directly. It recalls Isa 6 with its imperative verbs at the beginning (התמהמהו ותמהו השתעשעו ושעו). Both verbal roots appear in the form of hitpalpel imper mp + qal imper mp) and the hardening theme (v.10). Besides, וְיִן נָעוּ וְלֹא שָׁכְרוּ in v.9 links back to ch.28 by refuting the reason causing the drunken stupor in 28:7-8. Moreover, as Exum notes, "The

²⁸⁵ Exum ("Of Broken Pots," 345) observes a shift from the high (Mount Zion) to the low (underworld) and from strength (Ariel as a fortified city) to weakness (Ariel from the earth and dust) in v.4.

²⁸⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 401.

²⁸⁷ Exum, "Of Broken Pots," 346.

²⁸⁸ It is because of this tendency that I choose not to group vv.15-16 together with vv.17-24 but with vv. 9-14. Cf. Cheryl Exum, 350-352 makes a very tempting argument for dividing ch. 29 into vv.1-14 (further divided into vv.1-8, 9-14) and vv.15-24, especially the cultic conduct as the *inclusio* in vv.1-14, and the progress in both vv.1-14 (from deliverance to delusion) and 15-24 (from delusion to restoration), and the contrast between the end of vv.1-14 and that of vv.15-24, to name just a few.

image of YHWH pouring out a spirit picks up the liquid imagery suggested by *yayin* and *šēkār*”.²⁸⁹ In my view, all these three elements, that is, the ironic imperative verbs, the refutation of 28:7-8, and YHWH pouring out a spirit, rhetorically and effectively arrest the audience’s attention. V.10 then underscores that the imperception is caused and done by YHWH himself. The deep sleep (תרדמה) that YHWH poured out in v.10, as Wildberger writes, “is a sleep in which one’s thoughts were so turned off that even the strongest disturbance ... will not be able to awaken the person being affected.”²⁹⁰ As Tull observes, “It is the slumber of the first man when God took his rib (Gen 2:21), of Abraham in the vision of God’s ratifying the covenant (Gen 15:12), of Saul’s soldiers when David stole into his camp (1 Sam 26:12), of Elphaz’s melodramatic but ultimately anticlimactic vision (Job 4:13).”²⁹¹ It was in this state of soporific bewilderment that “God closed²⁹² their eyes (the prophets) and covered their heads²⁹³ (the seers)”. By comparing the prophets and seers to their eyes and their heads, the text vividly highlights what a significant role prophets and seers play in the nation with their special perceptive foresight and guidance when the nation is in need. However, as they are blocked of perception, we need not wonder what a profound imperception this nation was in.

Secondly, in the sub-section of vv.11-12, v.11a carries on the obduracy attributed to YHWH in vv.9-10 by the use of חזות (‘vision’, which is usually associated with seeing whereas v.10 has already talked about the inability to see) and of הספר החתום (‘the book that is sealed’, which recalls 8:16 where God commands sealing the teaching, חתום תורה). However, vv.11b-12 seem to allow for the people’s own responsibility. No one, either the literate or the illiterate, shows any eagerness to seek to understand החתום הספר, neither the former try to break the seal, nor the latter try to consult someone; they simply excuse themselves by saying that ‘the book is sealed’ or ‘I cannot read’. Tull is right in referring to them as ‘the wilfully heedless’.²⁹⁴ Therefore, though the imperception may be caused to some extent by החתום הספר, that is, by God’s doing, their wilful heedlessness has a role to play in their imperception as well. Here, we see the existence of the tension between God’s hardening and the people’s wilful heedlessness. This deliberate tension will become more obvious in the next sub-section, vv.13-14.

²⁸⁹ Exum, “Of Broken Pots,” 348.

²⁹⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 83-4.

²⁹¹ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 440.

²⁹² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 84, notes that the verb עצם II in post-biblical Hebrew refers specifically to “describing the eyes of those who has died”.

²⁹³ This once again is common for one who has died and indicates they will no longer be able to see.

²⁹⁴ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 442.

Thirdly, while their wilful heedlessness is very subtly indicated in vv.11b-12, it is directly and clearly raised in v.13, by making a distinction between mouths/lips and hearts through contrasting verbs– with the former they draw near (נגש) and honour (כבודי) YHWH, while the latter is far (רחק) from YHWH. Besides, the use of terms standing for true piety like יראתם אתי ('fear of me'), מצות ('commandment') and מלמדה ('teaching')²⁹⁵ become so ironic when אנשים is emphasized in v.13d as the word order shows. In such a way, they are accused of 'lip service without heart' and 'fear of God following commandment taught by men' – a piety not real or profound but superficial. Moreover, that the tone has now (in vv.13-14) turned to be more blaming the people can be seen firstly in the emphatic term העם הזה (this people) which usually has negative connotation, and secondly in God's response (v.14) introduced by the opening phrases לכן ('therefore').

Reading vv.13 and 14 alone, we may find there is some discreteness between the accusation in v.13 and God's judgment in v.14. W. Dietrich resorts to the *Sitz im Leben* to understand vv.13-14. He proposes this people came to offer petitions to God when Sennacherib was already in the vicinity of Jerusalem but at the same time they were following 'the wisdom of the wise men, the discernment of the discerning', that is, they have made a deal with, and sought help from, Egypt. This means there is no real faith in, nor reliance on, the God to whom they make their petitions.²⁹⁶ The threefold repetition of the root פלא in v.14 is undoubtedly another rhetorical device. As interacting with the audience, the speaker's threefold פלא may indicate that the audience, this people, does expect פלא, 'wonderful deeds from YHWH', deeds like what they saw at Exodus. However, as the preceding v.13 and the following vv.15-16 reveals – by mouths and lips, they expect salvation, yet simultaneously, they make plans hiding from YHWH – there is no real faith in their expectation. This would mean that they are not really expecting wonderful acts of salvation from YHWH, or at least not expecting with a faith-filled future hope. However, the repetition of פלא underscores that surely YHWH will do wonders. But these will not be the kind of wonders, familiar from the Exodus, that have recently been absent.²⁹⁷ This ironic sense is found in the wordplay of פלא. Its noun form occurs elsewhere in Isa 9:5[6] in the context of the ideal ruler, 'the Wonderful Counsellor' and in 25:1 where people praising Him for His wonderful deeds though it is not specified what the deeds are.²⁹⁸ Its hiphil verbal form occurs in 28:29, הפליא עצה ('he is wonderful in counsel'), the context of which also mentions YHWH's work and deed as strange and alien to them (28:21). Outside Isaiah,

²⁹⁵ Cf. Deut. 4:1; 5:1, 31.

²⁹⁶ W. Dietrich, *Jesaja und die Politik*, 173-75 as referred to by Exum, "Of Broken Pots," 349. Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 88-89.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 91.

²⁹⁸ It occurs also in Ex 15:11 where praise is made to YHWH for his wonderful salvation.

we find the verbal hiphil form of פלא in the context of God's wonderful deeds like Ex 3:20 and 34:10, etc., as well as of God's judgment like Deut. 28:59.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the wonders YHWH is about to make will be the marvellous things that will show that the wisdom of the wise was wrong. This kind of "wisdom" will perish.

Fourthly, the sarcasm against their foolishness is now the most obvious as we enter into vv.15-16, which is "in the familiar form of disputation, accusing those addressed with statements from their own mouths and directing rhetorical questions at them".³⁰⁰ The opening הוי catches the audience's attention, and echoes v.1, forming an inclusio of vv.1-16. Their attempt to hide (סתר) deep from YHWH their counsel is nothing but ironic – in the preceding v.14, it is YHWH who will make their discernment hidden. They thought their deeds are kept in the dark, and by the rhetorical questions expecting negative answers, they thought no one sees or knows them, which may ensure the success of their schemes. However, הפככם ("you turn things upside down") in v.16, as a stand-alone exclamation, once again effectively attracts the audience's notice, and highlights that what they are thinking in v.15 is totally wrong. This wrongness is analogous to the pot's usurping the place of the potter. Here again, putting the rhetorical questions into the pot's mouth ironically and vividly reveals their foolishness. Besides, this imagery denotes the relationship between Judah and YHWH. It is the same as that between a pot and a potter - one being made/formed, the other being the maker/former. It tells Judah that they are simply human, while YHWH is their creator. Moreover, the image of a pot is also powerful to denote that this people lack perception just as a pot does. Therefore, with the attention-arresting woe-oracle, rhetorical questions and the fitting analogy, vv.15-16 underscores the folly of their self-deceiving planners, i.e., the political leaders who want to lead the country out of the crisis and bring the imperception theme to its climax and end.

To conclude, it has been shown above how rhetorical strategies (the attention-catching imperative verbs, allusions, images, similes, rhetorical questions) are integrated in vv.9-16. These verses are deliberately structured to ascribe their imperception to YHWH (vv.9-10), while also gradually revealing that the people themselves should be responsible for their imperception. Their wilful heedlessness prevents them from seeking to read and further to comprehend YHWH's vision for them which is to them like a sealed book (vv.11-12). Then vv.13-14 further explains their wilful heedlessness is ascribed to their superficial and insincere piety towards YHWH, which is further

²⁹⁹ "Then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting."

³⁰⁰ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 408

shown by vv.15-16 to be a contempt or ignorance of YHWH. In such a way, the prophet demonstrates here that their lack of perception relates closely with how they view YHWH their God, and what he really means to them.

3.3.2.3 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 29:17-24

A description of the reversal of vv.9-16 is presented in vv.17-24, where the emphases are laid on perception (vv.18, 24), joy (v.19), משפט (vv.20-21) and salvation (vv.22-23).³⁰¹ It is noteworthy that the rhetorical question functions as an introduction to the possibility of instant change, echoing v.5bβ which also introduces the idea of an instant change. Another noteworthy point is that the theme of perception forms an inclusio in vv.18-24. The different fates falling upon people of different natures and the emphasis on YHWH's holiness also indicates the key to gaining perception. Verses 17-24, by picking up a lot of terms in vv.9-16 as well as vv.1-8, forms a vivid contrast with or reversal of them.

The rhetorical questions expecting a positive answer in v.17 indicate the change is instant (עוד מעט) מועד, 'a very little while'), which is in line with the transition from vv.1-5aα to vv.1-5bβ. This change is marked by a change in nature.³⁰² While Wildberger views the application of לבנון (Lebanon) and כרמל (Carmel) here "to exemplify the new fruitfulness in the time of salvation",³⁰³ commentators like Roberts and Blenkinsopp see an environmental reversal between Lebanon as a forest and Carmel as a land for growing crops –not necessarily signifying fruitfulness, but a positive change of behaviour by the Judahites.³⁰⁴ I would prefer the view of Roberts and Blenkinsopp to that of Wildberger's. That is, the speciality of the reversal between Lebanon and Carmel, both of which are fruitful yet chosen here as a rhetorical device, lies in their different natures – one as a fertile forest and the other a fertile land for growing crops or grazing. This fits within the context of vv.18-24 where we find the people categorized into two different natures – the deaf and blind (v.18), the

³⁰¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 409, views these all as "essential part of the restorationist eschatological view".

³⁰² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 110 notes this corresponds roughly to Deutero-Isaiah's proclamation of the homecoming from the exile. Actually, the change of nature as a signal of the change of something important can be traced back to Gen 3:8.

³⁰³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 110-11, refers to Lebanon as known for its fruitfulness (Ps 72:16; Nah 1:4; Isa 35:2) and cedars, while the withering of Carmel for YHWH's punishment (Isa 33:9) hence changing from Carmel to a forest signifies fruitfulness.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Roberts (*First Isaiah*, 377) writes "a transformation of the Lebanon and Mount Carmel, where the Lebanon becomes orchard land like Carmel, and Carmel becomes a forest land like Lebanon", not totally clear of "exactly what that is intended to signify", nor of "whether a simple renewal of fertility is what is implied". Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 409 writes "Lebanon, noted for its cedars, will revert to the condition of fertile land for growing crops and grazing that existed before it was covered with trees, and fertile land (*karmel*, also in 10:18; 16:10; 32:15-16; 37:24) will be as common as scrubland or forest – in other words, agriculturally unprofitable land."

humbled and the poor (v.19) as one, and the ruthless, scoffers and those watching to do evil (v.20) as the other. The exchange between them, therefore, signifies that something in their nature will be changed.

The change in society level starts with ‘the deaf shall hear’ and ‘the eyes of the blind shall see’ (v.18). This is indeed a change by nature. The deaf and the blind appearing as the first group in vv.18-24 once again echo imperception as the key problem of society in vv.9-16. Though ‘the deaf’ does not occur earlier in vv.9-16, other words in v.18 refer back to vv.9-16. For an example, דברי ספר links back to v.11, עיני and עורים to vv.9-10, and מחשך to vv.15-16.

Then in vv.19 and 20-21 come two contrasting groups: the humble and the poor (v.19) versus the ruthless scoffers and those who watch to do evil (v.20-21). The elements in the two lines of v.19 are parallel with each other: ענוים/ואביוני; ענוים/ואביוני; and שמה... יגילו/ויספו. The first pair embraces the vulnerable both in a religious/moral sense (ענוים) but also in an the economic/class sense (אביוני).³⁰⁵ The second pair denotes YHWH as the Holy One of Israel. The wordplay of שמה and יגילו in the last pair echoes 9:2. There are also parallels in the three lines in v.20 where the verbs אפס, כלה, and כרת are synonyms, and subjects עריץ, לץ, and שקדי און are closely parallel. The three participles in v.21 illustrate evildoers of v.20. As noted by commentators, the three kinds of people in v.21 are all related to the “judicial arena.”³⁰⁶ Roberts writes,

these oppressors deprive the poor of their right in court... מדביר אדם בדבר refer to those who give an unfair verdict against the honest man in his lawsuit, ruling that he is in the wrong ... ולמוכיה ... בשער יקשון ... those who try to obstruct the work of anyone who attempts to arbitrate or intervene on behalf of the poor in a lawsuit at the city gate ... and ויטו בתהו צדיק ... blocking the party in the right from gaining justice through legal procedures.³⁰⁷

The threefold repetition vividly calls to mind how the powerful, strong and the elite of society are oppressing the weak and what an unjust society that is. However, as YHWH reverses the situation, the people in v.19 who were vulnerable and of low-class will now find joy, while those in vv.20-21 who were the powerful elite in the society will now be cut off, because YHWH, as their Holy One, comes to judge and rule with משפט.

In v.22 a unique expression occurs. Commentators read it as an allusion to the rescue from Mesopotamian idolatry³⁰⁸ or the protection Abraham enjoyed according to Gen 12:10ff; 20.³⁰⁹ Many

³⁰⁵ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 378.

³⁰⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 114.

³⁰⁷ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 379.

³⁰⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 410.

³⁰⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 115.

commentators also read ‘his children’ in v.23 as a gloss, while Roberts views v.23 as originally suggesting “the return of the northern exiles to their homeland and a regrowth of the population of the north,” because he states ‘the house of Jacob’ refers to the northern kingdom.³¹⁰ However, I am proposing that a better way to read vv.22-23 is to associate Abraham with the shame of Jacob and with ‘when he sees his children’. The Abraham tradition becomes more significant in the later parts of Isaiah (that is, in the exilic period and after). The association of the shame of Jacob and his children may also indicate the exilic period. God did indeed once redeem Abraham from his shame of having no children. Therefore, though the idea of the redemption of Abraham occurs nowhere else in Isaiah (or in the OT), it is deliberately chosen here as a rhetorical device to associate the shame of Jacob with ‘his children’, reflecting the exilic hope for the return of Judahites to their homeland with the regrowth of their population. Although being inserted in the current position in the context of Sennacherib’s crisis, this ancient account is an encouragement that though they were in a national crisis, if the people believe in YHWH, he will redeem them from the shame of having no children/people (that is, the destruction of the southern kingdom), just as God redeemed Abraham from the shame of having no children.

Another rhetorical technique in v.23 is the twice repetition of hiphil יקדישו, with the parallel of ‘my name’ with ‘the Holy One of Jacob’ which emphasize ‘my name’ is ‘the Holy (קדוש) One of Jacob’. Given YHWH as ‘the Holy One of Israel’ in v.19, the play on of קדש and יקדישו and שמי brings out God’s accusation that “You call me ‘holy’, but do you act as if you really think I am holy?”

This is followed by v.24 where people will get insight and understanding. רוח occurs previously in v.10 and בינה in v. 14. Not only does v.24 contrast with vv.9-16 where people have no perception and where the wisdom, discernment and counsels of their own will all be perished or hidden, but also through its position right after the repetition of קדש and יקדישו emphasizes again the key to perception is honouring God as holy (cf. Isa 6).

3.3.3 The Interconnectedness of Subsections of Isa 29

Scholars debate over the authenticity of vv.5-8.³¹¹ It is widely agreed that vv.11-12 are a later commentary on vv.9-10,³¹² and that some of the language in vv.17-24 may be from the exilic period.

³¹⁰ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 380.

³¹¹ See the discussion and references in Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 66-69; Wong, “On ‘Visits’ and ‘Visions’,” 370-76.

³¹² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 81; Fohrer, *Jesaja. 2.24 - 39.3*, 77-80; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 269-74; Exum, “Of Broken Pots,” 347.

For example, ‘Abraham’ in v.22 occurs nowhere in the First Isaiah, but in the later part of the book, 41:8; 51:2; 63:16.³¹³ So does the word pair of deaf and blind of v.18 in 35:5; 42:7, 16-19; 43:8.³¹⁴ However, all these (whether authentic from Isaiah or later additions) are not unfitting in Isa 29. The transition from YHWH’s attack against Jerusalem to the attack against His instrument, the Assyrian, is in line with Isaiah’s prophecy elsewhere (Isa 10 for example). As ambiguous as vv.11-12 are, this section functions as a transition from YHWH as responsible for their imperception to their imperception as their own responsibility. Similarly, though it seems odd to have here Abraham’s sole occurrence in the First Isaiah, it serves as an effective rhetorical device.

Besides, though subsections of Isa 29 may have different origins, or even look discrete from each other, it is noteworthy that if any part of it were missing it would not form a complete rhetorical unit. For example, if there was not vv.1-8, it would have been more difficult to trace what rhetorical situation evokes the sayings in vv.9-16; if not vv.9-16, then the threat in vv.1-8 would have been presented to us without a reproach, which is usually not the case;³¹⁵ if not vv.17-24, we would have been left with no hope for a promising future. Therefore, it is the combination of all these three subsections that forms a complete rhetorical unit.

3.3.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 29

The role of the imperception theme in Isa 29 is closely related to its rhetorical situation. Thus I will address the latter before the former.

In vv.1-5ab β , we have seen the Ariel under siege, while v.10 mentions the imperceptive prophets and seers, vv.13-14 mention this people’s insincere piety, the wisdom of the wise men or discernment of the discerning, and v.15 those who hide deep from YHWH their counsel. The rhetorical situation that evokes these verses thus may be that the prophets, seers, wise men and the discerning have all offered their advice to the political leaders at the time of this siege crisis as described in vv.1-5ab β . This utterance demonstrates that their advice is based on their deluded perception and insincere piety.

In the reversal passage, the root $\Psi\Gamma\aleph$ occurs four times (twice in adjective form in v.19, 23 and twice in hiphil form in v.23), emphasizing YHWH as the holy one and the need of this people to honour Him. This again indicates a rhetorical situation of people not sanctifying YHWH or his name. This is

³¹³ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 379. Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 410; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 115.

³¹⁴ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 376.

³¹⁵ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 67.

actually what the people are doing in vv.13-14 and v.16 where though the word שׁדק itself does not appear, there exists the concept of their disregard of God as their Holy One.

From the perspective of a context wider than ch. 29 itself, we see ch. 29 falling between ch. 28 and ch. 30, where the former mentions their covenant with death and agreement with Sheol and the latter accuses them of having covenant or agreement with Egypt. This locates ch. 29 in the historical setting of 701 BCE Sennacherib's crisis, which fits what we find as the rhetorical situation from ch. 29 itself. Their seeking help from Egypt is a deluded and imperceptive act. It neither reflects sincere piety towards God, nor reliance on or fear of YHWH their God. According to Isa 36-37, this siege by Sennacherib was finally lifted by YHWH's intervention when Hezekiah finally showed true penitence towards and reliance on YHWH, and treated him as who He is, the holy one. This picture fits the instant change initiated by YHWH's intervention in vv.5b β -8.

Therefore, the siege and the lifting of it in vv.1-8, together with chs. 28 and 30, and the content about imperception and perception in vv.9-24 together identify the rhetorical situation of ch. 29 as when Judah is in the midst of Sennacherib's attack. All the prophets, seers, wise and discerning men who should have been able to give perceptive advice (that is, to have faith on YHWH their holy God), offer advice based on their deluded imperception, their self-deceiving vision, wisdom and discernment.

In Isa 29, vv.9-10 talk about the hardening from YHWH and vv.17-24 speak of a reversal of imperception. Besides, vv.9-16 are all related to the imperception theme. As for vv.1-8, even though the main theme is the threat against Jerusalem and that against nations, there is also some hint of imperception in vv.7-8.³¹⁶ More importantly, vv.1-8 function to define the rhetorical situation of the sayings in vv.9-16. Moreover, the transition from the threat against Jerusalem to the deliverance for them in vv.1-8 have something in common with the reversal from imperception to perception in vv.9-24. In addition, vv.22-24 indicates the purpose of all those sayings in Isa 29: the woe-sayings, the accusations and the reversal all aim to lead this people from imperception to perception so as to treat God and His name as holy. In such ways, Isa 29 is a unity, a complete rhetorical unit rather than a collection of different sayings, calling upon their perception.

³¹⁶ Exum, "Of Broken Pots," 346.

3.3.5 Summary

As is shown above, Isa 29 is a rhetorical unit, provoked into existence because of a rhetorical situation in the time of the Sennacherib's 701 BCE siege of Jerusalem city. The very people who should have been perceptive in order to offer sound advice about having faith in YHWH, were themselves deluded because of their lack of real faith in, reliance on and fear of YHWH their God.

This chapter has been focused on the (im)perception theme, and the associated rhetorical strategies echo this. Examples of these also are very much perception involved, like the sound rhythm, alliteration, assonance, repetition of similar or same words or similar sounding words, etc., as well as the visual theophany scene and the visual similes. These strategies themselves denote the importance of perception, satirizing the people, including the prophets, seers, wise and discerning men, and political leaders who are accused of the lack of real perception in the time of national crisis.

The reversal in vv.17-24 is instantaneous just like the instantaneous change from threat in vv. 1-5ab α to the deliverance in vv.5b β -8. This instantaneous change will once again demonstrate YHWH as the Holy One of Israel and lead them into their honouring Him and his name.

3.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 30

In Isa 30 the passages most relevant to the imperception theme and perception are respectively vv.8-17 where Judahites are accused as 'stubborn children' refusing to see visions and hear teachings (תורה) from YHWH their God, and vv.20-21 where they will see their teacher (מוריד).

3.4.1 A Literary- Thematic Analysis of Isa 30:8-17, 20-21

עַתָּה at the beginning of v.7 relates vv.8-17 to vv.1-7 where Judahites are accused of going down to Egypt for an alliance and help, which is not from YHWH or his Spirit. This will only turn out to be a shame and disgrace, in spite of all the efforts, the cost and the danger of this journey. Vv.8-17 are set in a rhetorical situation where Judah is in a great crisis which exceeds the danger that the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent may have brought to them on the journey from Jerusalem to Egypt. Thus, Wildberger regards the danger from Assyria in 30:1-7 as greater than those in 19:1ff (at the time of the conflict between Sargon and Osorkon IV) and 18:1ff (at the time of the rebellion of Ashdod, i.e., 713-711 BCE), hence the former dating later than the latter; and the alliance with Egypt in ch. 30 is similar to the 'covenant with death' or 'pact with Sheol' in 28:15.³¹⁷

³¹⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 123, 134.

This is at the time of Hezekiah's rebellion from 705-701 BCE. Now, what is implicitly referred to in chs. 28-29 has become explicit in chs. 30-31.

The similarities between these two passages, along with some other issues in them, shed light on the specifics of the theme of perception and imperception in Isa. 30. The two important similarities between vv.8-17 and 20-21 are as follows. Firstly, the 'instruction' (תורה) in v.9 and 'your teacher' (מוריד) in v.20 share the same cognate ירה. The verbs for both the instruction and teacher are sensory verbs, respectively שמוע (v.9) and ראות (v.20). Secondly, both passages mention 'the way' (דרך). While vv.8-17 say the addressees encourage the seers and prophets to leave the way of YHWH (v.11), vv.20-21 indicate they will walk on the right way under the teacher's guidance (v.21). Beuken proposes about v. 11, in light of 'leave' (סורר) of v.11 as a cognate of 'stubborn children' (סוררים) of v.1, and of the contents of vv.1-5, 6-7: "the addressees are actually branding their own expedition to Egypt as a departure from the way of YHWH."³¹⁸ That is to say, in v.11, there is a contrast between the addressees' own way of coalition with Egypt and YHWH's way. Concerning the way in v.21, Beuken proposes its dual horizon, encompassing both the literal and metaphorical senses, respectively referring to the way of the exodus from Egypt into the promised land in their salvation history and to the lifestyle according to the torah.³¹⁹

The other key issues are as follows. First, as noted by commentators, מוריד is unique as a name for YHWH.³²⁰ The hiphil verbal form of ירה occurs in 28:26 and the analysis of Isa 28 presents two choices for the addressees to take, either following the example of northern kingdom, not listening to God's instruction, or following that of farmers, being attentive to God's teaching. In Isa 29 the prophets and seers, the wise and discerning who should have been perceptive to offer insightful advice at the time of national crisis only come up with human plans which hide from YHWH. Following that YHWH has taught the farmers in 28:23-29, and that he is wiser than the Jerusalem leaders in 29:9-16, here, in Isa 30 addressing YHWH as the teacher is deliberate so as to emphasize that he will, and only he can, show the right way (cf. the way suggested by political and religious leaders of Jerusalem in 28:14-22; 30:1-7). Besides, the imperception passage, vv.8-17, is set in a context of judgment, while the perception passage, vv.20-21, are in a context of salvation, with v.18 functioning as a transitional verse from judgment to salvation through repeating the root הנין in v.18 (להננתם) and v.19 (הנון יחנך). Moreover, the significance of perception can be seen in vv.8-17, 18, 19-

³¹⁸ Beuken, "Isaiah 30", 375.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 379-380.

³²⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 174; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 400.

25. In vv.8-17 the unwillingness to heed (vv. 9-11, 12, 16) is the very reason for God's judgment (vv.13-14, 17). In vv.19-25, the perception is to be specific, God will hear their prayers and their eyes will see God their teacher, coming ahead of all the other blessings. In v.18, waiting applies to both YHWH and the addressees. The former waits to be gracious to the addressees, which may be read as YHWH waiting for the addressees' repentance to heed YHWH's instruction and words which they did not do in vv.8-17. The latter wait for YHWH's mercy, which may suggest their attentive waiting.

3.4.2 The Imperception Theme in Isa 30:8-17

I will illustrate the development of the imperception theme in vv.8-17 by examining the serious judgment and their imperception as the reasons that cause this judgement.

3.4.2.1 *The Seriousness and Completeness of the Judgment*

The seriousness and completeness of the judgment can be seen from the similes utilized in vv.13-14 and the comparisons in v.17. Vv.13-14, through "an enclosed simile, or a simile within a simile", present the result of their despising of God's word (v.12) as like the breaking of a wall (cracking, falling, bulging, and breaking) which in turn is like the breaking of a pot (breaking, smashing, fragments, and sherds).³²¹ As Exum writes, the second simile, in which not a small shred could be found useful, "dramatizes the utter completeness of the shattering in a way the first could not have."³²² Thus, these two similes, which, as O. Kaiser writes, "are comprehensive without explanation, show how complete the judgment will be".³²³ Similarly, in spite of leaving room for a remnant, "the two comparisons" in v.17, as Wildberger states, "illustrate again the dead aim that Isaiah takes when coming up with his metaphors",³²⁴ hence they also present a complete judgement. I will illustrate this by looking more closely at the rhetorical devices employed here.

3.4.2.2 *Imperception as the Reasons of Serious Judgment*

Having made the point of the seriousness and completeness of the judgments in vv.13-14, 17, we now turn to examine the reasons for these judgements.

In vv.9-11, this rebellious people are defined as בנים כחשים and יהוה תורת שמוע לא אבו (v.9), followed by a clause led by אשר (vv.10-11). In vv.9-10 the negative לא is used with parts of the verbs

³²¹ Exum, "Of Broken Pots," 334.

³²² Ibid., 335.

³²³ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 296.

³²⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 163.

שמע, ראה and חזה (vv.9-10) to indicate their imperception, and the successive use of the root for hearing (שמע), seeing (ראה and חזה) and for speaking (דבר) denotes the relationship of seeing, speaking and hearing. Ironically, seers are asked not to see, visionaries not to have visions (v.10) – not the root נביא but חזה is used to “exploit the notion of seeing,”³²⁵ – they are requested not to perform the very functions that their roles exist for. The quotations in vv.10-11 are unlikely to be what they actually said, but are rather cases of the Isaianic irony of attribution, that is, “the ironic quotation of words or ascription of thoughts to others,”³²⁶ to reveal the nature of “their attitude.”³²⁷ All these present to us a people unwilling to hear God’s instruction and to know God’s vision as seen and envisioned by seers or visionaries.

Then in v.12, יען מאסכם בדבר הזה ותבטחו בעשק ונלוז ותשענו עליו (“Because you refuse³²⁸ this word, and trust in crooked ways and perverseness and rely on them), while Wildberger reads ‘this word’ as “a reference to a particular message delivered by the prophet, in which he called the hearers to trust;”³²⁹ Kaiser proposes that “Formally, ‘this’ word’... seems to refer to the instruction of YHWH mentioned in v.9. But in substance, it seems like v.15, to sum up the whole message of pre-exilic prophets.”³³⁰ In the current context, both the specific and general reference of ‘this word’ makes sense. The same is true of the instruction of YHWH in v.9. Besides, Wildberger states, מאס (reject) as an antonym of בחר (choose) links with the connotation that “as the chosen people of God, Israel cannot afford to reject the word of God...[and] conveys the same idea ... ללא אבו שמוע.”³³¹ Moreover, עקש (crooked ways), as a play on ‘way’ here, links to v.11 and to vv.1-5, 6-7 perfectly. It makes the point again: going down to Egypt is a crooked way, deviating from YHWH’s way. Besides, the word נלוז (intrigue), all of whose occurrences are “in wisdom texts or texts influenced by wisdom,”³³² calls to mind their self-deceiving wisdom like 29:15. Moreover, are not ‘crooked ways’ and ‘intrigues’ in v.12 parallel to what they hope to see and hear in v.10, that is, the smoothing falsehoods (חלקות) and deceptions (מהתלות)? Therefore, unlike most commentators who demarcate vv.8-11 and vv.12-14 as two separate units,³³³ I read vv.12-14 together with vv.9-11, with v.12 further summarizing their attitude elaborated in vv.9-11, and thus it is the reproaches of vv.9-11 and 12 that result in the

³²⁵ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 389.

³²⁶ Good, *Irony*, 121.

³²⁷ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 294.

³²⁸ Note that this is an infinitive construct with suffix, not a finite qal. See GKC 61d.

³²⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 151.

³³⁰ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 295.

³³¹ Wildberger vol.3, 151.

³³² Ringgren, “לוד” in *TDOT* 7: 478. Note that this form is a niphthal participle of *luz*, but functioning here as a noun.

³³³ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 292-3; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 139-148.

judgment of vv.13-14. The reproach of vv.9-11 makes clear their attitude of unwillingness to hear God's instruction and see God's teaching while v.12 further summarizes this attitude. Since the verbs in v.12 used with 'crooked ways and intrigues' are ותבטחו and ותשענו, which are synonyms, we can then conclude from the development from vv.9-11 to v.12 that the imperception theme is related to their false trust, which is manifested in their not choosing the way of YHWH, but their own way of going down to Egypt for help.

Finally, in vv.15-16, which is led by a messenger formula, we see a form of thesis (v.15), a two-fold antithesis (v.16aα, 16ba), with their corresponding consequences (v.16aβ, v.16bβ), and a concluding consequence (v.17). The contrast between the thesis and the antithesis is that the former suggests 'returning and rest', 'quietness and trust' while the latter is about trying to 'run fast' and 'be swift'. As Wildberger observes, v.15 calls to mind the ideology of Holy War, in which Israelites are called to trust YHWH and be still to see YHWH alone fights for them (cf. Deut 20:3f; Exod 14:13f).³³⁴ The twofold antithesis illustrates the obstinacy and rebellion of the addressees in refusing to listen to YHWH's word. The wordplays on נוס and on קל in v.16, both juxtaposing two uses of the same word with ironic implications,³³⁵ and the recurrence of נוס in v.17, satirize the vanity of the addressees' efforts. We see again here that it is their refusal to listen to YHWH's word that causes the judgment, and that the theme of perception is related again to trusting in YHWH. In such ways, vv.15-16 function as a specific example of the reproaches of vv.9-11, 12.³³⁶

Finally, it is noteworthy that in these three reproaches (vv.9-11, 12, 15-16), the 'Holy One of Israel' as the name of YHWH is taken to highlight the seriousness of these oracles and of their guilt of unwillingness to heed.

To conclude, we see in vv.8-17 that very serious and complete judgements for the addressees are caused by their imperception. To be more specific, it is their unwillingness to heed YHWH's instructions or word, which manifests in their distrust of YHWH and in their self-deceiving trust in their own crooked ways and plans.

3.4.3 Summary

We have now examined 1) the rhetorical situation of 30:8-17, 20-21; 2) the similarities vv.8-17 and vv.20-21, which share the root ירה, and the concept of 'the way'; 3) the term מוריד as an unique name

³³⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 159-163.

³³⁵ Goods, *Irony*, 121.

³³⁶ Cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 224.

for YHWH, but deliberately fitting in the development from Isa 28-30; 4) the setting of vv.8-17 and vv.20-21 respectively in judgment and salvation with v.18 as a transition which applies waiting both to YHWH and the addressees; 5) the perception that YHWH as the teacher is the primary blessing in the period of salvation; and 6) the imperception theme as the very reason for the serious and complete judgements in vv.8-17, in which the imperception is related to the people's unwillingness to heed YHWH's teaching, either His word or vision. It is also related to their lack of trust in YHWH, and to their choice of their own crooked ways and plans which will only come to naught. The last five aspects help us to conclude that in Isa 30, through the theme of perception and imperception, the prophet and redactors aim to persuade listeners or readers that it is paramount to be perceptive, and that to get perception is to follow his teaching including words and visions which may not be smooth but are true, to choose God's way, and to trust in him. The first aspect helps us to identify the rhetorical situation of Isa 30 as at the time of Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria, which is implicit in chs. 28-29 but now explicit in chs. 30-31. It is when this rhetorical situation is made explicit that we come to the explicit relating of the theme of perception with trust in God and choosing God's way, and the imperception theme with trust in their own effort of allying with Egypt. Thus, we see the development of the theme of perception and imperception closely related to its rhetorical situation.

3.5 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 32

In Isa 32, the theme of perception occurs in a passage concerning a just and righteous king. I will illustrate in the following that 32:1-8 function as a climax to ch. 28-31 in the relationship of משפט and צדקה with the shelter, water and rock images in 32:1-2, and in the relationship of משפט and צדקה with the theme of perception in vv.3-8.

The emphasis on leaders' משפט and צדקה/צדק occurs previously in Isaiah in 1:21-27; 4:2-6; 9:5-6; 11:1-9; 16:4-5. Here, 32:2-8 elaborate the characteristics of the reign of a just and righteous king. Firstly, in v.2, with the imagery of a shelter from storm and heat, and of water in a parched land and of a shade of a rock, the text underlines the "security and prosperity" under such a reign.³³⁷ The shelter imagery contrasts linguistically with 28:17 where the shelter/refuge of lies will be swept away by hail and waters in the midst of an overflowing scourge, and thematically with 30:1-7; 31:1-3 where Egypt is useless as a shelter (which is implicitly in 28:15-22; 29:15).³³⁸ The rock imagery

³³⁷ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 412.

³³⁸ Cf. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 471.

recalls 31:9 which mentions the rock of Assyria will pass away in terror, hence a symbol of security. The water imagery symbolizes God's provision, contrasting the water imagery in 28:15-22 which is a destructive overwhelming flood. The character of this just and righteous king and reign, through the shelter, water and rock images, relates to, yet contrasts with, the political leaders and the enemy Assyria of Judahites in chs. 28-31. In such a way, 32:2 functions as a climax and contrast to chs. 28-31.

Secondly, in vv.3-4, during the just and righteous reign, the people will have perception from the perspectives of eyes, ears, hearts and tongues (cf. ch.6 also mentions all these four aspects), because of which, among them there will be no confusion of the fool with the noble, the knave with the honourable. Besides, the characteristics of the fool, the knave and the noble are further explained in vv.6-8. The fool, with "foolish speech, a mind dedicated to wickedness, an ungodly lifestyle and by heresy spoken against YHWH,"³³⁹ deprives the hungry of their food and the thirsty of their water, while the knave is characterized by their evil weapons and wicked plans against the poor and needy. They are both a harm to the society, especially to the defenceless, and are opposite to *משפט* and *צדקה*. By contrast, the noble person / ruler plans for noble things. According to Conrad, the root for 'noble', *נָדַב* means basically "prove oneself freely willing",³⁴⁰ which, as Watts understands, connotes that a noble "has no ulterior motive ... can deal objectively, thinking in ways that are not dictated by his personal interests."³⁴¹ Thus, unlike the fool and knave who are opposite to the *משפט* and *צדקה*, the noble people are in the same line of *משפט* and *צדקה*. That is to say, the fool and knave are related to injustice and unrighteousness while the noble to *משפט* and *צדקה*. Therefore, we see the connection of *משפט* and *צדקה* with perception here in 32:1-8. Like 32:2, the connection of *משפט* and *צדקה* with perception here in 32:1-8 is also a climax of chs. 28-31. As we know, preceding ch. 32, in the passages that accuse Jerusalem leaders of their folly, there is the reference to *משפט* and *צדקה* (28:5-6; 29:16), whereas the renewal passage in ch. 29, v.18 concerns perception, and vv.20-21 the removal of unrighteousness and injustice – the prophecy of the elimination of the insolent, the arrogant and evildoers (v.20) is followed by accusation of injustice and unrighteousness in the "judicial arena" (v.21).

³³⁹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 413.

³⁴⁰ Conrad, "נָדַב" in *TDOT* 8: 220.

³⁴¹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-39*, 413.

The role of ch.32 as a climax to 28-31 is also supported by the sequence from chs. 28-32 which is like chs. 10-11.³⁴² Thus, the close and explicit association of משפט and צדקה with the theme of perception here in 32:1-8, the climax of chs. 28-31, is deliberate and meaningful. This association reminds us of Isa 11, where perception is the characteristic of the just and righteous king himself (11:3). However, here the perception is extended to be the character of the people under the reign of this just and righteous king.

This development of the theme is closely related to the rhetorical situation of 32:1-8. In chs. 28-31, we have seen the imperception and delusion of the political leaders, religious leaders, the wise and the discerning in the society have led Judahites into plots, plans, alliance against YHWH, and abandoning a faith and reliance on YHWH, which will only result in their destruction. It is under such a rhetorical situation that 32:1-8 emphasizes that only the reign of just and righteous king and the perception of the whole society can bring hope to Judah.

3.6 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 33

It is necessary to investigate the nature(s) of perception in ch.33 – is it physical, metaphorical, intellectual, or a combination of them all? – and why this theme is picked up in this way in ch.33. I will examine every occurrence of (im)perception in Isa 33 and then give an overview of the chapter’s content. From that I will infer the rhetorical situation of ch.33, and finally conclude with what rhetorical purpose the emphasis on the *combination of physical and intellectual* seeing/hearing aims to serve in such a rhetorical situation.

3.6.1 The Structure of Isa 33

It is well observed that there are a variety of genres intertwined in Isa 33, which lack a smooth flow of the text. For example, Herman Gunkel wrote “whoever reads a text such as this for the first time

³⁴²Though the הוי in 10:1 resumes the woe-oracles of ch.5 while here in 32:,1 the הן breaks the הוי oracle that runs from 28:1-33:1.

reproaches of and judgements upon Judah’s sins	judgment upon Assyria	the righteous ruler
10:1-4	10:12-19, 33-34	11:1-9
28:1-30:7	31:8-9	32:1-8

will keep staring at the text, bewildered and clueless, as before an unsolvable puzzle.³⁴³ The flow of ch. 33 can be presented as follows.

v.1 woe against the destroyer
v.2 plea for God's salvation
vv.3-6 expression of certainty
vv.7-9 lament for their miserable situation
vv.10-12 YHWH's response to their lament:
 assuring of his rising up to save which indicates his judgment upon their enemies
[v.13 God's might is to be heard from afar and near, linking vv.10-12 (people from afar) and vv.14-16 (people from near)]
[vv.14-16 inner self-examination among Zion community]
vv.17-24 the security of Zion after YHWH's response to their plea and lament and after their internal examination

From a position of faith, they announced woe to the destroyer (v.1). For YHWH is their saviour (v.2 plea + vv.3-6 acknowledgment of YHWH's might and the blessings from him). This sub-unit ends up with YHWH's exaltation and dwelling on height.

This is then followed by a lament about their miserable situation (vv.7-9). In response to their lament, YHWH assures them of his rising up to save (v.10), which is manifested through judgment over their enemies (vv.11-12). By calling people from far and near to hear and know YHWH's might, v.13 leads into vv.14-16, the inner self-examination among the Zion community.³⁴⁴ Here, the entrance liturgy, similar to Pss.15 and 24, is applied to underscore YHWH's holiness,³⁴⁵ which is in line with his judgement. Even though the genre of vv.14-16 is different from the preceding, it is appropriate to have these contrasting fates between the godless and the righteous before coming into the depiction of the final vision of YHWH's rule (vv.17-24).³⁴⁶ This sub-unit ends with YHWH's dwelling on high (v.16).

Finally, in vv.17-24, ch.33 is concluded with YHWH the king dwelling in Zion which will no longer be a city of insecurity with insolent people (vv.18³⁴⁷-19), but one of stability and security (as the images in vv.20b-21, 23 show). Besides, while the sinners in Zion trembled in v.14, here are

³⁴³ The change of person is tricky: v.1 spoken to the destroyer (2ms for the destroyer); vv.2-4 to YHWH (2ms for YHWH, 1cp for Judahites in v.2, hence the prophet identifies with Judahites as supplicants in v.2 and as those acknowledging YHWH's might), vv.5-6 about YHWH (3ms for YHWH, 2mp for Judahites in v.6, as if it is the prophet speaks to Judahites about YHWH).

³⁴⁴ In contrast to the 'Zion-gentile division' in vv.1-13. Cf. Williamson, *The Book*, 223.

³⁴⁵ cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 247.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Williamson, *The Book*, 223.

³⁴⁷ Here I take Childs' comments that 'the one in charge of the towers' signifies 'military power', and 'the weigher of tribute' denotes 'a peace negotiated through treaties', see Childs, *Isaiah*, 249. They represent respectively the threat Judahites were facing and the solutions that they took to overcome the threat in ch. 28-31. However, here in 32:18, by the rhetorical questions, the point is made that there will be neither these threats, nor their foolish and death-provoking solutions.

announced the forgiveness of their sins and their freedom from sickness (v.24). Therefore, in contrast to Williamson who reads vv.17-24 as an extended development of vv.10-12 (13), YHWH's response to their lament, I argue that vv.17-24 are the conclusion of the whole ch. 33 because YHWH does not only assure them of salvation and security from foreign enemies but also from their own sins and sickness. It thus illustrates the positive vision of the divine rule. The text reaches its climax in v.22 where YHWH is recognized as the judge (v.11-12, 14a), lawgiver (vv.14b-15), king (vv.17-22) and saviour (vv.23-24).

In summary, ch. 33 as a whole can be taken as an assurance of salvation to the Judahites who are lamenting their miserable situation and pleading to YHWH for salvation. Through his response of judging Judah's enemies (which also causes awe and internal examination among the Judahites), YHWH will be exalted and dwell on high. To be exact, he will dwell as a king in Jerusalem.

3.6.2 Rhetorical Situation of Isa 33

It is not difficult to infer from above that the rhetorical situation of ch. 33 is that addressees are lamenting their miserable situation and pleading to YHWH. This is a multidimensional rhetorical situation. It could be at the time of the Assyrian siege of 701 BCE when Hezekiah finally repents and appeals to God (Isa 36), with the destroyer/traitor in v.1 identified as Assyria.³⁴⁸ Or, it could be at the end of exile, when Israelites have been lamenting and waiting for YHWH's bringing them back to Jerusalem, with Babylon as the destroyer. Williamson argues persuasively that ch. 33 belongs to Deutero-Isaiah's edition of the oracles of the prophet Isaiah to effect the transition to chs. 40-55, and assumes an exilic date and situation. In particular, his two most persuasive and related arguments here are i) the shape of ch. 33, namely the assurance of salvation provided as a response to the people's lament, which is characteristic of chs. 40-55, and found nowhere else in First Isaiah, and ii) the theme of 'YHWH as king' occurring in the setting of salvation (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7).³⁴⁹ Childs is correct in proposing the multidimensional identity of the destroyer.³⁵⁰ Although there are deliberate links with chs. 40-55, we should not deny the connection of ch.33 with the preceding sections. This is exactly the reason why ch.33 is regarded as a "mirror text" (*Spiegeltext*) by Beuken,³⁵¹ a hinge-chapter by Sweeney, or one of the triptychs in Isa – the other two being chs. 34-

³⁴⁸ Webb, *Isaiah*, 139. That its close parallel occurs nowhere else in Isaiah than 21:2 which refers to Babylon leads scholars to identify it as Babylon here as well, cf. Williamson, *The Book*, 222. However, as Childs (*Isaiah*, 426) acknowledges, that judgment will fall upon the one who destroys recalls 10:12 and 14:24ff referring to Assyria.

³⁴⁹ Williamson, *The Book*, 221-31.

³⁵⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 426.

³⁵¹ Beuken, "Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch", *ETHL* 67 (1991): 5-35.

35 (“a proto-apocalyptic writing”) and 36-39 (“an extended prose narrative”) – each in its own way bridging chs. 1-32 with chs. 40-55.³⁵² The emphasis on ‘YHWH as king’ in ch.33 is preceded by a just and righteous king in 32:1-8 where there is no indication of his identity, nor is there any hint of him as one from the Davidic line like 9:6 and 11:1, but there is an emphasis on משפט and צדקה and the extension of perception to the people. Thus, we see chs.28-33, developing from imperceptive and deluded political leaders or Assyrians (ch.28-31) first to a king whose rule will bring perception to the public, yet who is not identified (ch.32), then to YHWH as the king. Therefore, the content of ch. 33, and its connection with the preceding sections vindicates Sennacherib’s siege in 701BCE as its rhetorical situation, while its close link with Deutero-Isaiah may also support the exilic application of the prophet Isaiah’s message, in which case, the end of exilic time becomes its new rhetorical situation.

3.6.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 33

In ch. 33, the usage of the verbs ראה (vv.15b, 17b, 19, 20), חזה (vv.17a, 20) and שמע (vv.15b, 19) leads us into a distinction between what they will not see/hear – evil or bloodshed (v.15), insolent people or obscure speech (v.19) –and what they will see – the King in His beauty, the land stretching afar, and Zion/Jerusalem (vv.17-24). Most of the references to perception or imperception here can be understood in the literal sense, whereas the idea of physically seeing the king (v.17), (who is YHWH according to v.22) sounds weird/strange. However, the idea of physical seeing is complicated, because of metaphorical, and even mythological, elements. I will argue that the physical seeing in ch.33 is used metaphorically, which applies to both seeing the city Zion/Jerusalem and seeing YHWH.

Concerning seeing Zion/Jerusalem in vv.20-21, we are invited to see by an exclamatory חזה (‘behold’), and then עיניך תראינה (‘your eyes will see’) begins the description of this city Zion. On the one hand, the visible images of an immovable tent (v.20) and of a place of ‘broad rivers’ (v.21) echo this invitation to behold and to see (v.20a), which is thus a physical seeing. On the other hand, the descriptions of both images highlight the stability and security of the future Zion.³⁵³ ‘No stakes will ever be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken’ enhances the immovability of the ‘tent’ – an image familiar to the nomadic Israel. Similarly, in the broad rivers ‘no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass’, denoting there will not be threat from outside Zion. It is noteworthy that

³⁵² Thompson, “Vision, Reality and Worship: Isa 33,” 331.d

³⁵³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 304-05.

‘broad rivers’ in Zion (v.21a) probably belong to the mythological language used in the Zion tradition (cf. Ps. 46:5 [v.4]). This means that the prophet is employing the concepts of that tradition in order to adopt its assurances of God’s help and the security he gives.³⁵⁴ Therefore, seeing the future Zion calls for using our eyes, indicating a physical seeing, though simultaneously this is interwoven with mythological elements, indicating a metaphorical seeing. It is probable that the future Zion might not be precisely the same as what is described here in vv.17-24 in the *literal* sense – Zion is by no means surrounded by ‘broad rivers’ – but the literal description is employed *metaphorically* to highlight the future Zion’s characteristics of stability and security.

With regards to seeing YHWH, on the one hand, v.17 reads “your eyes will see the king in his beauty.” The employment of עיניך calls for the physical seeing with eyes. As Wildberger comments, “When the reign of God arrives...God will remain hidden no longer...It will not be merely a few select people such as Moses who can see God with their own eyes...Israel as a whole will have the privilege.”³⁵⁵ Besides, v.17 shares some commonality with 6:1-5. In 6:5, we have המלך יהוה צבאות ראו עיני (‘my eyes have seen the king YHWH the hosts’), while in 33:17, מלך ביפיו תחזינה עיניך (‘king in his beauty your eyes will see’). It may mean the people will have a vision like Isaiah’s. Moreover, in the context of ch.33, we have מלך ביפיו (‘king in his beauty’) in v.17, and אדיר יהוה (‘the majesty of YHWH’) in v.21, while we have כבוד in 6:3.³⁵⁶ In contrast to כבוד which is an abstract word, יפי refers to ‘outward appearance,’³⁵⁷ that is, the physical beauty. Therefore, seeing YHWH in his beauty here draws on a physical seeing. However, on the other hand, v.18 employs war imagery, which is the threat the historical Judahites often experienced. This connects with the heart and the understanding, bestowing an intellectual dimension looking back to v.17. Besides, the recalling of Isaiah’s vision of YHWH as king (6:1-5) may also mean that they will see the effect of YHWH reigning as king. Therefore, seeing YHWH in his beauty calls for our physical seeing, though interwoven with intellectual understanding.

In summary, the theme of perception and imperception is picked up in its physical sense in ch.33, though complicated and related to its metaphorical and intellectual senses –there is a subtle, or nuanced, relationship between the literal and the metaphorical.

³⁵⁴ It is an important reassertion of this assurance following an assertion of the promise of security to Zion in 31:4-5 in view of texts like 28:14-22 and 29:1-4 where a false trust in Zion is exposed and judgment, instead of protection, is announced against Zion.

³⁵⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 300-01.

³⁵⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 266-67, reads the fulfilment of YHWH’s glory upon the whole earth in light of Pss 19:1; 29:1f; 24:8ff etc.

³⁵⁷ Ringgren, “יפי”, in *TDOT.6*: 218-19.

3.6.4 Summary

It is in a rhetorical situation where the addressees are lamenting their miserable situation and pleading to YHWH, (which may be at Sennacherib's siege in 701BCE or after the event of 587 BCE), that the prophet is prompted to assure them of YHWH's salvation. On the one hand, the emphasis on the *physical* seeing and hearing, and the distinction between not seeing/hearing (bloodshed and wickedness) and seeing/hearing (the beauty of YHWH and the security of Jerusalem) thus function rhetorically to enhance the assurance of a peaceful and secure future. This is not merely a consolation, but a certain future reality which they will see/hear in actuality - and in that future, they will see/hear no more wickedness, sins or sickness. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that this physical seeing is interwoven with metaphorical and intellectual aspects. This means that this future may not be necessarily as literally precise as the description in ch. 33. However, the essence of the stability and security of the future Zion and the understanding of YHWH's beauty as he reigns amongst them, are surely to be the same.

3.7 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 34-35

In chs. 34-35, the so-called 'the little apocalypse,'³⁵⁸ we see how the theme of perception recurs in the invitation to nations to hear (שמע) in 34:1, in seeing YHWH's glory in 35:2 and in the reversal of the infirmities in 35:5. I will explore the question of whether perception in 34:1 and 35:5 should be understood in a physical sense or in a more intellectual/spiritual sense, and then why the theme of perception is picked up in this way in chs. 34-35. I will first investigate the rhetorical situation, and the place and function of Isa 34-35, before delving into the theme of perception.

3.7.1 Rhetorical Situation of Isa 34-35

A consideration of the contents of chs.34-35 will help identify the rhetorical situations. Though ch.34 starts with judgment against nations, it is then mainly concerned with judgment against Edom. Ch.35 anticipates revival and salvation for Zion. Both chapters announce the coming of the avenging God in judgment (34:1-4; 35:4), and the fate of Edom contrasts with that of Judah. This is explained pictorially through a contrast between the desertification and revivification of dry land.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Clements claims "the section comprised of 34:1-35:10 is recognised by almost all critical scholar to be a unity", though Wildberger is an exception.

³⁵⁹ See the detailed contrasts in Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 450, 456; Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 503-04, 512-13.

The particular focus on Edom may indicate a rhetorical situation after 587BCE where Judahites' long-term hatred against Edom was at its greatest. As we know, the rivalry between Edom and Israel in the biblical account started from Genesis. However, it is because of the Edomites' role and behaviour towards the Judahites in the events of 587 BCE that Edom becomes one of the major objects of the prophets' attacks. To be more accurate, the announcing of judgment against nations and Edom by the avenging God may indicate a rhetorical situation at the end of the exilic time. The recurrence of reference to Edom in ch. 63, and the similarities between these two chapters may further identify the rhetorical situation of ch. 34 as late as the post-exilic period.

Similarly, the main focus of ch. 35 on the reversal and redemption also indicates a rhetorical situation after the fall of Jerusalem. Besides, as is well observed by scholars, ch. 35 shares similar motifs with Deutero-Isaiah and Third Isaiah,³⁶⁰ which accounts for its dating at the latest stage of the growth of Isa, later than the Third Isaiah.³⁶¹

3.7.2 The Placement and Function of Isa 34-35

In retrospect, the victory over the nations and over Edom in ch. 34 is a natural implication of YHWH dwelling on Zion as the king (Isa 33). The same is true of the announcement of the revival in ch. 35. Besides, ch. 35 links with chs. 28-33 in several ways. Lebanon, Sharon and Carmel are turned into wilderness in 33:9b but now in 35:2 they will be renewed again to their full glory and beauty. Like the reversal sections in ch. 28-33 (29:18; 32:3-4; 33:23), this reversal chapter also promises the reversal of disabilities (35:5-6). The way Judahites choose in ch. 30 is a way of leaving the Holy One of Israel (v.11) and leads to danger, with no profit or salvation (vv.1-7). However, the way in ch.35 is a Holy Way for the redeemed people and leads to everlasting joy where there are no dangerous lions or other wild beasts. While chs.28-31 implicitly and explicitly accuse Judahites of choosing their own way of allying with Egypt, here in ch.35 the description of this Holy Way comes at its climax, which concludes chs.28-35 with an exhortation to choose this Holy Way for redemption, joy and security.

³⁶⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 255. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1-39*, 456-57) illustrates the themes in ch. 35 and ch. 40-55 are similar but their meanings are quite different. Matthews, *Defending Zion*, 123-135, compares in more depth those themes in ch.35, 40-55 and 56-66.

³⁶¹ Williamson, *The Book*, 215. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 356-57. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 362, 365-66. Though scholars vary in their opinion on the exact date: the 5th century CBE (Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 177), the 4th (Vermeulen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique*, 446) and even later.

To look beyond ch. 35, it is noteworthy that there is a division between chs. 33 and 34 in the Masoretic Isaiah text, making chs. 34-35 both like an introduction to the Second Isaiah but while also acting as a hinge-chapter between First and Second Isaiah. Seitz maintains that the position of chs. 34-35 leads us not to “move from ‘first’ to ‘second’ Isaiah by way of a record of Zion’s defeat (chap. 34-35). Instead, more mysteriously, the movement is from the promise of victory amidst the nations (chap. 36-38), to foreseen exile (chap. 39) and finally to bold words of comfort and forgiveness (chap. 40).”³⁶² Seitz’ thoughts are developed by Claire Matthews who writes,

“by introducing materials from the final third of the book, Isa 34-35 enable the prophetic narratives [chs 36-39] to point even beyond the return of the exiles, to express that same hope—and assurance—found in 56-66: that in the future, YHWH will deliver Zion from all of her enemies, whether they be those who threaten her as foreigners, from the outside, or those who threaten her from within.”³⁶³

Therefore, ch. 34-35 function as a natural implication of YHWH the king dwelling on Zion (Isa 33), a reversal of the negative imagery in chs. 28-33 on the one hand, and on the other hand an assurance of hope and salvation, followed by a historical example, to make more persuasive and encouraging the comforting words in ch. 40-66 for people in the exile or facing post-exilic threats.

3.7.3 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 34-35

The calling to hear/listen in 34:1 recalls 1:2, though in the latter, the heavens and the earth are called to listen to God’s accusation of his own chosen people, while 34:1 calls nations, peoples and all that is in the world to listen to YHWH’s rage and judgment upon nations and then more specifically upon Edom. The recipients of the calls are similar while the detailed points of focus are different. The word שָׁמַר in both 1:2 and 34:1 combines the physical and intellectual senses. That is, they are invited to listen and to understand.

The theme of perception in 35:2, 5 appears in a context of reversal. As Tull writes:

In fact, the entire poem concerns reversal. The desert is glad; the wilderness blossoms (v.1). Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel resume as landscapes of abundance (v.2). Weak hands and faltering knees are strengthened (v.3). The fearful should no longer fear, since God brings justice and salvation (v.4). Blind, deaf and lame, like dry land, are healed (vv.5-7); the highway is no longer populated by wild animals or people lacking moral credentials, but only with the redeemed, who are overtaken with joy as they return to Zion (vv.8-10).³⁶⁴

³⁶² Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 242.

³⁶³ Matthews, *Defending Zion*, 178. For her, Edom is Israel/Judah’s brother according to Esau/Jacob tradition. Therefore, the nations and Edom being judged in ch. 34 represents enemies from outside and from within. Besides, she argues on pp.162-63 that chs. 34-35 “was added when Third Isaiah and the collection as a whole, was nearly complete.”

³⁶⁴ Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 519-20.

While acknowledging Tull’s observation, I would like to point out that the focus of ch. 35 is the promise of the redemption of God’s people. As the table below shows, both nature (in vv.1-2 and vv.6b-7) and God’s people (in vv.3-4, 5-6a) share the similarity that they are both in need of God’s redemption. The encouragement to, and the transformation of, God’s people are framed by the transformation of wilderness and desert – the latter rhetorically enhances the former. Then, in vv.8-10, the whole poem comes to its climax,³⁶⁵ concluding that there is a highway for God’s redeemed people who will find no insecurity but everlasting joy on it, which is called the Holy Way.³⁶⁶ The message that God avenges his people also finds emphasis in the way Isa 35 is structured.

vv.1-2	transformation of wilderness and desert which are the weak in nature	A
vv.3-4	encouragement to the weak in God’s people who are described as having ‘weak hands, feeble knees, anxious heart’	B
vv.5-6a	transformation of the disabled of God’s people who are described as the blind and deaf, lame and mute	B’
vv.6b-7	transformation of wilderness and desert	A’
vv.8-10	a highway for God’s redeemed people on which they will find no insecurity but everlasting joy	climax

Should we now read the perception in vv.2, 5 literally, metaphorically, or intellectually? The promise of the perception of the blind and the deaf in v.5 is consensually regarded as ‘literal’ in the light of v.6a. Claire Matthews writes, “at 35:5-6 the healing of the blind and deaf is combined with that of the lame and mute, suggesting that what is there envisioned is not at all metaphorical but the healing of actual physical infirmities.”³⁶⁷ Similarly, Wildberger states “v.6a shows that one must understand this text as a literal promise.”³⁶⁸ Kaiser claims as well “v.6 makes it clear that v.5 goes beyond 42.7, as well as 42.18 and 43.8, and unlike 29.18 and 32.3 has in mind the actual healing of human ailments in the time of salvation.”³⁶⁹

The nature of the seeing in v.2 is not so easy to identify. Nevertheless, to identify it, we need to answer two questions. Firstly, who will see? הַמָּה as the subject of יִרְאוּ כְבוֹד יְהוָה in v.2 is unspecified. It may be identified at the first glance with the preceding מְדַבֵּר and עֹרְבָה, but more possibly with God’s people in vv.3-4.³⁷⁰ Secondly, what does it mean by ‘seeing the glory of YHWH’? It is noteworthy that 35:2 is different from 33:17 in the sense that the latter employs ‘your eyes’, while

³⁶⁵ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 346; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 456.

³⁶⁶ This way, where they will find no lion or ravenous beasts (v.9) and which leads to everlasting joy, is different from the way Judahites choose in 30:1-7 where there are dangerous lions, lionesses, adder and flying fiery serpent (v.6) and which leads to no profit and help.

³⁶⁷ Matthews, *Defending Zion*, 132.

³⁶⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 3

³⁶⁹ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 362.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Matthews, *Defending Zion*, 129; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 345.

the former not, hence not necessarily calling for a physical seeing. As observed by Matthews, “the glory of YHWH” also occurs in 40:5 “all the flesh shall see it together”, and interestingly, “ch. 35 shares a number of the themes found in 40:1-11.”³⁷¹ In ch.40, “the glory of YHWH” relates closely with his redeeming Judahites from exile and bringing them back to Jerusalem. Similarly, as said above, the focus of ch. 35 is also the redemption of God’s people. Thus, seeing God’s glory in 35:2 is meant to be an intellectual seeing, that is, in the time of salvation. When nature revives, Judahites will understand that it is God who makes possible this restoration.

To conclude, the flow of ch. 35 above shows that the changes in nature are taken to enhance the changes among God’s people. As the changes in nature will be physical and visible, so are the changes among God’s people (v.5-6b). Besides, as the restoration of nature and the healing of human infirmities become physical and visible, people will intellectually see (that is, understand) the glory of YHWH. Therefore in ch.35, there is a combination of physical perception (v.2) with intellectual perception (v.5).

3.7.4 Summary

In summary: i) I have identified the perception theme in chs.34-35, with a combination of physical and intellectual senses, which is conveyed through a nuanced relationship between the literal and the metaphorical; ii) I have identified the rhetorical situation of ch.34-35 with the end of the exile when Judahites were hoping for salvation and with the post-exilic time when they also faced threats from their neighbours; and iii) I have clarified the function of chs.34-35 in its current position.

In the rhetorical situation of chs.34-35, the emphasis on the combination of physical and intellectual perception further reinforces the conclusion that chs.34-35 function to assure people who are facing various threats of a promising future which can be perceived and experienced in actual reality, and which in turn enhances both their intellectual perception and their understanding of YHWH’s presence with his miraculous deeds amongst them.

3.8 Conclusion

To conclude, I have investigated chs. 28, 29 more closely and chs. 30, 32, 33, 34-35 more briefly, so as to trace the development of the theme of (im)perception in its rhetorical situation. The analyses above have shown that in chs. 28-32 the theme is related more to its intellectual sense (insight,

³⁷¹ Matthews, *Defending Zion*, 129-130.

understanding) and spiritual sense (trust YHWH), whereas in chs. 33-35, it is connected with a combination of its physical sense (in actual reality) and with its metaphorical or intellectual sense.

Chs.28-32 relates to the rhetorical situation of events leading to 701 BCE – the political decision of betraying Assyria through an alliance with Egypt. It underscores the significance of deep insight and correct understanding in making the right choice, namely, to trust YHWH amid a national crisis.

Chs.33-35 relate to the rhetorical situations of the aftermath of crises in 701 BCE and 587 BCE, and it provides the people in crisis with an assurance that they will see YHWH's dwelling on Zion as king (33:17, 21) and his glory (35:2).

Physical seeing is intertwined with its metaphorical and intellectual senses – through the promises of their *actually* seeing a peaceful, secure and righteous Zion where there is no bloodshed/wickedness (33:15), sins/sickness (33:24), or foreign threats (33:20-21), and where the infirmities regain their physical perception (33:5-6a).

Besides, the theme extends from the imperception of the religious, political leaders and the wise (chs. 28-31) to the perception of the people (chs. 32-35). Therefore, we see the horizontal and vertical developments of the theme of (im)perception related to its rhetorical situations, with a rhetorical function to persuade people to be perceptive and to have faith in YHWH, to choose his way which ensures security and joy.

4 The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 40-55

Isaiah 40-55 aim to persuade the exilic Israel to trust in YHWH's comfort and promise of their returning. 40:1-11 proclaim a new commission for the new situation, parallel with 6:1-13:³⁷² the 'I' figures of both passages are asked to proclaim something,³⁷³ though their messages are different. While Israelites are destined to be imperceptive in 6:9-10, all flesh shall *see* Yhwh's glory as he comforts and restores Jerusalem (40:1-5).³⁷⁴ The presence of other 'voices' (vv.3, 6), of Yhwh (v.1), of the prophet and his question of 'What shall I cry?' in response to 'a voice' who gives him further response (vv.6-8), and especially the revelation of 'glory' (v.5) now not just to the prophet, but to 'all peoples', all reflect on Isa 6. These verses announce that the prophecy initiated by Isaiah in Isa 6 is continued here, yet also that something momentarily new is about to happen. It is from this commission of 40:1-11 that all messages of DI flow. This chapter will show how the (im)perception theme is associated with YHWH's comforting and persuading schemes in DI.

4.1 The Structure of Isa 40-55

When demarcating DI, several aspects are worth noting. Firstly, as Goldingay and Payne observe, there is a spiral movement throughout DI which is more appropriately comparable to a symphony in music, hence the validity of various demarcations, while simultaneously there "are ways in which strong themes develop and points at which strong structural markers appear."³⁷⁵ Secondly, both differences and echoes between Isa 40-48 and 49-55 have been widely observed.³⁷⁶ Thirdly, in DI,

³⁷² In Sommer's *A Prophet Reads Scripture* (165-6), he sees 40:1-11 as a particular example of DI's way of alluding to older material: "by beginning with a bevy of allusions, an author signals that older material will play a crucial role in the text at hand"; he regards 40:1-11 "allude to 28:1-2; Jer 16:16-18; 31:15 and Ezek 31:5 ... and may allude to Isaiah 6; Exod 32:14-15, and Lamentations' refrain 'There is no comforter' (Lam 1:2, 9, 16, 21)"; and he also claims that DI uses allusion extensively. On p.105, he sees DI's allusions use 'reversals, re-predictions, and typological linkages' extensively. On p.106, he refers to a fixed number of allusions to PI in DI, and on p.258, n.95, he lists them.

³⁷³ See particularly the use of קול and אמר in these two passages: ואשמע את קול אדני אמר ... ואמר ... ויאמר לך ואמרת לעם (6:8-9) and קול אמר קרא ואמר מה אקרא (40:6) and ... אמרי ... (40:9).

³⁷⁴ Stern maintains that the prophet envisages and holds out this prospect of seeing God's glory for the blind servant (cf. "Blind Servant," 227).

³⁷⁵ Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 19.

³⁷⁶ The thematic differences include Jacob-Israel in chs.40-48 while Zion-Jerusalem in chs.49-55, and topics like 'Cyrus-Babylon' (Isa 41:1-5, 25; 43:14; 44:25-45:7; 45:13; 46:11; 48:12-16a for Cyrus; Isa 46-47 for Babylon), 'the former-latter/new things' (41:21-29; 42:6-9; 43:8-13; 44:6-8; 45:21; 46:8-11; 48:3-8; 14-16), 'the polemic against idols' (40:19-20; 41:6-7; 42:17; 44:9-20; 45:20; 46:1-7; 47:9b-15 [against Babylonian divination practices] and 'the incomparability of YHWH' (40:12-18, 21-31; 41:21-28; 42:14-17; 45:9-13; 46:3-5; 48:1-11) only in Isa 40-48 but not in Isa 49-55. Besides, there are also literary parallels between the beginning of Isa 40-48 and Isa 49: (i) whereas 40:1 begins with 'comfort,

there are hymnic verses summoning explicitly to sing and rejoice, dominated by verbal roots רנן (42:11; 44:23; 49:13; 52:8,9; 54:1) and/or פצה (44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 54:1; 55:12), followed by a כִּי explanation (42:13; 44:23; 49:13; 52:9-10; 54:1) relating to God’s saving action, characterized by verbs עשה (44:23), גאל (44:23; 48:20; 52:9) and נהם (49:13; 51:3; 52:9). However, it is debated whether hymnic verses are structural markers. Berges deems 42:10-12; 44:23; [45:8]; 48:20-21; 49:13; [51:3]; 52:9-10; [54:1-3] to be hymnic verses, though he also realises they are not counted as hymns by all.³⁷⁷ Fourthly, the instructions to leave Babylon (48:20; 52:11-12; 55:12-13) may also serve as structural markers. Taking all these elements into consideration, I demarcate DI into subsections as follows.

40:1-12 Opening prologue	YHWH commissions the proclamation of comfort and good news for Jerusalem
40:12-48:22 Servant Jacob-Israel and Jacob-Israel’s Redemption	40:12-31 introduction to 40:12-48:22: the creator God YHWH’s incomparability, and his initial response to Jacob-Israel’s faith question
	41:1-44:23 God’s exhortation and commission for the blind and deaf servant Jacob-Israel who he will redeem to be his witness
	44:24-48:22 a further development of 41:1-44:23: why Cyrus is raised, why Babylon falls, and why Jacob-Israel is redeemed
49:1-54:17 The individual servant and Jerusalem-Zion’s Restoration	49:1-26 the servant’s mission and the restoration of Zion 50:1-52:12 the servant and the comfort to Zion: awakening 52:13-54:17 the fruitfulness of the servant’s ministry and the restoration of Zion
55:1-13 Epilogue	Final exhortations

4.2 The Perception Theme in Isa 40:12-31

4.2.1 The Structure of Isa 40:12-31

In 40:12-31, vv.12-17, 18-20, 21-24, 25-26 and 27-31 all have a structure of rhetorical question(s) followed by statements, while vv.12-20 and vv.21-26 are parallel with each other with a structure

comfort my people’, 49:13 concludes vv.1-13 with ‘the Lord has comforted his people’ – noteworthy after the double imperative נחמו נחמו at 40:1, the root נהם does not occur again until 49:13, to be followed by a high frequency in chs. 51-52 (51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; cf. 54:11 as the last one in chs. 40-55); (ii) whereas 40:10 announces ‘YHWH will come ... his recompense before him (ופעלתו לפניו)’, the servant figure proclaims ‘my recompense with my God (ופעלתי את אלהי)’ in 49:4; (iii) the call to both איים (‘coastlands’) and לאמים (‘peoples’) occurs only twice in the whole book of Isaiah, respectively in 41:1 (ההרישו אלי איים ולאמים יהליפו כח) and 49:1 (שמעו איים אלי והקשיבו לאמים מרחוק); (iv) there are in all two embedded speeches of the audience in DI, one in 40:27-28, and another in 49:14, both of which express the audience’s concern about YHWH’s forsaking them, and occurring near the beginning of the two major subsections; (v) Isa 49 recapitulates 42:1-9 in various ways.

³⁷⁷ Berges, *The Book*, 306. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 68-69 only takes 42:10-13; 44:23; 49:13; 52:9-10; 54:1 as structural hymns. Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 21 take 45:8 and 49:13 more as “a call to heaven and earth that is based on YHWH’s new act,” and hence more what Mettinger calls ‘gemstone passages.’

that is made up of (i) questions leading to some descriptions of YHWH (vv.12-14, 21-22), (ii) statements concerning nations/rulers (vv.15-17, 23-24), (iii) questions leading to YHWH's incomparability to idols/heavenly forces (vv.18-20, 25-26).

Vv.27-31 is another subunit after, and linked back to, vv.12-20 and vv.21-26. The verbal links between vv.27-31 and vv.12-26 include *דרך* and *משפט* (v.27, v.14), the co-emergence of *כה*, *אונים* and *רב/רבה* (v.29, v.26) and that *הלוא ידעת אם לא שמעת* (v.28a) is similar to *הלוא תדעו הלוא תשמעו* (v.21a). Thematically, vv.27-31 develops from vv.12-26 in that v.26 asks *מי ברא אלה* ('who created these'), whereas v.28 reads *יהוה בורא עולם* ('everlasting God is YHWH, the creator...') and in that v.13 emphasizes YHWH's untaught understanding, whereas v.28 his unsearchable understanding (*אין חקר*) (לחבונתו). Formally, as Goldingay and Payne write, "Verses 27–31 do not have the same formal structure as vv. 12–20 and 21–26, but they too comprise rhetorical questions and a conclusion, though these elements are now differently arranged."³⁷⁸

Therefore, 40:12-31 can be demarcated into vv.12-20, 21-26 and vv.27-31.

4.2.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 40:12-31

The interrelationship between the demarcated subsections, vv.12-20, 21-26 and vv.27-31, can be further shown in the table below.

vv.12-20// vv.21-26	vv.12-14 YHWH as creator + YHWH's knowledge	v.21-22 YHWH as creator + Israel's knowledge	הארץ + שמים
	vv.15-17 (<i>נחשבו</i> in both vv.15 and 17) nations are nothing and emptiness	vv.23-24 princes and rulers are nothing and emptiness	תהו + אין
	v.18 (<i>ואל מי תדמיון אל</i>)	v.25 (<i>ואל מי תדמיוני</i>)	דמה + ואל מי
	vv.19-20 idols created by craftsmen	v.26 heavenly forces created and called out by YHWH	
vv.27-31	v.27 embedded speech of Jacob/Israel, complaining about YHWH's imperception v.28a (<i>הלוא ידעת אם לא שמעת</i>) picks up the similar phrase of v.21 (<i>הלוא תדעו הלוא תשמעו</i>) v.28bcd YHWH as the creator God + might + knowledge, picking up vv.12-14, 22, 26 vv.29-31 YHWH who himself does not faint or grow weary gives <i>כה</i> to those who faint and wait for him so that they shall not faint or grow weary (cf. v.26)		

³⁷⁸ Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 97.

In vv.12-14//vv.21-22, whereas v.14 suggests YHWH alone has the ‘knowledge’ (דעת) and ‘understanding’ (תבונות) to create the world, v.21 questions the addressee (הלוא תדעו הלוא תשמעו) about their perception of how God creates the heaven and earth. Besides, both v.12 and v.22 indicate the universe is tiny and light from the perspective of its creator.³⁷⁹

In vv.15-17//vv.23-24, nations/peoples and rulers share the similarity of ‘nothingness’ and ‘emptiness’ (אין and תהו in both v.17 and v.23).

In vv.19-20//vv.25-26, the same phrase מי ואל (‘to whom’) and verbal root דמה (‘to liken’) are employed in both v.18 and v.25, whereas idols and heavenly forces are both made/created, though the former by craftsmen (vv.19-20) while the latter by the Holy One (v.26).

Having acknowledged the parallelisms between vv.12-20 and vv.21-26 as above, it is noteworthy how each individual subsection is related to its surrounding subsections. Firstly, vv.12-14 and 15-17 correspond with each other conceptually: in v.12, the waters, heavens, mountains, and hills seem light in weight and small in size for the one who measures them; similarly, the nations are small and light in the metaphors of v.15, and even nothing and emptiness in v.17.³⁸⁰ Therefore, the nations in vv.15-17 are indeed like those objects who are measured rather than the one who measures in v.12. Secondly, both v.18 and v.25 work transitionally: v.18 refers backwards to vv.12-17 and forwards to vv.19-20, indicating that in comparison with the creator God (vv.12-14), nations (vv.15-17) and idols (vv.19-20) are nothing. The same is true of v.25 which refers backwards to vv.21-24 and forwards to v.26 so that in comparison with the creator God (vv.21-22), rulers (vv.23-24) and the heavenly host (v.26) are nothing.³⁸¹ Thirdly, vv.23-24 cannot be separated from vv.21-22 grammatically, for v.22 (הישב...וימתחם) takes a similar grammatical form with v.23 (הנותן...עשה) – a participle-verb in the first line and a definite verb in the second line. The whole of vv.22-24 can function as the object of the verbs in v.21.

Besides, it is noteworthy that similes are used to describe every subject except YHWH in vv.12-31. For example, nations are ‘like a drop from a bucket’ (כמר מדלי), ‘like dust on the scales’ (כשחק מאזנים)

³⁷⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 193.

³⁸⁰

vv.12-14	מים (waters)	עפר הארץ (dust of the earth)	הרים וגבעות (mountains and hills)
vv.15-17	מר מדלי (a drop in a bucket)	שחק מאזנים (dust on the balances)	לבנון...והיתו (Lebanon ...and its animals)

³⁸¹ cf. Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 98-125, who subdivide 40:12-26 into four sections: ‘compared with Creator, the nations are nothing (vv.12-17); compared with Creator, images are nothing (vv.18-20), compared with Creator, rulers are nothing (vv.21-24), compared with Creator, heavenly forces are nothing (vv.25-26).

in v.15, and ‘like nothing’ (כַּאֲיֵן) in v.17; heavens ‘like a curtain’ (כַּדֶּק) and ‘like a tent’ (כַּאֲהֶל) in v.22; rulers ‘like chaff’ (כַּקֶּשׁ, v.24); and those who wait for YHWH ‘eagles’ (כַּנְשָׂרִים, v.30), while no simile or comparison is used for YHWH, even though comparison is asked for rhetorically in vv.18 and 25. The use of similes in vv.12-31 thus denotes YHWH’s incomparability.

Thematically, vv.12-20 contrasts the creator YHWH’s greatness and wisdom with nations and peoples’ triviality and nothingness, and with the made-made idols, whereas vv.21-26 contrasts YHWH with rulers and with the heavenly forces which were brought about and named by YHWH’s power and might.

It is after vv.12-20 and vv.21-26 that YHWH responds to Jacob-Israel’s lament (v.27-31). The concept of *לֹא יִיָּעַף וְלֹא יִיָּגַע* (v.28) is unprecedented concerning the creator YHWH from vv.12-26. The roots *יָּעַף* and *יָּגַע* re-occur both in vv.30 and 31, while *יָּעַף* alone occurs in v.29, where we find also *כָּח* and *אֲוִיָּים* from v.26. Throughout vv.12-31, apart from the exhortation to perceive (v.26), only in vv.28-31 is there another exhortation: the weary and faint should wait for YHWH. As Blenkinsopp writes,

Biblical Hebrew differentiates between waiting as a neutral activity, something to be endured (stem *hkh* Qal and Piel) and waiting with hope and the anticipation of a positive outcome (*qvh*), which is what is meant here by waiting for YHWH.

Therefore, it is only in vv.27-31 that, by quoting Jacob-Israel’s saying (v.27b), the prophet confronts them directly, and it is only with vv.27-31 that we can embrace the rhetorical purpose of every individual subsection in vv.12-26.³⁸² Concerning why vv.27-31 do not appear at the beginning but rather at the end, Gitay writes,

Had he done so [vv.27-31] already at the beginning, he would have confronted his audience when they were not prepared for his argument. In order to avoid such a potential tension, DI builds his case gradually, developing his theme one step at a time.³⁸³

Therefore, as the structure and literary-thematic analysis above shows, the interaction between interrogative questions and indicative statements in 40:12-31 effectively attracts the audience Jacob-Israel’s attention: it invites them to the perception of YHWH whose wisdom, greatness and power are shown in his creation and who is a God who never faints or grows weary; and it invites them to the perception of the smallness and powerlessness of humanity, and even of kings, idols and heavenly forces, and thus confronts them with the concluding exhortation to wait for YHWH with hope and faith

³⁸² Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 48; Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 97.

³⁸³ Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 87.

4.2.3 The Perception Theme in Isa 40:12-31

In 40:12-31 seeing/hearing is intricately connected with understanding. Firstly, in both the similar rhetorical questions in v.21 and v.28, שמע parallels with, and comes after, ידע, indicating that their hearing is a source of their knowledge.³⁸⁴ Secondly, in v.15, the double vocative הן is a particle that directs attention to something. Though it does not necessarily mean seeing, it does call for attention. However, what follows the two-fold הן is surely not a result of physical seeing, but of understanding. Thirdly, in v.26, what follows the imperative commands (שאו מרום עיניכם וראו) are not things that they could see physically but rather that they should understand and know. Fourthly, the repetition of words and sounds, the alliteration, assonance and anaphora, and the rhetorical questions, all work effectively to draw the audience's attention and enlist their hearing. The similes (vv.15, 17, 22, 31) call for their imagination of physical pictures, whereas the rhetorical questions (vv.12-14, 18, 21, 25, 27, 28) call upon their *mind* and *understanding* to frame an answer. I have shown above that it is after this insistent calling for attention and perception and contrast between YHWH and all others (vv.12-26) that there comes the exhortation to wait for YHWH with faith (v.31).

The perception theme is used in 40:12-31 in relation to a rhetorical situation of Jacob-Israel who are in exile in Babylon. The latter can be argued as follows. Firstly, v.27 suggests the audience of 40:21-31 Jacob-Israel who 'exhibits a mood of despair',³⁸⁵ with the assumption that God has actively neglected them, though the rhetorical question of v.27a suggests the invalidity of their lament. Besides, the repetition of יעה (4 times) and יגע (3 times) and כח (2 times) in vv.28-31 indicates that they are faint and weary and in need of strength which is offered by YHWH. Moreover, vv.12-14 particularly question who the measurer of the creation is and who his counsellor/teacher is. This contrasts specifically with the Babylonian mythical texts in which Marduk needs the wise god Ea's advice in creating the world in a prayer for the Babylonian New Year Festival.³⁸⁶ Thus, it might support a rhetorical situation of the Babylonian exilic period. Moreover, the emphasis on the nothingness and emptiness of nations (vv.15-17), princes and rulers (vv.23-24), and on idols as made by craftsmen rather than a creator (vv.19-20) implies a rhetorical situation in which Jacob-Israel regards them as powerful.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ It is their 'hearing' rather than 'seeing' that is called upon here, because these rhetorical questions draw them to YHWH's creating the heaven and earth, which they did not see physically but hear about.

³⁸⁵ Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 95.

³⁸⁶ ANET, 64.

³⁸⁷ Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 82.

The use of the perception theme with a contrast of YHWH with nations, idols, rulers, and in relation to such a rhetorical situation suggests the significance of the true ‘perception’ for the spiritually weary and faint Jacob-Israel.

4.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 41:1-44:23

In 41:1-44:23, the (im)perception theme occurs most significantly in 42:18-25 where rhetorical questions denote that YHWH’s servant Jacob-Israel is the most blind and deaf, who sees many things but does not understand. Simultaneously earlier in 42:7 one element of YHWH’s servant’s mission is ‘to open eyes that are blind’ (v.7), whereas later in 43:8-13; 44:8 YHWH’s servant Jacob-Israel is said to be YHWH’s witness. These relationships between the servant and the (im)perception theme provoke questions: How could the blind and deaf servant be YHWH’s witness; is the servant in 42:1-9 also Jacob-Israel, and if so, how could they who are themselves blind and deaf execute the mission of ‘to open eyes that are blind’? While DI functions rhetorically to persuade Jacob-Israel to trust in YHWH’s promise of returning home, in Isa 41-44 this persuasion is done through the connection with the imperception theme whose development here is elaborated essentially through the idea that *the blind servant becomes a witness to the nations*. Apart from the servant passages in relation to (im)perception theme in 42:1-44:8, the (im)perception theme also occurs in ch.41 and 44:9-20 where terms and phrases of perception and understanding occur: למען יראו וידעו וישימו וישכילו יחדו (41:20); לא ידעו ולא יבינו כי טח מראות עיניהם (41:22); ונשימה לבנו ונדעה אחריתן או הבאות השמיענו (41:23, 26); ולא ישיב אל לבו ולא דעת ולא תבונה ... מהשכיל לבתם (44:18-19a). I will show in this section how these passages on (im)perception relate to each other in YHWH’s scheme of comforting Jacob-Israel, and to the role of the perception theme in 41:1-44:23. Initially, I will show how the structure (section 5.2.1) follows a spiral movement throughout 41:1-44:23 and demonstrate a contrast between the perceptive YHWH and imperceptive idols.

4.3.1 The Structure of Isa 41:1-44:23

41:1-44:23 can be demarcated into two major subsections: 41:1-42:12 and 42:13-44:23. I take 42:13 together with its following, not with its preceding, verses mainly because 42:10-12 is a self-contained hymn inclusio-ed by the key word תהלתו close to the beginning and end of vv.10-12, whereas v.13 concerns about *YHWH’s readiness to act*, which is thematically similar to 42:13-16.

Firstly, in the whole Isa 40-48, 41:1 and 42:10 are the only two occurrences in which ‘coastlands’ (אִיִּים) is part of the addressee,³⁸⁸ hence they form an *inclusio*. Besides, 41:1-20 and 41:21-42:9 are two parallel subunits while 42:10-12 is a concluding hymn, as the table shows below.

41:1-20 YHWH’s comfort to the servant Jacob-Israel in the rise of internationally political leader	41:21-42:9 The mission of the Servant in the rise of internationally political leader
41:1-7 coastlands and peoples are invited to court (v.1): who lies behind political events? Only I-YHWH (vv.2-4). Coastlands’ reaction (vv.5-7).	41:21-29 idols are invited to court (vv.21-23): who can explain political events? Only YHWH (vv.25-26). No answer from idols (v.28). Comments on idols’ emptiness (vv.24, 29)
41:8-20 YHWH’s comfort to servant Jacob-Israel, and YHWH will be known	42:1-9 YHWH’s commission to his servant, and YHWH’s glory will not be given to idols.
42:10-12 concluding hymn: praising YHWH	

When looking closely at the table above, we may find that 41:21-42:9 does not simply parallel with, but further develops 41:1-20.

In 41:1-7//41:21-29, whereas vv.4 emphasizes who ‘who has performed and done this’, its parallel v. 26 emphasizes ‘who could explain this’. Thus, the latter is a further development of the former. Similarly, whereas peoples try to strengthen carved idols to ease their fear of the newly raised up figure (implicitly Cyrus) in the international political sphere in 41:1-7, the twofold comments on the emptiness and nothingness of idols in 41:24, 29 indicate that 41:21-29 function as a commentary on its parallel subsection 41:1-7. Thus, whereas these two parallel subsections have already indicated that only YHWH is the sovereign in the international political sphere and in history – it is only he who purposes and foretells these, and simultaneously idols are futile in any of these spheres – the development from 41:1-7 to 41:21-29 further enhances the contrast between YHWH and idols.

In 41:8-20//42:1-9, the former focuses on encouraging the servant Jacob-Israel not to fear, while the latter highlights the perseverance of the servant and his mission in relation to the nations. Thus, it suggests that the servant Jacob-Israel is comforted not simply for his own sake but also for the nations. Besides, whereas in 41:20 people will know the work of the hand of YHWH, the Holy one of Israel, in 42:1-4 YHWH’s מִשְׁפָּט and law will be brought forth to the nations through the servant. The development here portrays a picture that peoples will be attracted by YHWH’s uniqueness (41:20) and then come into his מִשְׁפָּט and laws (42:1-4), both through his servant Jacob-Israel.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ This use of ‘coastlands’ occurs later only in 49:1 in the book of Isaiah.

³⁸⁹ Some scholars (e.g., Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 210-11; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 654) identify the servant in 42:1-7 as the ruler Cyrus in 44:28-45:6. They argue from the similarity between 42:1-7 and the Cyrus Cylinder which records that

Secondly, 42:13-44:23 can be demarcated into 42:13-17, 42:18-43:22, 43:23-44:22 and 44:23, with the first and last subsections as prologue and epilogue respectively, with the middle two subsections as two parallel ones, as shown in the table below.

42:13-17 prologue: YHWH will act and lead the blind, and idol makers/worshippers will be ashamed				
42:18-43:21 the blind and deaf servant Jacob-Israel who is in exile is promised of salvation and appointed as God's witness	42:18-25 the reality of Jacob-Israel: blind and deaf servant, in exile	43:1-7 fear-not oracle: YHWH deliver those who bear his name	43:8-13 Jacob-Israel will witness to YHWH as the only God	43:14-21 Concluding notes on YHWH's salvation
43:22-44:22 the sinful Jacob-Israel is redeemed because of YHWH's own commitment	43:22-28 the reality of Jacob-Israel: they weary and profane God with their sins	44:1-5 fear-not oracle: YHWH recreates a people to bear his name	44:6-20 Jacob-Israel will witness to YHWH as the only God + a further elaboration on the folly of idolatry	44:21-22 concluding exhortation
44:23 epilogue: sing to YHWH for his salvation and glorification of Jacob-Israel				

The table above also shows how 43:22-44:22 parallels with and further develops 42:18-43:21.

Firstly, in the parallel 42:18-25//43:22-28, the former focuses on Jacob-Israel's blindness and deafness and the exile as their judgment from YHWH, while the latter on the fact that it is not because of what they have done, but because of YHWH's commitment that he has blotted out their sins. This development from 42:18-25 to 43:22-28 also testifies to and explains the salvation oracles in between these subsections.

Secondly, the parallel 43:1-7//44:1-5 both proclaim salvation oracles (marked by the phrase על-תירא, 43:1, 5; 44:2) to the chosen servant Jacob-Israel (43:1; 44:1), while there is also a contrast between

Cyrus was called by name by Marduk who was well pleased with him and "chose him to restore Babylon and its inhabitants, which he did (so he says) peacefully and without violence while setting people free (cf. *ANET*, 315-16). One might also argue that since the unnamed servant of 42:1-7 and the unnamed figure of 41:2, 25 are both raised by YHWH for a purpose (they are to bring about a new order), and since the unnamed figure of 41:2, 25 is regarded as the same as Cyrus of 44:28-45:6, the servant of 42:1-7 must also be Cyrus. However, the context and logic of chs. 40-43 would suggest the servant of 42:1-7 is more likely to be Jacob-Israel on the following grounds. Jacob-Israel complains in 40:27 yet has been encouraged three times in 41:8-20, contrasting with nations vividly (41:5-7), in the midst of YHWH's work in the political event, that is, rousing Cyrus (41:1-4, 21-29), which has proved only He alone is God and gods and idols are nothing. Moreover, in terms of משפט, while Jacob-Israel complains their משפט is disregarded in 40:27, YHWH calls the whole earth to draw to משפט in ch.41, and now as משפט has been vindicated, YHWH commissions his servant to establish the משפט to the nations. It is within this background that attention-drawing הך brings us to the servant whose mission is related to nations, which will again demonstrate YHWH alone, not gods/idols, as the sovereign of the history and the only God (vv.8-9) and which will result in nations' praise of YHWH (vv.10-12). Being referred to through the same association of עבדי with בהר (which occurs twice in ch.41), and through תמך (the climax of the three synonyms in 41:10), the servant in 42:1 is intentionally linked with that in ch.41. The logic seems to be like this: as have been comforted, this servant Jacob-Israel is now designated with a nations-related mission! This reading presents us a development of YHWH's message to Jacob-Israel throughout 40:12-42:7. Therefore, it makes good sense that the servant of 42:1-7 is the same as that of ch.41, that is, Jacob-Israel. It is also in such a way that 42:1-4, 5-7/5-9, whatever their origins are, are related and integral to their context.

these two passages: in the former YHWH bases his redemption of them on the fact that he called them by name (43:1), whereas in the latter YHWH's deeds for them will lead into their calling themselves on the name of Jacob-Israel and 'I am the Lord's' (44:5).

Thirdly, the parallel 43:8-13//44:6-20 both contain a polemic against foreign gods and in favour of YHWH as the only God to which Jacob-Israel is the witness (אָתָּם עֵדִי in 43:10, 12; 44:8), though the latter further satirizes the foolishness of idols and their makers/worshippers with vivid descriptions.

Therefore, the structure above has shown that the subsections in 41:1-44:23 are related to one another in a spiral movement in two senses. Firstly, in two parallel subsections, the second one develops the first one: 41:21-29 develops its parallel 41:1-7 to bring out the contrast between YHWH and idols, while 42:1-9 develops its parallel 41:8-20 to direct the comforted servant forward towards its worldwide mission. Similarly, 43:22-44:22 develops its parallel 42:18-43:21 in the sense that the blind deaf servant is appointed as YHWH's servant, though not because of what they have done, but purely because of who they are – chosen and created by YHWH for his glory and bearing YHWH's name. Secondly, the adjacent subsections are also closely related to each other. 41:8-20 contrast with adjacent ones 41:1-7 and 41:21-29 on how YHWH is able to comfort Jacob-Israel and change their situation while nations who seek foreign gods' help would only find them helpless. 42:1-9 relate to its adjacent 41:21-29 and 42:10-12 through the motif of YHWH's ability in declaring and doing a new thing through the raised-up figure and through his servant which leads into glory and praise to YHWH alone. Similarly, 42:18-43:21 relate to its preceding 42:13-17 through the imperception theme, while 43:22-44:22 to its following 44:23 through the idea that YHWH's redemption will lead into praise to him. This spiral structure of 41:1-44:23 itself has drawn upon the perception theme by challenging the audience to think, to compare what foreign gods cannot do with what YHWH can do, and to think how YHWH is going to do, and what these will lead to.

4.3.2 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 41:1-42:13

I will show below that 41:1-42:13 concerns what nations and Jacob-Israel should perceive.

4.3.2.1 41:1-20

41:1 opens with a command to coastlands/nations to renew their strength³⁹⁰ so as to be ready for a court-disputation, while vv.2-4 is inclusio-ed by two וְיִשְׁׁרְתֶּנּוּ rhetorical questions with an answer at the

³⁹⁰ Cf. 40:31 the weary and faint Jacob-Israel are encouraged to wait hopefully for YHWH to renew their strength so that they will no longer be weary or faint,

end (v.4b), denoting what he has done and who he is. Then v.5 onwards indicates that nations, including Jacob-Israel, are all frightened³⁹¹ because of YHWH's raising up of a powerful figure. While nations could only help and strengthen each other by strengthening idols (vv.5-7),³⁹² Jacob-Israel will be helped and strengthened by YHWH (vv.8-20).³⁹³

Jacob-Israel's special status stands out in the contrast between vv.8-20 and vv.1-7. While YHWH gives up nations to the figure he raised from the east and made them like dust to his sword and driven stubble to his bow (v.2), he will not do the same to Jacob-Israel, but rather he comforts and encourages them, and enables them to thresh mountains and hills into driven chaff. Besides, in vv.5-7 the word that the peoples could use to encourage each other is merely הִזְזֶק ('be strong'), whereas YHWH utters all the words from v.8 to v.20 to encourage Jacob-Israel – the lengthy encouragement of vv.8-20 aims to efface the strong fear that Jacob-Israel is feeling. Despite the contrasts between vv.8-20 and vv.1-7, both passages call peoples and Jacob-Israel into a proper perception of YHWH. In vv.1-4, YHWH calls coastlands and peoples into court, and the questions themselves function rhetorically to call upon the addressees to think and answer, while the provision of the answer at the end (v.4d) invalidates any other answer. In vv.2-4, YHWH reveals what he has done and who he is in world history. For the former, vv.2-3 reveals how he aroused one from the east – (by) צִדְקָה he called him to his service; he gave up nations before him and brought down kings so that he (-the powerful figure YHWH aroused) made them (-nations and kings) like dust with his sword, and like driven stubble with his bow. This highlights that YHWH is the planner behind, and the source of the power of, this internationally powerful figure,³⁹⁴ which is further endorsed by v.4aα (פָּעַל וַעֲשֵׂה) 'he has performed and done this'). Concerning who YHWH is, v.4aβ (מֵרֵאשִׁית הַדְּרוֹת קָרָא, 'the one who call generations from the beginning') and v.4b (אֲנִי יְהוָה רֵאשִׁון וְאַחֲרֵימֵי אֲנִי הוּא, 'I, YHWH, the first and with the last; I am he') highlights him as the Lord of history, who is himself the first, and who is there with every generation till the end.

³⁹¹ 41:5 (ראו איים וייראו קצות הארץ יחדו) takes verbs ירא ('to fear') and חרד ('to tremble') to describe their fear and takes איים ('coastlands') and קצות הארץ ('the ends of the earth') to denote the involved subjects. Besides, threefold אל-ירא (41:10, 13, 14) indicates Jacob-Israel's fear.

³⁹² The contrast between the answer (v.4b) to the rhetorical questions (vv.2-4a) – it is YHWH himself who has raised this figure and made him so powerful – and the coastlands/peoples' going after idols for help demonstrate ironically how foolish nations are and that they are the losers in this court-confrontation with YHWH.

³⁹³ It is noteworthy that the key roots, עזר ('to help') and הזק ('to be strong') in vv.5-7 (respectively one and three times), are also repeated in vv.8-20 (respectively three and two times), and that the emphatic pronoun together with the verb form, אֲנִי עֹזְרֶיךָ, occurs both in v.13 and v.14.

³⁹⁴ Though many scholars are interested in identifying this unidentified figure, the text here indicates its central focus is YHWH himself, not the raised figure. McConville, *Isaiah*, 462-3 maintains this unidentified figure has the shades of Abraham but foreshadows Cyrus.

In vv.8-20, YHWH calls Jacob-Israel into a proper perception of who they are, what he will do for them, YHWH's relationship with them, and what attitude they should have in difficult situations and towards their enemies. Besides, as will be revealed below, v.20 suggests how YHWH will be perceived globally, hence here already indicating how Jacob-Israel will be a witness to the nations, though the theme is not explicit until 43:10; 44:8 where the phrase אַתָּם עֵדֵי ('you are my witness') occurs.

Concerning who Jacob-Israel is, the inclusio of vv.8-9 emphasizes Jacob-Israel as YHWH's servant and chosen one, and the offspring of YHWH's friend Abraham. These terms all characterize the intimate relationship between YHWH and them, and their long history as YHWH's people.³⁹⁵ Noteworthy, outside BI, the only texts where עֶבֶד and בָּהָר both occur in relation to YHWH and his protection are 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 34, 36 referring to David as YHWH's servant and chosen one. In this way, vv.8-10 allude to David's relationship with YHWH. Besides, the fact that Jacob-Israel is both YHWH's servant and the offspring of Abraham finds a good parallel in Gen 26:24 where Abraham as YHWH's servant is linked with YHWH's blessing of offspring. Moreover, v.9 focuses on Jacob-Israel as taken and called from the remotest corner by YHWH. This recalls YHWH's calling of Abraham from Mesopotamia (Gen 11:27-32) while also connecting with v.2-4 where YHWH empowered the one that he called from the east. Here in v.9 it is Jacob-Israel who bears YHWH's calling and will surely see the realization of his promise. Therefore, the descriptions of Jacob-Israel here focus on their long intimacy with YHWH, whereas mentioning Abraham, alluding to David, and linking back to v.2 all contribute to YHWH's purpose of encouraging them in faith with assurance of blessings of future offspring, protection, and victory.

As for what YHWH will do for Jacob-Israel, he promises them his presence, his help and his strengthening (vv.10,11,13,14), his empowering them to victory (v.15-16), the transformation of the desert into a garden (vv.17-19), and the fall and humiliation of those who contend with them (vv.11-12). While vv.11-12 focus on the fact that those who are against Jacob-Israel will be ashamed and confounded and be like nothing, vv.15-16 advance the thought by saying that Jacob-Israel will be made a threshing sledge, threshing and crushing mountains and hills, making them like driven chaff, carried away by the wind with nothing left behind. The 'worm Jacob' (תּוֹלַעַת יַעֲקֹב) and 'men of Israel' (מֵתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) of v.14 will no longer be the vulnerable worm or ordinary human beings, but rather a destroying weapon equipped with YHWH-like power (cf. 40.12). Whybray writes,

³⁹⁵ McConville, *Isaiah*, 465.

mountains and hills have been taken by many commentators to refer to Israel's enemies; but this would give to Israel an aggressive role not found elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah; and the mountains probably stand for Israel's present difficulties, which will be swept away (cf. 40:4; Zech 4:7).³⁹⁶

Regarding vv.17-19, YHWH speaks in the first-person about the third-person העניים והאביונים ('the poor and the needy'). Both עני and אביון are 'regularly used in the lamentations in the Psalms by the petitioners as a description of himself' and that ענה (answer) also presupposes 'a previous lamentation',³⁹⁷ which indicates that vv.17-20 can also be addressed to Jacob-Israel who are lamenting (cf. 40:27), whereas the third-person addressee העניים והאביונים functions rhetorically to be more inclusive or generalised. While YHWH's miraculous provision in response to the lack of and plea for water may allude to the Exodus story (Exod. 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13), it is debated whether vv.17-20 should be identified as 'new Exodus' passage, the main objection to which is the lack of travelling imagery.³⁹⁸ However, as Whybray states, "none of these trees is a fruit tree; rather their purpose is to give shade, which travellers in the desert would, together with water, need most."³⁹⁹ In this case, vv.17-19 could depict a journey like the exodus, hence the movement from vv.11-12 to vv.15-16 and to vv.17-19 presents the exilic community's returning journey to the promised land when all hindrances will be removed (the enmity of other peoples in vv.11-12, or the unsmooth path in vv.15-16) and when waters and shade will be provided (vv.17-19).

41:20 concludes vv.8-20 with the implication of YHWH's miraculous work for Jacob-Israel. In v.20a, the cluster of four 'perception' terms⁴⁰⁰ indicates the significance of 'perception'/'understanding'. All these four verbs have the unspecified 'they' as their subject, which can refer to 'the poor and the needy' at the beginning of v.17, or more generally to 'people' in line with 'all flesh' in 40:5.⁴⁰¹ Even for the former, as noted above, it can either mean 'Jacob-Israel' or more generally 'people'. By specifying the subject, v.20a simply emphasizes 'perception' and leads into v.20b where it denotes what they will know is the work and creation of the Holy One of Israel. קדוש occurs earlier in vv.14 and 16, while its occurrences in v.20 link vv.17-20 with vv.14-16. While its occurrence in v.14 relates to YHWH as a "redeemer" (וגאלך קדוש ישראל, 'your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel'), its occurrence here in v.20 relates to YHWH as a 'creator' (וקדוש ישראל)

³⁹⁶ Whybray, *Isaiah 40-55*, 65-66. Whybray bolded "mountains" and "hills" which are now de-bolded in this quotation.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 177-8. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 203.

³⁹⁹ Whybray, *Isaiah 40-55*, 67.

⁴⁰⁰ The third verb, שים, is read here as with על-לב, hence 'to take to heart', see *HALOT*, vol.3, 1324.

למען יראו וידעו וישמו וישכילו יחדו	41:20 So that they may see and know, consider and understand together,
כי יד יהוה עשתה זאת וקדוש ישראל בראה	that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it

⁴⁰¹ McConville, 468-9.

בראה, v.20bβ). As Williamson observes, while קדוש ישראל is a familiar term in the first part of Isaiah relating to YHWH's judgment, it is used in the second part of Isaiah 'to announce that the free and sovereign Lord is able to work as vigorously and surprisingly in *grace* as he had in judgment.'⁴⁰² Thus, it also invites a perception of YHWH as both a redeemer and a creator.

Therefore, in 41:1-20, both the nations and Jacob-Israel are invited into a proper perception of who YHWH is: he is the planner behind the international scene, raising up a powerful and frightening figure in the political sphere, the Lord of creation and world history and the one who declares and explains what he is going to do; simultaneously, he is the one who comforts Jacob-Israel by recalling their relationship and his promises and by reminding them that he is the one who provides for, and transforms, their situation.

4.3.2.2 41:21-42:9

Like 41:1-20, 41:21-42:9 is also made of two subsections, a court-disputation passage (41:21-29) and a servant passage (42:1-9).

41:21 starts with commands, the identity of the addressee of which is not revealed until v.23, and as vv.22-23 reads, the command is concerning deities' self-vindication through their telling 'the former things' (הראשנות) and 'things to come' (הבאות). In vv.22-23, the repetition of the root נגד (in hiphil Jussive or imperative forms) with its synonym שמע (hiphil form), together with the use of the virtual synonyms תקרינה ('to happen'), אחריתן ('their outcome'), הבאות ('things to come') and האתיות לאחור ('things comes hereafter'), and their antonym, הראשנות ('the former thing'), rhetorically make this invitation to declare 'the former things' and 'things to come' irresistible. However, the attention-catching הן in v.24 draws us to the conclusion of the ineffectiveness of these foreign gods. This hints that they are incapable of declaring past or future. Then, a similar, yet not identical, structure is used in vv.25-26 and vv.27-28 – that is, YHWH's first-person announcement (vv.25, 27) is followed by negations concerning the(se) gods' capability of foretelling (vv.26⁴⁰³, 28) – to make a contrast between YHWH and other gods, before once again reaching a similar conclusion to v.24 in v.29, on the nothingness of the deities. As Blenkinsopp writes, in vv.21-29,

The forensic setup is clear: the opponents are invited to state their case (vv 21-23); after they fail to respond, the appropriate conclusion is drawn (v 24); then YHWH proves his claim to be the only deity capable of both predicting and bringing about events in the political sphere with

⁴⁰² Williamson, 'Isaiah, Book of,' 373, Italics added.

⁴⁰³ The threefold negation of v.26b denies the possibility of foreign gods as the answer to the rhetorical questions of v.26a.

reference to the military successes of Cyrus (vv 25-28), after which the counterclaimants are once again dismissed as totally ineffective (v 29).⁴⁰⁴

Like 41:1-7, 41:21-29 is a court-disputation where rhetorical questions are addressed about YHWH. However, 41:21-29 further develops 41:1-7 in bringing out what was only hinted at earlier, namely the delusion and nothingness of foreign gods. Besides, vv.1-20 focus more on YHWH's capability while vv.21-29 more on the inability of foreign gods. This shift from vv.1-20 to vv.21-29 is transitioned by v.20 which emphasizes 'perception' rhetorically, making the contrast between YHWH and foreign gods more striking.

42:1-9 can be further divided into vv.1-4, 5-7, 8-9. The first two parts are separated by 1) the "messenger formula" in v. 5 as a new section, 2) the change of addressee from the audience in the heavenly courtroom in vv.1-4,⁴⁰⁵ to the servant in vv. 6-7, and 3) the formal change from presenting the servant in vv.1-4 to speaking with him in vv.5-7. Then, the last two parts are separated by the shift of the addressee from the servant (v.5-7) to the wider congregation (v.8-9). In v.1-4, the servant is introduced and spoken about. Chosen and supported by YHWH, his mission is to bring forth מִשְׁפָּט and he will accomplish it quietly (v.2), caringly (v.3) and perseveringly (v.4). In v. 5-7, after an introductory oracle marker with YHWH the speaker as the creator of the cosmos and all those in it (v.5) – in the same order as the creation recital in Gen 1⁴⁰⁶ – the servant is addressed directly with YHWH's promise and the details of his mission as a covenant and a light (v.6) to enlighten and set free the blind and the imprisoned (v.7). God's designating (v.1a), equipping (v.1b) and supporting (v.6) the servant, as well as the servant's own quietness (v.2-3ab) and perseverance (v.4a), are all for the mission he is to carry out (v.1b, 3c, 4bc, 6c, 7). In v. 8-9, YHWH himself states that he will not give his glory and praise to others, which is coupled with the mentioning of 'former things' and 'things to come'. In particular, אֲנִי יְהוָה in v.8 recalls vv.5-7 while הִנֵּה in v.9 recalls הָיָה in v.1. Situating vv.8-9 after vv.1-7 indicates that YHWH's glory and praise are not only connected with 'former things' and 'new things' (v.8-9), but also with the presentation of his servant (v.1-4), and his servant's future executing the mission that he has just now allocated to him (vv.1-7).⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 205.

⁴⁰⁵ As mentioned above, the addressee in 42:1-4 could not be nations, because nations is addressed to in 3rd person as "to the nations", rather than in 2nd person as "to you". Neither could it be Israel if the Israel is the servant. Isa 42:1-4 is still in the context of the fictive lawsuit in the heavenly court of 41:21-29. Thus, the addressee of 42:1-4 is the same as that of 41:21-29.

⁴⁰⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 211.

⁴⁰⁷ Thus, Blenkinsopp interprets the new thing in v.9 as "the sponsorship of the conquests of Cyrus II by YHWH God of Israel" with the premise of identifying the servant as Cyrus (*Ibid.*, 69).

42:1-9 is related to the immediately preceding verses 41:21-29, through confirming YHWH's making 'former things' happen and declaring 'new things' (note the using of הַרְאִישׁוֹת, hiphil שמע and hiphil נגד in both 42:9 and 41:22-23),⁴⁰⁸ while also related to 41:8-20 through the chosen-servant theme. Whereas the 'fear-not' exhortations in 41:8-20 characterize the servant Jacob-Israel in a frightening situation, the characterization of the servant in 42:1-9 focuses on his spirit-giftedness, perseverance, and mission. As 41:8-20 concludes with making known YHWH's work and creation (v.20), 42:1-9 concludes with YHWH's glory and praise not to be given to foreign gods.

The thematic continuity and discontinuity of 42:1-9 with Isa 40-41 are as follows. Firstly, the three occurrences of מִשְׁפָּט in 42:1-4 emphasise its importance, while מִשְׁפָּט also occurs earlier in 40:14, 27; 41:1. This may be a deliberate linking of Isa 42 with 40-41. Secondly, the description of YHWH the creator (42:5) recalls 40:22, 26, especially through the verb roots בָּרָא and נָטָה. Thirdly, while Jacob-Israel's lament is heard in 40:27, 42:2 says that the servant will not cry out or make his voice heard; and while 40:27-31 indicates Jacob-Israel is weary and faint spiritually, 42:3 emphasizes that the servant will not grow faint or be crushed. Fourthly, by the same association of עָבְדִי with בָּחַר (which occurs twice in ch.41), and through תִּמְךָ (the climax of the three synonyms in 41:10), the servant in 42:1 is intentionally linked with that in ch.41. However, apart from the same emphases on the servant's special status and being strengthened by YHWH (41:8-10, 14; 42:1abc, v.6bcd), other emphases concerning the servant fall on the threefold developing promise of a returning journey in 41:8-20, whereas it is on the servant's quiet role (v.2), perseverance (v.3ab) and missions (v.1d, 3c, 4bc, 6ef, 7) in 42:1-7. With regards to the mission, the servant is to 'bring forth (יִצְאָ/שִׂים) מִשְׁפָּט' to the nations in 42:1-4, and also to be a covenant and a light to nations in vv.5-7. These two different emphases on the missions may be taken to argue for different origins of vv.1-4 and vv.5-7, though they are co-related. That מִשְׁפָּט is related to תּוֹרָה, and בְּרִית is brought into the discourse – despite '[w]hat v. 7 describes is the outworking of what being a light to nations means. It brings people out from darkness and enables them to see'⁴⁰⁹ – belongs within Israelite tradition which we firstly come

408

<p>יגישו ויגידו לנו את אשר תקרינה הַרְאִישׁוֹת מה הנה הגידו ונשימה לבנו ונדעה אחריתן או הבאות הַשְׁמִיעֵנו הגידו האתיות לאחור ונדעה כי אלהים אתם אף תיטיבו ותרעו ונשתעה ונרא ונראה יחדו</p>	<p>41:22 Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. 23 Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified</p>
<p>הַרְאִישׁוֹת הנה באו והדשות אני מגיד בטרם תצמחנה אַשְׁמִיעַ אתכם</p>	<p>42:9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them</p>

⁴⁰⁹ Goldingay, *Message*, 166. He states previously in p.165 that '[v.6] might be describing two acts of deliverance, the healing of blindness and the release of prisoners, but more likely the allusion to darkness in v. 7 indicates that both clauses describe one act,' that is, 'release into light'.

across in Exodus 19ff where תורה become a significant part of בריית. Besides, the motif of darkness and light are both used in the servant figure in 41:9-20 and 42:1-9. In the former, as Stern observes, the servant Israel is figured as ‘worm’, who “are well known to be the blind dweller in darkness” in 41:14, “will be transformed into a people of seeing individuals in 41:20.”⁴¹⁰ In the latter, this motif is vivid especially in 42:6-7. Stern even observes “Although Isa 42,1-4 never uses the word, ‘light’, the word is evoked constantly.”⁴¹¹ Fifthly, concerning the motif of YHWH versus the gods, whereas 40:12-31 raise the question of who is comparable to YHWH, ch. 41 specifies the differences between YHWH and the gods through his sovereignty in history and capability of foretelling, while 42:8-9 straight-forwardly announces that:

I am YHWH, this is my name, (and) my glory I will not give to others, nor my praise to idols. Behold, the former things have come about, and new things I am declaring, before they will spring forth, I will make them heard.

There are no longer rhetorical questions or disputations in 42:8-9 as there are in chs 40, 41, but rather only the announcement. This looks very much like a climax concerning the motif of YHWH versus the gods. Overall, 42:1-9 develops from 41:8-20 to call on the servant’s perception that as YHWH’s gifted and chosen servant, he is commissioned with a mission in relation to the nations and YHWH’s will for the nations.

4.3.2.3 42:10-12

42:10-12 calls for praise to YHWH from the concrete and entire world: the sea lands (west of Palestine) and the desert lands (east of Palestine) indicate entirety,⁴¹² while the typical places – Kedar and Sela – denote the concreteness of this summoning.⁴¹³ Thus, the plural subject of vv.10-12 refers to the nations, as distinguished from the singular servant Israel in v.1-7.⁴¹⁴

42:10-12 is linked to its immediately preceding vv.1-9. Firstly, the servant’s mission and the praise of YHWH are both related to the nations, see especially ותהלתו באיים יגידו of v.4 and ייהילו of v.12. Secondly, as Gitay writes, “the servant in v 2 will not ישא anymore, but now the nations are praising God – ישאו (v 11). Similarly, the servant will not shout out – יצעק (v 2), yet the nations will open their mouth loudly – יצוהו (v 11b).”⁴¹⁵ Thirdly, vv.10-12 is linked with vv.8-9 through repeating חדש (‘new’), כבוד (‘glory’), and תהלה (‘praise’). Therefore, the summoning for a new song to YHWH

⁴¹⁰ Stern, “Blind Servant,” 226.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, 227.

⁴¹² See Calvin, *J. Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*. As referred to in Goldingay, *Message*:169.

⁴¹³ Vincent, *Studien zur Literarischen Eigenart und zur Geistigen Heimat von Jesaja*. As referred to in Goldingay, *Message*, 169.

⁴¹⁴ Goldingay, *Message*, 168.

⁴¹⁵ Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 123.

(vv.10-12) can serve as an appropriate response to the new thing he will do through His servant for the nations' benefit demonstrating his glory and praise in vv.1-9.⁴¹⁶

Besides, 42:10-12 can also serve as a conclusion to 41:1-42:12 because YHWH's supremacy is one of the overarching themes in the whole section of 41:1-42:12, which qualifies the call to sing his praise.

4.3.2.4 Summary

Therefore, as 41:1-42:12 call nations and idols into conversation through court-disputations (41:1-7, 21-29), while drawing attention to his servant through either a direct address to his servant (41:8-20) or through an address about his servant (42:1-9), it reveals what should be perceived about YHWH and about his servant, and about YHWH's will and glory in the world. He is the one who determines history and politics, causing the former things to come to pass and declaring the new things; the one who takes care of who he has called; the one who makes impossible things possible; the one who commissions his servant for the blessing of his world. By comparison, foreign gods are nothing but a delusion, and all who choose them will be ashamed. Therefore, it would be an appropriate response for the whole world to sing YHWH's praise.

4.3.3 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 42:13-44:23

As shown in section 4.1, 42:13-44:23 is introduced by 42:13-17 (introduction), followed by two parallel subsections 42:18-43:21 and 43:22-44:22, and concluded with a hymnic verse 44:23.

4.3.3.1 42:13-17

In 42:13-17 the two images of YHWH, a mighty warrior (v.13) and a woman giving birth (v.14), appear quite different. However, as McConville observes, "as the warrior image was couched in language of extreme vehemence, so the birth image conjures up the extreme physical stress of childbirth."⁴¹⁷ The sound-effect of *ke-ye-ke-ye* in v.13a and *ya-a-ya-a* in v.13b recalls the vehement warfare scenario and is in line with the emphases on 'warrior' (כַּגְבוּר...יִתְגַּבֵּר) and on 'crying out' (יִרִיעַ אֶף יִצְרִיחַ). Similarly, the threefold *e-* sound in v.14b (אִפְעָה אִשָּׁם וְאִשְׂאֵף) recalls the painful scenario of women giving birth: groaning, panting and gasping. Then, the portrayal of YHWH

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Goldingay, *Message*, 168, 169, regards vv.13-17 as the reason for the praise in v.10-12.

⁴¹⁷ McConville, *Isaiah*, 482. Cf. Goldingay, *Message*, 172 maintains, in fact they 'both are strong, intensely human similes, both emphasize the extraordinary noise and energy of the protagonist...both derive from Isa 9-11.' See *ibid*, 170 for how v.13 echoes Isa 9-11 and his conclusion that "the vision of Isa. 9-11 is reaffirmed, and its fulfilment announced. Present events are that fulfilment."

(vv.13-14) is followed by what YHWH will do (vv.15-16). These actions are contrasting in character, namely the wasting of hills, withering of vegetation, drying up of rivers and wetlands in v.15 which are undoubtedly *calamitous and destroying*, while the images in v.16 are *caring and saving*.⁴¹⁸ However they express the reality that when God acts, destruction (for some) and salvation (for others) usually come hand in hand. Finally, this introduction is concluded with the shame of those who trust idols (v.17). The movement from speaking about YHWH (v.13) to quotations of YHWH's direct speech (vv.14-16) to comments on those who trust in idols (v.17) functions to contrast YHWH with idols and to persuade the audience rhetorically to trust in YHWH alone.

The images used in vv.13-16 echo Isa 6-9 in various ways and suggest a fulfilment of the promises in Isa 9. Firstly, YHWH's self-restraint and silence in 42:14a echoes Isaiah's question (עד אשר, 'how long', 6:11) and YHWH's hiding his face (8:17); the salvation image expressed particularly through leading the blind (42:16a) alludes back to 6:9-10 where imperception is articulated as the major problem for Israel. This means the judgmental imperceptive situation is now ready to be changed. Secondly, גבור occurs earlier in 9:5 as one of the names of the son that is born to us (ילד לנו בן נתן) (לנו...אל גבור) in relation to YHWH's zeal (קנאת יהוה צבאות, 9:6) whereas here in 42:13-14 YHWH will go out like a 'warrior' and stir up his zeal (יהוה כגבור יצא כאיש מלחמות יעיר קנאה) and is giving birth (כילודה). Besides, while the levelling of rough places on the way (ומעקשים למישור) in the second column of v.16bα recalls 40:3-5 (esp.v.4 והרכסים לבקעה למישור), 'the turning of darkness into light' (אשים מהשך לפניהם לאור) in the first column of v.16bα alludes to 8:23-9:1 where there is a contrast between the former time and the latter time (הראשון ... והאחרון) and where 'the people walking in the darkness will see a great light' (העם ההלכים בחשך ראו אור גדול). Moreover, while the two columns of v.16bβ echo respectively to 40:8b by (אלה הדברים) and to 41:17 by reaffirming 'I will not abandon them' (ולא עזבתים), the combination of v.13 (קנאת) and v.16 (עשיתם) echo 9:6 (קנאת יהוה צבאות תעשה זאת). All these links of 42:13-16 to Isa 40, 41 in its nearer context, and to Isa 6-9, demonstrate that the promises made earlier in Isa 9 and the turning over of 6:9-11 and 8:17 are now applied to the promises made in the exilic situation (Isa 40 onwards) and is now come to fulfilment.

Moreover, the use of 'the blind' (עורים) and the double use of 'they have not known' (לא ידעו) undoubtedly highlight their 'imperception', while 'I will lead' (והולכתי) and 'I will guide' (אדריךם) emphasize YHWH's self-involvement in helping with their 'imperception'. That this cluster of

⁴¹⁸ Goldingay, *Message*, 173.

perception vocabulary and theme (v.16) is followed by the comment on the shame on those who trust in idols in turn calls the audience to be perceptive and to make correct choices, to trust in YHWH alone in their current situation, and to trust that the promised salvation is now to come.

Therefore, as an introduction to 43:13-44:23, 43:13-17 linking back to chs. 40-41 through its polemics against idols and comforts for Jacob-Israel and connecting with chs. 6-9 through the ending of the imperceptive period, and the enabling of perception, mark the beginning of salvation. The promises made in the 8th century BCE are now being fulfilled in the current exilic situation.

4.3.3.2 42:18-43:21

As demarcated in 4.3.1, there are four subunits in 42:18-43:21: the reality of Jacob-Israel (42:18-25), salvation oracles for Jacob-Israel (43:1-7), Jacob-Israel as witness to YHWH as the only God (43:8-13) and concluding notes on YHWH's salvation (43:14-21). They are all interconnected. 42:18-25 and 43:1-7 are closely connected by the transition marked by the opening of 43:1 (ועתה, 'but now'), and antithetical images are applied to denote the fate of Jacob-Israel – they are in exile as denoted by the triple בוז/בז and נשסה/משסה in 42:22a, 22b, 24, and 'burned up by fire,' v.25. By contrast, in 43:1-7, they will be redeemed from exile (vv.3-6) and the fire will not consume them (v.2). 43:8-13 are related back to 42:18-25 with the combination of 'blind', 'deaf' and 'my servant', this time in a trial scene with gods. The blind and deaf servant is appointed as 'my witness' (אתם עדי, vv.10, 12) to YHWH's uniqueness as God and savior. 43:14-21 is related to 43:8-13 through the redemption theme (vv.11-13 cf. vv.14-15) and the 'former thing' themes (vv.9, 19), and to 43:1-8 through the idea that Jacob-Israel is created to reveal his glory and declare his praise (vv.7, 21).

(Im)perception terms abound in 42:18-25 and 43:8-13, while v.19a indicates that 43:14-21 is also related to the (im)perception theme. Though (im)perception terms do not occur in 43:1-7, this subunit is a transition from 42:18-25 to 43:8-13, and simultaneously 43:14-21 also echoes back to it. Thus, this whole subsection (42:18-43:21) is now under investigation for evidence of the (im)perception theme.

42:18-25

This is a significant passage not only because the perception terms abound in structurally significant positions, but also because it contrasts with 42:1-9 and with 43:8-13.

42:18-25 can be further divided into vv.18-20 and vv.21-25, because while vv.18-20 are all about '(im)perception',⁴¹⁹ vv.21-25 is introduced by תורה (vv.21), which is later picked up in v.24, and also tied by the co-occurrence of בוז/בז and משסה/משסה (vv.22a, 22b, 24), and the clause-consequence between vv.24b and v.25. This demarcation is supported by the correspondences between the beginning and the end of each subsection, that is, between v.18 and v.20 (ראה and שמע in v.18 occur in chiasmic order in v.20) and between vv.21-22a and v.25. Both are characterized by statements about YHWH followed by references to the people - in 3ms, to be exact. YHWH's intention is followed by the people's state in vv.21-22a, while YHWH's action is followed by the people's reaction in v.25. Vv.21-22a is followed by, and v.25 preceded by, a reference to the people in 3mp. and with a twofold negation.⁴²⁰ Furthermore, the concluding verses of these two subsections correspond with each other through their emphasis on their imperception or lack of proper response.⁴²¹

This demarcation helps solve at least two uncertainties, namely the change of speakers, and the textual criticism of v.19. For the change of speakers: since other verses in vv.18-25 (except v.19, 24b) do not indicate their speakers or the change of speakers,⁴²² the demarcation into vv.18-20 and 21-25 suggests that the speakers of vv.18-20 can be identified in v.19, and for vv.21-25 in v.24b. Besides, because עבדי and מלאכי (v.19) suggest its speaker as YHWH, and חטאנו (v.24b) suggests the speaker there is the one who is identified with 'we' (very likely the one commissioned in 40:3-8), then we can conclude that the speakers change from 'YHWH' in vv.18-20 to 'the prophetic figure'

⁴¹⁹ v.18 calls the deaf to hear, the blind to see; v.19 designates the blind and deaf as 'my servant'; v.20 explains why he is blind and deaf.

⁴²⁰

A	יהיה חפץ למען צדקו והוא עם בוז ושסוי	v.21 v.22a	YHWH's intentions (3ms) people's exiled situation
B	היה לבו ואין מציל משסה ואין אמר השב	v.22b	3mp verbs + twofold negation אין
C	מי בכם יאזין זאת יקשב וישמע לאחור מי נתן למשסה למשסה יעקב וישראל לבוזים הלוא יהיה זו חטאנו לו	v.23 v.24aαβ v.24aγ v.24bα	
B	ולא אבו בדרכיו הלוך ולא שמעו בתורתו	v.24bβγ	3mp verbs+ twofold negation לא
A	וישפך עליו חמה אפו ותלהטהו מסביב ולא ידע	v.25a v.25b	YHWH's actions (3ms) people's reactions

⁴²¹

imperception	Given fact/situation	imperception	Given fact/situation	
ולא ישמע	פקוח אזנים	ולא תשמר	ראות רבות	42:20
ולא ישים על לב	ותבער בו	ולא ידע	ותלהטהו מסביב	42:25

⁴²² See also the form in *Goldingay*, 'Isaiah 42:18-25,' 47.

who undertakes ‘we’ to speak on behalf of sinful Israel in vv.21-25. Curiously, the speech reverts to third person in vv.24b-25. For the textual criticism: the triple עור in v.19b in contrast to only one חרש has led BHS and many commentators to suggest emendation of one עור in v.19b to חרש so as to keep the poetic balance of this pair like in v.18 and v.19a.⁴²³ However, as Uhlig observes, since v.19b and v.23 are both located in the middle of their subsections and both contain rhetorical questions in relation to (im)perception, an emphasis on ‘seeing’ with threefold עור in v.19b parallel with v.23’s emphasis on ‘hearing’ (שמע, קשב, אזן, אזן).⁴²⁴

Therefore, structurally speaking, the (im)perception theme plays an important part in 42:18-25. As shown above, in the first subsection (vv.18-20), its beginning, middle, and end, are all about (im)perception. Concerning the second subsection (vv.21-25), though it is not introduced by an (im)perception theme, the rhetorical questions right in the middle take three verbs about hearing to awaken the addressees’ perception (v.23) and the rhetorical questions following that also aim to direct their perception on who and what has led them into their current exiled situation (v.24), and it also ends up with the notes on the addressees’ imperception.

Besides, other literary devices applied in 42:18-25 also enhance the significance of the (im)perception theme and the call to perceive.

Firstly, the paradoxical opening of v.18, that is, the call to the deaf to hear and the blind to look and see (החרשים שמעו והעורים הביטו לראות) is itself a contradiction: how could a person ask the deaf to hear, and the blind to look and see? The suspense this call creates draws the addressees to pay close attention to what comes next.

Secondly, the rhetorical questions in v.19 denote that it is YHWH’s servant (עבד יהוה, עבדי), messenger (מלאכי) and covenanted one (כמשלם)⁴²⁵ who is the blind and the deaf, whose blindness and deafness is further elaborated in v.20: ‘he sees many but does not observe, opens ears but not hear’ (ראות רבות ולא תשמר פקוח אזנים ולא ישמע). The designations here are ironic because both עבדי and מלאכי are those whom YHWH calls to his service for his purpose, and כמשלם also denotes YHWH’s purpose of peace through this servant, while simultaneously they are blind and deaf: how could they

⁴²³ BHS suggests emendation of עור in v.19bβ, while McConville, *Isaiah*, 483 n58 עור in v.19ba.

⁴²⁴ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 145-50.

⁴²⁵ BHS suggest an emendation to כמשלהי (‘like the one I sent’) to keep the same pronoun suffix as עבדי and מלאכי. However, this emendation is without textual evidence. Besides, as McConville (*Isaiah*, 483, fn 57) notes, MT reading, “a pual participial of the verb שלם (‘to be at peace or in covenant’),” denotes YHWH’s will/purpose through his servant and messenger.

carry out YHWH's service with their blindness and deafness?⁴²⁶ In such a way, vv.19-20 express YHWH's disappointment at his servant's lack of perception as a way to challenge them to live consistently with their status.

Thirdly, vv.18-25 deliberately alludes back to and contrasts with 42:1-7. The two central terms (צדקו and תורה) and the whole idea of YHWH's intention in v.21 (YHWH is pleased for the sake of צדקו and will magnify and glorify תורה) intentionally evoke 42:1-7 because 42:1-7 and 42:18-25 are two of the few small units where צדק and תורה co-occur.⁴²⁷ Thus, v.21 is not only situated in the context of vv.18-25 but also vv.1-7, which then reveals that what counts is not only YHWH's צדק or תורה, but much more his servant's failure in his commission. Besides, the servant 42:18-25 is deliberately contrasted with the servant of 42:1-7. While coastlands wait for his law (v.7), the servant himself does not follow his law (v.24); similarly, while the servant is commissioned to be 'a light to the nations' (v.6) and 'to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out...from the prison (v.7)', the servant is characterized as 'blind' (v.18, 19) and 'in the prison' (v.24) himself.⁴²⁸ These deliberate allusions and contrasts suggest the servant in vv.18-25 does not qualify for the mission for which he is commissioned in vv.1-7. However, this does not mean that the servant in the two passages should be identified differently or that YHWH has been wrong with his commissioning of his servant in the first place. But rather, it is exactly the striking contrast between the reality of the servant (42:18-25) and his mission (42:1-7) that would explain how the deaf and blind servant could be YHWH's his witness (43:8-13; 44:6-20).

Fourthly, the juxtaposition of 3ms and 3mp (referring to the servant/people) deliberately and rhetorically emphasizes the need for Israel to perceive, both on the individual and corporate level.

⁴²⁶ In Israel's history, Moses is the one called עבדי יהוה, עבד מלאכי, who faithfully does YHWH's will, while it is Israelites who are rebuked of lacking faith despite all those they have seen, heard and experienced (e.g., Deut 3:21; 4:3, 9; 7:19; 10:21; 11:7; 29:1, 3). However, these two aspects are both applied to Jacob-Israel in 42:18-25. In PI עבדי is applied to Isaiah in 20:3, Eliakim in 37:35 and in.

⁴²⁷ In the context of 40-44, צדק occurs earlier in 41:2, 10; 42:6 respectively in relation to YHWH's raising Cyrus, comforting Jacob-Israel and calling his servant, while תורה occurs earlier in 42:4, the sense of which is very much in line with the vision in 2:1-4. Another co-occurrence of צדק and תורה is 51:7, or the unit 51:1-9 where תורה occurs in 51:4, 7 while צדק in 51:1, 5, 7. If we search the co-occurrence of תורה and צדקה, then we will find Isa 5 (תורה in v.24, while צדקה in 5:7, 16, 23).

⁴²⁸

לפקח עינים עורות להוציא ממסגר אסיר מבית כלא ישבי חשך	42:7
ובבתי כלאים החבאו	42:22

Fifthly, as Sommer observes, 42:18-25 allude back to 30:9-14 by the way of using words, the split-up pattern, the sound play, and the fire imagery as follows to “explain to the people why they are in their current state.”⁴²⁹

	30:9-14	42:18-25
The way of using words	עם מרי הוא (v.9, ‘It is a rebellious people’)	והוא עם (v.22, ‘And it is a people’)
split-up pattern	לא-אבו שמוע תורת יהוה (v.9, ‘unwilling to listen to the teaching of YHWH’)	ולא אבו בדרכיו הלוך ולא שמעו בתורתו (v.24 unwilling to walk on his paths, and not listen to his teaching)
sound play	חרש (v.14, ‘shard’)	חרשים (‘the deaf ones’)
Fire imagery	להחיות אש מיקוד (v.14 ‘to take fire from the hearth’)	ותלהטו מסביב ולא ידע ותבער בו ולא ישים על לב (v.25b, ‘it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.’)

Sixthly, Stern makes an ‘...attempt to understand the function of “the Blind Servant” of Isa. 42:19 in terms of imagery scattered throughout the book’ which will progress to ‘the suffering servant’ in Isa 53.⁴³⁰

To conclude, 42:18-25 invite Jacob-Israel to perceive their spiritual condition of blindness and deafness. The text ascribes their current exiled situation to their unwillingness to walk upon YHWH’s way and to obey his torah which he has intended to magnify and glorify through his servant Jacob-Israel, but their condition has disqualified them. Therefore, the exilic situation, and the blind and deaf condition of his servant Jacob-Israel, are what together hinder YHWH from executing his intention for the world through him.

43:1-7

The salvation oracles (started by the opening ועתה (‘but now’) in 43:1) introduces YHWH’s comforting of Jacob-Israel (43:1-7). It is the first step in how he would solve the above-mentioned obstacles and hence 43:1-7 is the transitional subunit in 42:18-43:21.

⁴²⁹ Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 97-99.

⁴³⁰ Stern, “Blind Servant,” 224-32.

In 43:1-7, v.1 and v.7 form an inclusio using the combination of קרא, יצאר, ברא and שם to frame the salvation oracles. Other elements in v.1 emphasise YHWH's exhortation (אל תירא כי גאלתיך קראתי בשמך) (לי אתה) while v.7 emphasises לכבודי . Thus, both the introduction and conclusion highlight Jacob-Israel as created, formed, and called by YHWH, while the development from v.1 to v.7 (as shown by their distinct elements) show that his exhortation and salvation are both related to YHWH's glory.

While earlier passages highlight YHWH as the creator of the whole creation (42:12-31; 42:5), 43:1-7 highlight YHWH as Jacob-Israel's personal creator, former and maker (vv.1, 7). Besides, in comparison with the earlier 'fear-not' salvation oracle (41:8-20),⁴³¹ 43:1-7 are a further development from 41:8-20 in two specific senses. Firstly, they depict what Israel means to YHWH in an even more intimate and direct way: לי אתה ('you are mine,' v.1) and קרת בעיני נכבדת ואני אהבתיך ('you are precious in my eyes, honoured, and I love you,' v.4a). Secondly, they move towards a clearer focus on releasing them from captivity. The use of גאלתיך right after the divine speech formula, YHWH's self-predication and the 'not-fear' exhortation in 43:1 together aim to relieve them from the fear that resulted from the threefold-emphasized situation of captivity and oppression (in 42:22-24). The word גאל itself presupposes an oppressive situation from which they will be redeemed.⁴³² Besides, while 43:3b, 4b resonate with the idea of YHWH giving others⁴³³ for Jacob-Israel as his ransom (the price paid for his redemption⁴³⁴), YHWH's self-predications in vv.5b-6a explicitly promise his gathering of them from the whole world, a comprehensiveness suggested by reference to the four corners of compass. The use of אל תכלאי in v.6 echoing 42:22 (ובבתי כלאים החבאו) also suggests 43:1-7 response to Israel's captive situation in 42:22-24.

43:8-13

In comparison to 41:1-42:25,⁴³⁵ the nuance of 43:8-13 lies in their 'witness' motif, in particular, how this motif is associated with the 'blind and deaf servant' and with YHWH's self-predications. There

⁴³¹ The phrase אתך אני ('I am with you') occurs in 43:2, 5 while its synonyms אני עמך in 41:8. The images 43:1-7 take include YHWH's protection from the subversive water and fire, and YHWH's releasing them from captivity, while 41:8-20 the victory over contending enemies and levelling mountains and hills.

⁴³² Ringgren, גאל, 350-55.

⁴³³ Whom YHWH gives extends from the specified Egypt, Cush and Seba (v.3b) to the more general humanity (אדם and לאמים, v.4b).

⁴³⁴ Note the use of נתן and תחת in both verses. Though כפרך only occurs in v.3b, not v.4b, while נפשך only in v.4b, not v.3b, these two are in fact two complementary parallel lines, presenting a more comprehensive idea with two lines.

⁴³⁵ Many of the expressions in 43:8-13 have already occurred in 41:1-42:25.

43:8	הוציא עם עור ועינים יש	החרשים שמעו והעורים הביטו לראות	42:18, 19
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is a positive note of hope in the depiction of ‘blind and deaf’ in v.8, because they still have eyes and ears, hence the ability to perceive.⁴³⁶

43:8-13 begin with trial speech like 41:1-5 and 41:21-29, because the blind and deaf are called into a trial scene where nations and peoples are challenged to produce witnesses to vindicate their gods’ claim (vv.8-9). However, vv.10-13 do not record the outcome of the trial, but rather more YHWH’s appointment of the addressees as his witnesses, testifying to his uniqueness as God and savior.

As shown in the table below, vv.10a-12a and vv.12b-13 both start with a declaration of אתם עדי נאם (a, a’), and YHWH’s self-characterizations (c, c’), while the former has, in addition to these two elements, the elements (b) of the identity of the witness (the servant that YHWH has chosen, that is, Jacob-Israel, v.10aβ), and the purpose of the appointment of this witness (“so that you might know and trust me, and understand that I am he,” v.10bα). This unparalleled element b in the structure of vv.10-13 highlight that the blind and deaf chosen servant Jacob-Israel (42:18-25), after the encouragement of 43:1-7, is now appointed as YHWH’s witness for the purpose of their perception of and faith in YHWH. In the structure c/c’, the twofold הוא אני resonates with YHWH’s initial self-revelation in Ex.3:14; the first הוא אני is followed by the statement that no god was formed before or after him (v.10bβ), indicating YHWH is the only God, while the second one followed by a statement and a rhetorical question which together suggest YHWH is the only deliverer (v.13). These two aspects are re-announced in v.11 and v.12a through the same emphatic phrase (...ואין...). In such a way, the witness motif is closely connected with YHWH as the only God and the only savior.⁴³⁷ The addressees are to act as witnesses to YHWH’s gracious redemption of them (cf. 43:1-7 and note מושיע in 43:11 and 43:3). Furthermore, the development of YHWH’s self-characterization from

	וחרשים ואזנים למו	מי עור כי אם עבדי וחרש כמלאכי אשלח מי עור כמשלם ועור כעבד יהוה	
43:9	כל הגוים נקבצו יחדו ויאספו לאמים מי בהם יגיד זאת וראשנות ישמיענו יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו וישמעו ויאמרו אמת	יגישו ויגידו לנו את אשר תקרינה הראשנות מה הגה הגידו ונשימה לבנו ונדעה אחריתן או הבאות השמיענו 23 הגידו האתיות לאחור ונדעה כי אלהים אתם אף תיטיבו ותרעו ונשתעה ונראה ונראה יחדו 24 הן אתם מאין ופעלכם מאפע תועבה יבחר בכם	41:22-24
43:10aβ	ועבדי אשר בחרתי	ואתה ישראל עבדי יעקב אשר בחרתיך הן עבדי אתמך בו בחירי	41:8 42:1
43:10b	למען תדעו ותאמינו לי ותבינו	למען יראו וידעו וישמו וישכילו יחדו	41:20a
43:10bβ, 13aα		אני הוא	41:4bβ
43:13aβ	ואין מידי מציל	ואין מציל	42:22ba

⁴³⁶ See Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 121; Gitay, *Prophecy*, 144, 150; Motyer, *Prophecy*, 334 for the opposite argument, insisting on the blindness and deafness of the people despite having eyes and ears.

⁴³⁷ As Childs (*Isaiah*, 335) states, “The issue is not one of clairvoyance or simple prediction, but of the God of Israel being at work in the world. Israel alone can rightly testify to God’s redemptive presence in its life.”

v.10bβ to v.13a prepares the addressees to reach the expected negative answer to the question of ‘I work, who can turn it back?’. Such a development, and the rhetorical question itself, create a suspense evoking the addressees’ thinking, which is in line with the structural emphasis on *element b*: the purpose of appointing them as YHWH’s witness.⁴³⁸

אתם עדי נאם יהוה	‘witness’ appointment	v.10aα	a
ועבדי אשר בחרתי	identity	v.10aβ	b. focusing on Israel
למען תדעו ותאמינו לי ותבינו	Impact/purpose	v.10bα	
כי אני הוא לפני לא נוצר אל ואחרי לא יהיה	I am he; no god formed before or after YHWH	v.10bβ	c
אנכי אנכי יהוה ואין מבלעדי מושיע	I, I am YHWH, no savior besides me	v.11	
אנכי הגדתי והושעתי והשמעתי ואין בכם זר	I declared, saved and showed; no strange god among them	v.12a	
ואתם עדי נאם יהוה	‘witness’ appointment	v.12bα	a’
ואני אל	I am God	v.12bβ	c’
גם מיום אני הוא ואין מידי מציל	hereafter I am he, no deliverer from my hand	v.13a	
אפעל ומי ישיבנה	I work; who can turn it back?	v.13b	

Therefore, 43:8-13 take the form of a trial speech and combine the blindness theme and YHWH-versus-idol theme. YHWH himself alone is emphasized as the true God, of whom Israel are witnesses. The speech aims to encourage the addressees to trust YHWH.

43:14-21

While the divine speech formula (כה אמר יהוה) further divides 43:14-21 into vv.14-15 and vv.16-21, these are undoubtedly closely related. In vv.14-15 YHWH’s now-familiar-yet-joint self-predications (v.14a, v.15) from Isa 41⁴³⁹ bracket the first-explicitly-mentioned fall of Babylon (v.14b). These relate the fall of Babylon with YHWH’s attributes as Israel’s redeemer, Holy One, creator and king, and bring his announcements from Isa 41 to a climax. After such an emphatic announcement of vv.14-15, vv.16-17 allude to Ex. 14-15 by the images of a pathway through powerful waters which overwhelm horses, chariots and warriors (cf. Ex.14:9, 17, 28; 15:1, 21), and the emphasis on the perishing of the enemy army (14:21-31; 15:1-2),⁴⁴⁰ Hence the first Exodus (the release from Egypt) becomes the paradigm for the release from Babylon (the second Exodus).⁴⁴¹ While vv.16-17 naturally recall the addressees of the Exodus tradition, the commands and rhetorical

⁴³⁸ Different groups of repetitions are highlighted in different colours in the table.

⁴³⁹ The combination of ‘your redeemer’ and ‘holy one of Israel’ occurs earlier in 41:14, though *גאֹלְכֶם קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל* in 43:14 while *גֹּאֲלֶךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל* in 41:14. In 43:15a, *אֲנִי יְהוָה* has occurred many times so far (27:3; 41:4, 13, 17; 42:6, 8; 43:3), though *אֲנִי יְהוָה קְדוֹשְׁכֶם* is unique with its relational dimension. In 43:15b, *בּוֹרֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל* echoes 43:1, 7, while YHWH being referred as ‘king’ only in 41:21 (*מֶלֶךְ יַעֲקֹב*); 43:15 (*מַלְכְּכֶם*); 44:6 (*מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל*). As McConville (*Isaiah*, 493) states, YHWH as king “is loaded with significance in a time of subjugation to a foreign empire.”

⁴⁴⁰ The allusion to Ex.14-15 is vivid Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 494.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 494.

questions in vv.18-19a serve to draw the addressees' attention/perception away from the former thing and to expect the new thing,⁴⁴² which is then further elaborated in vv.19b-21. The lifegiving images of 'a way in wilderness and rivers in desert,' v.19b) and 'waters in wilderness and rivers in desert,' v.20b), are what were most needed and struggled for in the first Exodus, and hence which clearly highlight YHWH's sufficient provision.⁴⁴³ Besides, since the combination of תנים and בנות יענה (v.20a) only occurs elsewhere in Isa 13:21-22 and 34:13 (where they are characterized as animals in abandoned or uninhabited places), the blessings even extended to, and the honoring YHWH from, these 'wild animals' would further vindicate YHWH's being known even by animals.⁴⁴⁴ Thus, 43:14-21 carry forward the deliverance theme and the contrast between the former and new things from 43:1-8 into a more concrete dimension: the release from Babylon. The 'perception' terms (vv.18-19a) occur in structurally significant places in vv.14-21, echoing the people's appointment as YHWH's witness in 43:8-13. They are to witness YHWH doing new miracles.

4.3.3.3 Isa 43:22-44:22

Like 42:18-43:22, 43:22-44:22 also start with Israel's failures, followed by salvation oracles which lead into a court-scene with the 'witness' motif and polemic against foreign gods. While picking up similar terms, phrases or motifs from preceding passages, this passage develops in a stronger way.

43:22-28

The accusations in 43:22-24 focus on Israel's indifference and weariness towards YHWH (v.22ab, 23a, v.24a),⁴⁴⁵ how they have wearied and burdened YHWH (v.24b), while YHWH has never

⁴⁴² The related Hebrew words are respectively highlighted in green and purple: אל תזכרו ראשונות וקדמניות אל תתבנו הנני עשה ('Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?')

⁴⁴³ Cf. in vv.16-17a, בים and ובמים עזים are threatening from which Israel survived while Egyptians army forces perished, hence the emphasis is laid on the contrast between Israel's *survival* and Egyptians perish.

⁴⁴⁴ In YHWH's call of and promises to Abraham, nations will be blessed through Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), while here the blessings upon Jacob-Israel are even extended to these wild animals.

⁴⁴⁵ All these -לא phrases accusing Jacob-Israel of what they have not done, including ולא אתי קראת ('you did not call me'), לא הביאת לי ('you did not bring me...'), לא כבדתני ('you did not honour me'), לא קנית לי ('you did not buy me...'), לא הרויתני ('you did not satisfy me...'), do not mean that YHWH requires the otherwise (as v.23b makes this point clearly), but they all demonstrate *their lack of passion in worshipping YHWH*, which in YHWH's terms is כי יגעתי בי, 'you are wearied of me', v.22b), and they also prepares for the argument YHWH is going to make in v.25: YHWH saves Israel not because of their honouring or fearing or making sacrifice to him, but because he himself blots out and does not longer remember their sins for his own sake..

wearied or burdened them (v.23b).⁴⁴⁶ The invitation to court also vindicates YHWH's משפט in judging their sins ever since their first ancestor (vv.26-28). Both the accusations in vv.23-24 and the court-disputation in vv.26-28 vindicate YHWH's gracious announcement in the middle (v.25), the emphatic note of which is marked by אנכי אנכי הוא.

44:1-5

The calling to hear at the opening of 44:1 (ועתה שמע) and divine speech formula (כה אמר יהוה) in v.2 and v.6, effectively call the addressees to attend to YHWH's speeches in vv.2-5 and vv.6-20, both of which exhort 'do not fear' (אל תירא, v.2; cf. אל תפחדו ואל תרהו, v.8).⁴⁴⁷ The introductory v.1 calls Jacob-Israel as עבדי and בחרתי בו. This second term is picked up again in the first speech, but while the first term is not picked up in either speech, its associated term עדי occurs in v.8. The salvation oracle in 44:1-5 contrasts with the accusation of 43:22-28. In the latter Jacob-Israel is weary of YHWH, and not passionate about worshiping YHWH (43:22-24), so YHWH will give Jacob up to utter destruction/reviling (43:28). By contrast, the former emphasizes that each member of Jacob-Israel loves to call themselves YHWH's and with the name of Israel (v.5), the name YHWH gave to their ancestor Jacob marking a change in his relationship with YHWH. This contrast surely indicates the conditions of Jacob-Israel in 42:22-28 will now be changed. Undoubtedly, the exhortation in 44:1-4 plays a key role in the shift from Jacob-Israel's sinful and unpassionate situation in 43:22-28 to their willingness in 44:5. The image of pouring water upon thirsty or dry land (44:3a) echoes Exodus tradition and the nearer context Isa 41:17-18; 43:19-21, while the image of pouring spirit upon Jacob-Israel's offspring (44:3b) echoes 42:1. Thus, the combination of these two images brings together YHWH's provision and Jacob-Israel's mission. As the pouring of water and spirit generate life (v.4), so will YHWH's provision and Jacob-Israel's executing their mission. Their willingness to take on the name of YHWH and the name of Israel (v.5) in such a context would also suggest their willingness to walk in his way, to do his will and to execute his mission, contrasting the blind-deaf servant's unwillingness in 42:18-25, but in line with 42:1-9.

⁴⁴⁶ This contrast is particularly made in v.23b (לא העבדתיך בלבונה) and v.24b (אך העבדתני בחטאותיך הוגעתני) by applying same verbs but with different person and pronoun suffixes. Besides, the wearying of YHWH here in v.23b also contrasts with his proclamation of unweariness as his comfort for Jacob-Israel in 40:28 (לא ייעף ולא ייגע). McConville, *Isaiah*, 496, also observes the use of העבדתני in v.24b is an ironic play with their status as YHWH's servant yet they're making YHWH as their servant.

⁴⁴⁷ McConville states different terms are undertaken for poetic and rhetorical enhancement (Ibid., 502). Cf. Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 341.

44:6-20

44:6-8 come again to YHWH's polemic against foreign gods and to the exhortation of 'fear-not'. Many expressions found here have occurred earlier, though they are used with renewed emphasis.⁴⁴⁸ As the table below shows, after the introductory divine speech formula and YHWH's self-predications (v.6a), vv.6b-8b are framed by the fact that YHWH is the only God (v.6b, v.8b), while in the middle, YHWH challenges foreign gods to declare about old and new things (v.7)⁴⁴⁹ and exhorts Jacob-Israel not to fear (v.8a). The sense is that because Jacob-Israel is the witness of the true God, who appointed them from of old, and who is the governor of the world and history, who is known to them as the reliable Rock, they should not fear because of their current conditions, but trust YHWH in the salvation and transformation he has announced to them. Besides, as Goldingay and Payne observe,

the coming together of court speech and 'fear not' oracle towards the end of the group of spirals that occupy chapters 41–44 reflect the fact that it is the sole God of the court speeches who can say 'fear not'.⁴⁵⁰

וגאלו יהוה צבאות מלך ישראל	כה אמר יהוה	v.6a introductory divine speech formula
	אני ראשון ואני אחרון ומבלעדי אין אלהים	v.6b YHWH as the only God
	ומי כמוני יקרא ויגידה ויערכה לי ואתיות ואשר תבאנה יגידו למו	v.7 who could be like YHWH?
	אל תפחדו ואל תרהו הלא מאז השמעתיך והגדתי ואתם עדי	v.8a exhortation to Jacob-Israel
	היש אלוה מבלעדי ואין צור בל ידעתי	v.8b YHWH as the only God

The 'witness' motif and 'do not fear' motif of v.8 are picked up in a contrasting manner in v.9 (עדיהם), and v.11 (יפחדו), which introduces an elaborate subunit on the folly of idolatry (vv.9-20).

As the table shows below, the statement on the unprofitability of idol-makers in v.9a is questioned in v.10, satirising their folly. Besides, the beginning and end of v.9b are picked up in v.11, as ועדיהם המה in v.9b is paraphrased as וחרשים המה ... וחרבריו in v.11, and יבשו in v.9b is repeated twice in v.11.

This manner of repetition in vv.9-11, thus, lays an emphasis on idol-witnesses' imperception (בל יראו), the unrepeated phrase in vv.9-11). This theme also is satirized in vv.9-11 and further elaborated in vv.12-20.

יצרי פסל כלם תהו וחמודיהם בל יועילו	v.9a
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⁴⁴⁸ Especially, YHWH's self-predication in 44:6a, מלך ישראל (cf. 41:21; 43:15); the combined וגאלו יהוה צבאות is unprecedented in 40-55 so far, though גאל is frequent in 40-55 while יהוה צבאות a familiar Isaianic term in 1-39. In 44:6b אני ראשון ואני אחרון (cf. 41:4b); ומבלעדי אין אלהים (cf.43:11 מושיע).

⁴⁴⁹ In v.7, while the opening question ומי כמוני echoes 40:18, 25, the rest of v.7 recalls 41:22-23 and 43:8-13.

⁴⁵⁰ Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 328.

ועדיהם המה בל יראו ובל ידעו למען יבשו	v.9b
מי יצר אל ופסל נסך לבלתי הועיל	v.10
הן כל חבריו יבשו וחרשים המה מאדם יתקבצו כלם יעמדו יפחדו יבשו יחד	v.11

In vv.9-11, every verse satirically highlights the imperception of the idol-makers. In v.9a, an idol is made, but not a maker: פסל is the subject, not the object, of יצר (cf. YHWH as ‘maker’ in 43:7, 21). Besides, the idol-makers could not profit: תהו כלם and בל יעילו בל highlight the meaninglessness of their making and desiring. In v.9b, the insertion of the personal pronoun המה between the subject ועדיהם and the description of them as בל יראו ובל ידעו למען יבשו bring out the emphatic tone; the two בל preceding its two perceptive verbs ראה and ידע highlight their imperception; and the consequent clause (למען יבשו) at the end further enhances the shame of ועדיהם. Then, v.10 re-uses some of words and ideas of v.9, yet turns them into a rhetorical question, which brings out the sarcasm even further: who is so silly as to make an idol or image without profit? The use of singular here in v.10, in contrast to the use of plural in v.9 and v.11, is rhetorical, urging every individual to reflect on this folly. Later, in v.11, the use of the twofold יבש, the phrase וחרשים המה מאדם, and the calling to assemble or stand forth, only result in their being terrified and ashamed, once again strengthening the message about the folly of idolatry.

vv.12-20 illustrate the process of the making of an idol, and how foolish the idol-worshippers are not to perceive or use their understanding at all. While v.12 is related to the making of ‘iron’ (ברזל), vv.13-20 are all related to ‘wood’: v.13 is about how a carpenter shapes wood into an idol of a human shape to dwell in his house, and v.14 how the wood is prepared. Each of v.15 and vv.16-17 explains the twofold uses of the prepared wood, while vv.18-20 conclude with how the idol-worshippers’ imperception ignores this twofold use of the prepared wood. Despite the difference between v.12 (on ‘iron’) and vv.13-20 (‘on wood’), v.12 is not unrelated in this context. For example, the need for energy to make the metal (the metal-worker lacks of energy and becomes faint when he gets hungry or thirsty, v.12b) parallels with an idol-maker’s satisfaction from bread and meat (v.15a, 16). Besides, as Goldingay and Payne maintain, “vv.12-14 as a whole work backwards through the image-making process,” and v.13 is about “someone who plates metal on top of the wooden body of an image”.⁴⁵¹

In v.12 the use of כח (‘strength’) and יעף (‘weary’) in the metalworker’s making of an idol-image (which uses up his strength and wearies him), stands in stark contrast with 40:29 where YHWH gives strength to them who is weary. The skilfulness of the idol maker, as portrayed in 44:13,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 350.

indicates he surely has sound perception, which contrasts strikingly with his imperception demonstrated in the fact that he worships what he makes (vv.15b, 17, 18-20). Besides, the irony of v.13b (an idol is made in man's image) is striking in the light of Gen.1:27 (man is made in God's image). Furthermore, the elaboration of where the wood⁴⁵² comes from and how it is prepared, and the natural process of how trees grow (v.14) is also an irony, because what is given by nature/God (v.14) is now made into an idol to be worshipped, bowed before and prayed to (v.15b, 17). The use of verbs עשה, יצר, and פעל with חרש as their subject, while with אל or פסל as their object (vv.9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19), contrasts with YHWH as their subject in earlier chapters. This satirically denotes idols are made by those who are made by YHWH. This again enhances the folly of idolatry. In comparison, v.15 and vv.16-17 both mention the twofold usages of wood – (i) to be fuel to be burned in fire, to give warmth, to bake bread or roast meat (v.15a, v.16), and (ii) to make idols (v.15b, v.17) – while simultaneously, vv.16-17 further add the idol-maker's reaction to these two usages of the wood (v.16b, v.17) where the same person who says 'I've seen (ראיתי) the fire,' (v.16b) and then pleads and speaks to what he has made by his hand 'deliver me, for you are my god':⁴⁵³ he sees the fire, but he does not see that what he calls a god has been made by his own hand. This folly has now reached its climax to be concluded and commented on in vv.18-20. Vv.18-19 evoke 6:9-10 with their nuances. Both occurrences use the same terms for 'imperception' (לא בין and לא ידע) and relate the fact of imperception to a disability in 'perception'. One and the same verb טח is used for both eyes and heart in 44:19b, while in 6:10a השמן is used for heart and השע for eyes. Besides, there is no mention of 'hearing' in 44:18-20 in contrast to its use in 6:9-10.⁴⁵⁴ The word שוב ('to return') plays a significant role in both occurrences: 6:10b states "if they return, they will be healed," while 44:19 implies "if they returned to their heart, knowledge and understanding, they should have realised the folly of idolatry, and that idolatry is nothing but an abomination (תועבה)."⁴⁵⁵ V.20 depicts the idol maker as "feeding on ashes, led astray by a deluded heart, not only unable to save his life, but even not questioning whether there is a lie in his right hand." This once again highlights their lack of perception.

44:18a	לא ידעו ולא יבינו	שמעו שמוע ואל תבינו וראו ראו ואל תדעו	6:9
44:18b	כי טח מראות עיניהם מהשכיל לבתם	השמן לב העם הזה ואזניו הכבד ועיניו השע	6:10a
44:19a	לא ישיב אל לבו ולא דעת ולא תבונה	פן יראה בעיניו ובאזניו ישמע ולבבו יבין ושב ורפא לו	6:10b

⁴⁵² Wood is the basic material from which an idol-image is made.

⁴⁵³ (ואין מידי מציל אפעל ומי ישיבנה) cf. 43:13 (ואין מידי מציל אפעל ומי ישיבנה) cf. 43:13 (ואין מידי מציל אפעל ומי ישיבנה).

⁴⁵⁴ Watson, "The Unnoticed Word Pair 'Eye(s)'/ 'Heart'," 398-408 (esp. 399) suggests v.18 evokes Deut 28:28. Cited in Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 I*, 359.

⁴⁵⁵ As Goldingay & Payne (*Isaiah 40-55 I*, 360) observe, v.19 "expresses the self-evident nonsense of the action."

44:21-22

After this polemic against idols and the folly of their witnesses in their idolatry (44:6-20), there comes a call for Jacob-Israel, addressed as ‘my servant’ (כי עבדי אתה יצרת־יך עבד לי אתה), to remember these (זכר אלה) and to return (שוב) to YHWH (44:21-22).

In the chiasmic structure of v.21 (roughly ‘remember – my servant – my servant – not forget’), we see Jacob-Israel’s remembering of these, which refers back to the polemic against gods and the folly of idolatry, corresponds with YHWH’s not forgetting them which echoes their lament earlier in 40:27. In 44:22, after YHWH’s reaffirmation of his blotting out Jacob-Israel’s sins (cf. 43:25 which is near the beginning of this subsection 43:22-44:22; and also cf. 40:1), he exhorts them to ‘return to me, for I have redeemed you’ (שובה אלי כי גאלתיך). The motif of YHWH as Jacob-Israel’s redeemer occupies chs. 41-44,⁴⁵⁶ while שוב itself is key word with the connotation of perception in both 6:9-10 and 44:18-20.

Therefore, 44:21-22 function as an epilogue in 43:22-43:22. They form an inclusio with the prologue (43:22-28) through repeating terms מָהָה, פִּשַׁע, and חַטָּאת. Simultaneously, they relate to the middle parts through the associations of YHWH’s polemic against idols, and of the contrast between his witnesses and idols’ witnesses, with the motif of ‘Jacob-Israel’s redemption, in which the (im)perception theme plays a significant role.

4.3.3.4 44:23

Here, ‘heavens’, ‘depths of the earth’, ‘mountains’ and ‘forest, and every tree in it’ are called to sing and shout for what YHWH has done for Israel. The technique of ‘merism’ is used in the first two addressees to denote ‘the whole cosmos,’ while the final two addressees are a deliberate link with 44:9-20 where wood/tree is the raw material for idol-making and worshipping⁴⁵⁷ so as to denote that their right position is that they shall join in praising YHWH, rather than to engage in idolatry.

4.3.3.5 Summary

As shown above, in 42:13-43:23, after the announcement of YHWH’s readiness to work, and in particular to lead and guide the blind (42:13-17), 42:18-25 illustrate the current conditions of the servant Jacob-Israel in stark contrast to the servant of 42:1-9 through the emphasis on their blindness, not obeying YHWH’s teaching and their being in captivity. The use of ‘(im)perception’ terms in structurally significant positions and the poetic and rhetorical use of these terms demonstrate the

⁴⁵⁶ The term גָּאֵל itself occurs earlier in 41:14; 43:1, 14.

⁴⁵⁷ See particularly עֲצִיִּים in 44:13, and the trees mentioned in 44:14.

significance of the (im)perception in 42:18-25. The distinctive development of this theme here is how its association with YHWH's teaching and their captivity disqualifies them from executing the mission that YHWH has commissioned them for the benefit of the whole world. Then, 43:1-21 start and end with YHWH's encouragement and promise of solving their problem of captivity, with the end (vv.14-21) as a further concretization of the beginning (vv.1-7). The middle subunit (vv.8-13), in a court-scene setting, calls nations and peoples to vindicate their gods' claim of governing the history ('show us the former thing') and appoints the blind and deaf servant as YHWH's witness for the purpose that the blind/deaf servant may know, trust and understand YHWH is the only God and saviour. It is this appointment, and the emphasis on YHWH as the savior, from which the salvation oracles develop. This leads to the general release from captivity (and the emphasis on YHWH's protection and presence (vv.1-7) to the more concrete release from Babylon and the emphasis on YHWH's gaining honor and glory even from the wild animals (vv.14-21). It is also this appointment that solves contradictions between the servant's mission in 42:1-9 and his current situation of being blind/deaf, captive, and not obeying YHWH's law. Besides, there is a developing movement from its beginning to its end of 43:22-44:23. In the beginning, while v.25 announces YHWH's blotting out their transgressions for his own sake, 43:22-28 elaborate more on Jacob-Israel's destruction-deserved conditions, which are promised to be changed in two 'fear-not' divine speeches in 44:1-5, 6-20. In the first speech, the lifegiving images of pouring-water and pouring-spirit mark Jacob-Israel's shift from their previous position of being weary of and impassionate about YHWH to their current willingness to respond to YHWH's call. They move from a previous destructive and reviling fate (arising from the sins of their first father) to the glorious fate of proudly calling themselves Israel. The second speech elaborates on YHWH's polemic against idols through contrasting their witnesses: while Jacob-Israel will witness YHWH as the governor of history and their reliable rock (vv.6-8), idols' witnesses do not profit but only have shame (vv.9-11); sarcasm against their imperception (vv.12-20) prepares the way for YHWH's call for Jacob-Israel to return to him (vv.21-22).

4.3.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 41:1-44:23

The literary-thematic analysis above has shown that the (im)perception theme plays a significant role in 41:1-44:23 where its key rhetorical purpose is to comfort and persuade Jacob-Israel to trust in YHWH's redemption and to return to him. The (im)perception theme is expressed through the intertwined themes of YHWH's polemic against idols and themes of his comforting, commissioning, appointing and redeeming his servant Jacob-Israel.

At the outset of the first subsection (41:1-42:13), coastlands and peoples are called to a court where God provokes their perception of who is the governor of world history and politics (41:1-4). Then, Jacob-Israel is provoked to perceive who they are for YHWH and what he will do for them (41:8-19). This will lead to YHWH's being known for the work of his hand, and for the creation of the Holy One of Israel, not only by Jacob-Israel but also by peoples (41:20). While 41:1-20 contrast peoples' self-strengthening through strengthening the idols that they make (41:5-7) with YHWH's strengthening Jacob-Israel (41:8-19), 41:21-42:9 further contrasts the nothingness of idols with YHWH's governing of world history on the one hand (41:21-29) and how he commissions his now-already-comforted servant for the whole world (42:1-9) on the other. The two parallel subsections, 41:1-20 and 41:21-42:9, are interconnected through the developing theme that the self-strengthening peoples with vain hopes in empty idols surely need YHWH's teaching and that this new thing YHWH is going to do through the servant will thus direct glory back to himself, and no longer give it to carved idols. Thus, 41:10-12, a call for the nations to praise YHWH, becomes a fitting conclusion to 41:1-42:9. Therefore, 41:1-42:12 has set up the interrelationship between Jacob-Israel's perception and the nations' perception of YHWH, which is to be further developed in the rest of DI.

In the second subsection (42:13-44:23), its introductory unit (42:13-17) announces YHWH's readiness to work, after a long period of silence, through the images of YHWH as a warrior and a mother giving-birth (vv.13-14). These images express his work in both negative (v.15) and positive ways (v.16), also putting idol-devotees to shame (v.16). Noteworthily, the people that YHWH is going to lead, and guide are particularly termed as עורים ('the blind'). This introductory unit brings out themes to be further developed in the following subsections, 42:18-43:21 and 43:21-44:22. The former explains Jacob-Israel is YHWH's blind and deaf servant who is now in captivity (42:18-25) in stark contrast to 42:1-9, while simultaneously he comforts them with the promise of the release from captivity (43:1-7), and with the appointment of them as his witness (43:8-13), and with a more concrete and greater promise on the release from Babylon (43:14-21). The key message here is that the blind, deaf and captive servant is appointed to witness YHWH as the only God and saviour who declared, saved and proclaimed which relates particularly to YHWH's redemption/release Jacob-Israel from its captivity in Babylon. Then, 43:22-44:22 on the one hand further explains why the sinful Jacob-Israel is to be redeemed, the prerequisite of being YHWH's witnesses, and on the other hand develops the contrasts between YHWH's witness and idols' witnesses. The concluding note 44:23 relates the whole creation's praise to YHWH with YHWH's redemption and glorification of Jacob-Israel, this aligns with the servant Jacob-Israel's mission in 42:1-9 and with the appointment of Jacob-Israel as YHWH's witness in 43:8-13 and 44:8.

The paradoxical idea of *a blind servant as witness* in 41:1-44:23 is a new development in the prophetic critique of Israel as imperceptive. The idea of the servant as a witness to the nations is the important new thing. How this will be worked out remains to be shown in subsequent chapters of 40-55. It will eventually show how YHWH addresses Israel's imperception as part of his purpose to redeem the world. What Israel *should perceive* at this stage is a view of YHWH's whole work in creation and history. This is traced from the beginning, and through Abraham, and it involves the nations who also are eventually called to *perceive*. What YHWH is doing is a *new thing*; Israel and the nations are being invited to perceive something they have never seen before. This is the heart of the prophetic challenge to the addressees in 41:1-44:23.

To conclude, Jacob-Israel is provoked to perceive (i) YHWH is the governor of creation and history, the only God and the only saviour, the God who proclaims and is doing a new thing; (ii) their own status and reality in YHWH's eyes; (iii) YHWH's determination to commission them as 'a covenant for peoples, a light to nations', despite their blind, deaf, captive and sinful situation, through appointing them as his witness, they will witness YHWH enacting a new Exodus, blotting out their transgressions and redeeming them. Simultaneously, the undertaking of court disputations addressed to nations and peoples (together with the appointment of Jacob-Israel as YHWH's witness) also indicates that nations and peoples will also perceive YHWH as the only God.

4.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 44:24-48:22

The current section (44:24-48:22) further develops from the previous one (41:1-44:23) on YHWH as Jacob-Israel's redeemer and the only God in the world. This section integrates the (im)perception of Cyrus (45:3-5) and nations (45:6-7, 14-25), Babylon (ch.47) with that of Jacob-Israel (chs. 46, 48) through the association with YHWH's salvation plan through Cyrus.

4.4.1 Structure of 44:24-48:22

A significant feature of 44:24-48:22 is the technique of 'specification'. Like 43:14-21 which specify the general reference to the redemption from captivity in previous chapters to the reference to the redemption from the captivity of Babylon, 44:24-48:22 undertake the technique of specification in several ways. Firstly, the anonymous one that YHWH raises for his plan and purpose in 41:2, 25 is mentioned by name, Cyrus, in 44:28 and 45:1. Secondly, the general attack on idols in chs. 40-45 is developed into the specific attack on the fall of Bel and Nebo in 46:1-2. Thirdly, YHWH's plan through Cyrus is further specified as the fall of Babylon in ch.47. Both 46:1-2 and ch.47 are followed by YHWH's exhortation to Jacob-Israel ('to hear' and 'to remember' in a chiastic order in 46:3, 8, 9,

12; ‘to hear’ in 48:1, 12, 14, 16). Both the exhortations in 46:3-12 and 48:1-16 characterize Jacob-Israel in association with the theme of ‘imperception’ (קשה אתה וגיד ברזל ערפך ומצחך in 46:12; אבירי לב in 48:4) and ‘unrighteousness’ (לא באמת ולא בצדקה in 46:12; הרחוקים מצדקה in 48:2) and both also mention YHWH’s ability of prediction (46:10; 48:3-8).

Therefore 44:24-48:22 can be demarcated into two main subsections, 44:24-45:25 and chs. 46-48. The former concerns YHWH’s plan through Cyrus in association with the nations’ perception of YHWH, while the latter specifies YHWH’s plan through Cyrus further to the fall of Bel and Nebo and the fall of Babylon in association with Jacob-Israel’s perception.

4.4.2 A Literary-Thematic Study of 44:24-45:25

44:24-45:25 can be further divided into 44:24-45:8, 45:9-13 and 45:14-25. In the first sub-unit, YHWH’s speech to Cyrus concerning his plan in association with his own and nations’ perception (45:1-7) is framed by YHWH’s long self-introduction to Jacob Israel (44:24-28) and by a call to heavens and earth (45:8). The second sub-unit confirms YHWH’s plan through Cyrus (vv.12-13) which is introduced through a contrast between vv.9-10 and v.11. The third sub-unit elaborates on nations’ perception of YHWH and YHWH’s response to their perception. Thus, in all the three subunits, the second one functions as a transition from the first one to the third one, developing on the theme of YHWH’s plan through Cyrus and nations’ perception of YHWH.

4.4.2.1 *Isa 44:24-45:8*

44:24-28 are almost all YHWH’s self-predication. They start from YHWH as Jacob-Israel’s redeemer and shaper from his womb (v.24a), the sequence of which links YHWH’s shaping work with his redeeming work of Jacob-Israel, starting from Exodus and still going on.⁴⁵⁸ Then, they zoom out to YHWH as the maker of all, stretcher of heaven alone and beater out of earth (v.24b). Though these terms are now familiar, the nuance v.24b brings is the adjective or adverbs (‘all’, ‘alone,’ ‘by myself’) at the end of each cola,⁴⁵⁹ which contrasts strikingly with Babylonian mythology. Thus, v.24 sets off from Israel’s current exilic situation and need, but integrates redemption into the process of shaping, and sees these two aspects from the perspective of YHWH as the sole maker/creator of all, all by himself alone. Then, the portrayals of YHWH in vv.25-26a⁴⁶⁰ contrast his

⁴⁵⁸ Goldingay, *Message*, 254-5.

⁴⁵⁹ V.24b: עשה כל נטה שמים לבדי רקע הארץ מאתי

⁴⁶⁰ The alliteration of *me* at the start of each line (מפר, משיב, מקים).

treatments of two groups of people: making the self-esteemed/relied wise/diviners fail,⁴⁶¹ while his servant/messenger prosper. Later, vv.26b-28⁴⁶² portrays YHWH in relation to his intention to get Jerusalem rebuilt, and how this will be done. V.26a reverses 6:11,⁴⁶³ while v.27 focuses particularly on YHWH's speech to 'the deep' (צולה),⁴⁶⁴ which in turn heightens the effect of the concrete appointment of Cyrus in v.28 with a mythological sense).⁴⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that all three words of the speech in v.27 חרב, נהר, and יבש, co-occur earlier in Isa 19:5 (in an oracle concerning Egypt) and 42:15 (in the announcement of YHWH's readiness to act), signifying YHWH's power to triumph just like when he created order from chaos (Gen 1). The long and general divine self-predication finally comes to its climax at a concrete appointment of Cyrus as his shepherd to fulfil all his purpose, to rebuild Jerusalem and lay the foundation for the temple.⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, as Goldingay observes, each one and even the sequence of YHWH's self-predications is intentional 'to convince an audience of something that the prophet knows will take some believing.'⁴⁶⁷

In YHWH's speech to Cyrus (45:1-7),⁴⁶⁸ he starts with what he has done for Cyrus (vv.1-3a), to be followed by his revelation so that Cyrus and peoples may know about YHWH (respectively vv.3-5, vv.6-7). As the table below shows, while their knowledges both include YHWH's sole divinity, Cyrus' knowledge lays more emphasis on YHWH's calling and equipping Cyrus – despite his unknowing of him – for the sake of Jacob, while peoples' knowledge more on YHWH as the only God and the maker of all.

<p>למען תדע כי אני יהוה הקורא בשמך אלהי ישראל למען עבדי יעקב וישראל בחירי ואקרא לך בשמך</p>	<p>So that you may know That I am YHWH The one who called you by your name is God of Israel For the sake of my servant Jacob, Israel my chosen, I call you by your name</p>
<p>אכנך ולא ידעתני אני יהוה ואין עוד זולתי אין אלהים אאזרך ולא ידעתני</p>	<p>I titled you though you did not know me I am YHWH, there is no other, besides me there is no god. I equipped you though you did not know me</p>
<p>למען ידעו ממזרח שמש וממערבה כי אפס בלעדי אני יהוה ואין עוד</p>	<p>That they may know, from the rising of the sun to the west, That no other is beside me, I am YHWH, and there is no other.</p>

⁴⁶¹ Each of the four colas all take a perception term: אתים, קסמים, הכמים, and דעתם.

⁴⁶² האמר leads the first three lines while ולאמר the fourth line.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 107-8; Goldingay, *Message*, 258.

האמר לירושלם תושב ולערי יהודה תבנינה וחרבותיה אקומם	44:26b
עד אשר אם שאו ערים מאין יושב ובתים מאין אדם והאדמה תשאה שממה	6:11

⁴⁶⁴ צולה is a hapax legomenon variant of מצולה ('the depths of the sea'). McConville (*Isaiah*, 507) follows Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 107) to regard it as a poetic word for the ocean.

⁴⁶⁵ Goldingay, *Message*, 259; McConville, *Isaiah*, 507.

⁴⁶⁶ The temple motif is to be developed as a major theme in chs.56-66.

⁴⁶⁷ Goldingay, *Message*, 253.

⁴⁶⁸ Though the actual addressee is still Jacob-Israel.

יוצר אור ובורא חשך	The shaper of light, and creator of darkness
עשה שלום ובורא רע	Maker of well-being and creator of evil
אני יהוה עשה כל אלה	I am YHWH, maker of all these

In 45:7, while 45:7b (אני יהוה עשה כל אלה) forms an inclusio with 44:24b (אנכי יהוה עשה כל),⁴⁶⁹ the pair of ‘light’ and ‘darkness,’ in the current context, might link back to the ‘sun’ mentioned in v.6α, but more possibly link forward to the pair of ‘well-being’ and ‘evil,’ hence the connotation of ‘salvation’ and ‘judgment’, which summarises YHWH’s plan in 44:24-45:7 and aligns well with its following 45:8. The sequence of 45:8 following the speech of 41:1-7 signifies YHWH’s צדק and salvation are to be revealed through his plan through Cyrus.

4.4.2.2 Isa 45:9-13

While the woe-oracle where the woe is to those who are made strive with their maker and to the children who ask their parents about their begetting (vv.9-10) seems a bit out of context, it functions rhetorically to contrast with the divine speech of vv.11-13 where YHWH allows people to ask him about things to come and command him concerning his children and the work of his hand (v.11) followed by YHWH’s further confirmation of his plan through Cyrus (vv.12-13).⁴⁷⁰ This contrast is specifically expressed by the use of יוצר in v.9ab and v.11, and by that of the parent-children relationship in v.10 and v.11b. Besides, v.9b and v.11b share the similarity of ‘work of hand’, while v.10 and v.11b share the similarity of the parent-children relationship.⁴⁷¹

4.4.2.3 Isa 45:14-25

45:14-17 exemplify nations’ knowledge of YHWH and of the contrast between idol-devotees and Israel.⁴⁷² Egyptians, Cush and Sabaeans, who co-occur earlier only in 43:3 where they are the

⁴⁶⁹

44:24	45:7
יצרך	יוצר אור
נטה שמים לבדי רקע הארץ מאתי	בורא חשך עשה שלום ובורא רע
אנכי יהוה עשה כל	אני יהוה עשה כל אלה

⁴⁷⁰ 45:12 (cf. 40:22, 26); In 45:13, אנכי העירתהו בצדק (cf. 41:2); וכל דרכיו אישר (cf. 40:3-4), and הוא יבנה עירי (cf. 44:28)

⁴⁷¹ See the מה questions in v.9b (הוא יאמר לאב מה תוליד ולאשה מה תחילין) and v.10 (האיתות שאלוני על בני ועל פעל ידי תצוני).

⁴⁷² This reading is based on my understanding of two scholarly debates. Firstly, is Cyrus or Jerusalem that is meant as ‘you’ in v.14? Following Ibn Ezra, Jerome and Hugo Grotius, Skinner, Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 240) argues for Cyrus by repointing 2fs pronoun suffix to 2ms pronoun suffix. However, as Blenkinsopp, McConville and Goldingay observe, v.14a links back to v.13 by the motif of ‘wealth’ and the 2fs noun/pronoun-suffix, thus ‘my city’ Zion is meant in the 2fs pronoun suffix in v.14. Secondly, do the three nations who speak of v.14bβ continue to speak in vv.15-17? Blenkinsopp

ransom that YHWH paid in exchange for Jacob-Israel, are now listed here as representatives of these nations. This is rhetorically powerful. It is exactly they who will see YHWH save Israel, and who will see the contrasting fate between idol-devotees and YHWH's people Israel. In such a way, Jacob-Israel is YHWH's witness.

They recognise firstly that the God of Israel is the only God (45:14b β ; cf. 45:6) and Israel's saviour (45:15, 17; cf. 43:3, 11, 12) – the combination of these two ideas echoes very much 43:11-13 – and secondly that idol-makers will be ashamed while Israel will not (45:16, cf. 41:11; 44:9, 11). These two aspects occur respectively in 43:8-13 and 44:6-20, the two passages on Jacob-Israel as YHWH's witness. Therefore, 45:14-17 are a manifestation of Jacob-Israel as YHWH's witness through YHWH's salvation of Israel. YHWH's response in vv.18-19 confirms their recognition of him as the only God, while also corrects their misperception on his hiddenness (cf. v.15).

In vv.18-19 YHWH not only reaffirms he is the creator, but also emphasizes there is *purpose* in what he creates (לא תהו בראה לשבת) and he is to be sought (לא אמרתי לזרע יעקב תהו בקשוני) in contrast with the idol's nothingness and emptiness (41:24, 29) and idol-makers not profiting (44:9a, 10).⁴⁷³ Besides, v.19 also characterizes YHWH's speech with openness and brightness (לא בסתר דברתי במקום),⁴⁷⁴ ארץ חשך and truth (אני יהוה דבר צדק מגיד מישרים), which is to be developed in vv.20-25.

The imperative calls in v.20, 21, 22 carry the discourse of vv.20-25 forward. In v.20 the imperative call (2mp verbs) to פליטי הגוים ('survivors of nations') is followed by a description of the 3mp idol-devotees (לא ידעו הנשאים את עץ פסלם ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע) which rhetorically exhorts the survivors of nations to note the folly of idolatry. In v.21 the imperative call to declare is followed by rhetorical questions and answers, which reveal YHWH as the only God, the governor of the course of history (cf. 41:21-24; 43:8; 44:7), saviour (43:11, 12; 45:17), and 'a righteous God' (אל צדיק), a new dimension to YHWH's self-proclamations in previous chapters. Developing from vv.20-21, in v.22-24 YHWH exhorts all the ends of earth to turn to him and be saved (פנו אלי והושעו), v.22a, cf. the

(*Isaiah 40-55*, 257) regards the prophet as the speaker of vv.15-17, while Goldingay (*Message*, 285) states there is "no indication of the change of speaker," hence nations are still speaking here. Besides, if vv.15-17 are all spoken by the prophetic figure, then it is difficult to rationalize why the prophetic figure suddenly addresses Israel directly in v.17b (as the second person in v.17b shows) while Israel is referred to (not addressed directly to) in vv.15-17a. However, if vv.14b β -17 are all spoken by the nations, then the inconsistency between the 2fs suffix in v.14b β and 2mp in v.17b can be explained as referring respectively to the city as a whole (hence 2fs) and the individual people in the city (hence 2mp), a similar case could be found in 42:18-25 where 2ms is used to refer to the collective Israel while 2mp to the individual Israelites.

⁴⁷³ תהו occurs in 41:29 and 44:9a, though not in 41:24 or 44:10.

⁴⁷⁴ As Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40-55*, 260) maintains that the statement of YHWH's not speaking in hiddenness or darkness emphasizes that YHWH has consistently conveyed messages to his people with clarity, honesty, and directness, which implies a comparison between the transparent and unequivocal declarations of Yahveh's prophets and the murmuring/whispering meditation during a necromantic séance (8:19-22 and 29:4).

exhortation to Jacob-Israel in 44:22: שובה אלי כי גאלתיך,⁴⁷⁵ which is followed by his sole divinity (v.23b), his oath (v.23) and peoples' submission to and knowledge of YHWH (vv.24-25).

Therefore, in the subunit vv.14-25, there are some developments from vv.14-17 to vv.18-25. Firstly, the peoples who come to know YHWH extend from Egyptian, Cush and Sabaeans to 'all the ends of earth' (v.22), 'every knee' and 'every tongue' (v.23). Secondly, idol-devotees' shame (v.16) is related to their imperception (v.20b). Thirdly, Israel is not only saved and not put to shame (ישראל) (v.17), but the offspring of Israel will be justified and boast (ביהוה יצדקו ויתהללו כל זרע ישראל) (v.25). Here, the development from נושע to יצדקו aligns with YHWH as נושע (v.21),⁴⁷⁶ the development from לא תבשו ולא תכלמו to ויתהללו takes on a more positive emphasis, and the development from ישראל to כל זרע ישראל extends the horizon. Fourthly, it develops from YHWH as known as a God who hides himself (v.15b) to a God who reveals himself through his speech (v.19, 23).

4.4.3 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 46-48

Isa 46-48 constitute two parallel subunits: Isa 46 and Isa 47-48, both structured by the fall of Babylon-related (46:1-2 on the fall of Babylon's gods Bel and Nebo; Isa 47 on the fall of Babylon itself) and exhortations to Jacob-Israel (46:3-13; Isa 48).

4.4.3.1 Isa 46

The imperatives שמעו אלי (v.3), זכרו (v.8, v.9) and שמעו אלי (v.12), occurring in a chiasmic order, together with the rhetorical question (v.5), rhetorically call upon the addressee's attentiveness. A key rhetorical device in Isa 46 is 'contrast'. 46:1-2 pick up the verb כרע ('to bow,' vv.1, 2) from 45:23 in an ironically contrasting manner, because in the former YHWH claims that every knee shall bow to him, while the latter depicts an ironic picture that both Bel and the animals which carry its image shall bow down. Simultaneously, 46:1-2 link forward to what follows by the repetition of נשא/משא and עמס in a contrasting manner in vv.3b-4. In the former the images of Bel and Nebo were a burden that was carried and borne by animals and cannot free a burden, while in the latter YHWH emphasizes that he has carried and borne Jacob-Israel. Moreover, the prepositional phrases in v.3b-4a express the time range of YHWH's bearing/carrying them (מני בטן ... מני רחם ועד זקנה ... ועד) ('from birth...from womb, and 'till your old age and till your grey hair') while the

⁴⁷⁵ שובה אלי כי גאלתיך cf. the exhortation to Jacob-Israel in 44:22: שובה אלי והושעו.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 269; McConville, *Isaiah*, 519.

announcement of הוא אני and the fourfold repetitive pattern of אני preceding the first-person verb in v.4 (אני אסבל אני עשיתי ואני אשא ואני אסבל) clearly highlight YHWH's own involvement. These striking contrasts between vv.1-2 and vv.3-4 would naturally lead to a negative answer to the rhetorical question of v.5, which introduces a short version on the folly of idolatry (vv.6-7; cf. 44:9-20)⁴⁷⁷ by emphasizing that idols are made from and with gold and silver, unable to move from where people have placed them, or to answer or save.

It is after these contrasts that YHWH calls Jacob-Israel to “remember...call to mind...remember” successively and intensively (vv.8-9) followed by an echo with 41:1-4, 21-24 concerning YHWH's plan through Cyrus in 46:10-11 whose emphasis here lays “on the certainty of YHWH bringing his purpose to completion.”⁴⁷⁸ Thus, vv.8-11 again call Jacob-Israel to perceive YHWH as the Lord of world history.

While v.12 addresses Jacob-Israel as אבירי לב הרחוקים מצדקה v.13 announces the imminence of צדקתי and ותשועתי. The parallelism between them suggests understanding צדקתי in the similar sense of ותשועתי. Thus, McConville translates the former as ‘deliverance’.⁴⁷⁹ The address אבירי לב (‘strong-minded,’ v.12)⁴⁸⁰ complements and carries forward the address פושעים (‘rebels,’ v.8), calling with greater urgency for them to trust in the deliverance of YHWH alone rather than other gods.

4.4.3.2 Isa 47-48

Isa 47 and 48 are respectively addressed to Babylon and Jacob-Israel. Both discourses are carried forward by imperatives. Noteworthily, the first two subunits of each discourse use the same imperative word and the similar addressee (47:1 and 47:5 both use the imperative שב and are addressed to בתי כשדים, while 48:1 and 48:12 both use the imperative שמע and are addressed to יעקב or בית יעקב).⁴⁸¹ Both the discourses comment on the addressee's imperception.

The openings of vv.1-4 and 5-7, the first two subunits of Isa 47, are both formed with שבי ... כי לא (‘sit...for you will no longer be called...’ vv.1, 5). Then, v.1 is followed by the judgement upon Babylon, while v.5 is followed by the reasons for that judgment, which culminate

⁴⁷⁷ Apart from the length difference, there are some other nuanced differences between these two passages on the folly of idolatry. Firstly, the highlighted material for making idols in 44:9-20, esp. 44:13-20, is more *wood*, while that in 46:6 is more *gold/silver* which, apart from being the material for making idols, could also be the payment for hiring a goldsmith to make the idol. Secondly, 44:9-20 illustrate the folly of idolatry through the failure in perceiving that the idols that they bow down to, worship and pray to are made by themselves from the same wood that they use to warm themselves and cook food. By contrast, 46:6-7 emphasize more the passiveness of idols, their inability to move from where people have placed them, and their inability to answer and save people.

⁴⁷⁸ McConville, *Isaiah*, 526.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 II*, 85.

⁴⁸¹ See Figure 18 in Uhlig, *Hardening*, 209.

their imperception (v.7b, *עד לא שמת אלה על לבך לא זכרת אחריתה*). Their imperception is further elaborated on in vv.8-9 and vv.10-15, both of which quote their embedded speeches about their security and divine-like feature (vv.8, 10), but overthrow their security (v.9a, 11) in a way of revealing the uselessness of their sorceries or wisdom (vv.9b, 12-15).

The openings of 48:1, 12, the first two subunits of Isa 48, both have the imperative form of שמע addressed to יעקב, together with a participle form of קרא used in relation to ישראל.

In vv.1-11 the prologue (vv.1-2) and epilogue (vv.9-11) – both mention YHWH's name – frame a chiasmic structure of vv.3-8.

Structurally, in vv.1-2, v.1aβγ//v.1bαβ and v.2aα//v.2aβ; while v.1bγ is the only colon that is not semantically or syntactically interrelated to other cola like others in vv.1-2, v.1bγ locates in the centre,⁴⁸² hence standing out. While the designations associate Jacob-Israel with YHWH through their name and origin (v.1aβγ, v.2aα) and their reliance on YHWH (v.1bαβ, v.2aβ),⁴⁸³ the structural emphasis (לא באמת ולא בצדקה) strikingly contrasts with YHWH's dispositions or purposes in previous chapters.⁴⁸⁴ Hence vv.1-2 characterize Jacob-Israel in a way that emphasizes how they have profaned YHWH's name and reputation, which is to be picked up and solved later in v.9 (cf. בשם יהוה in v.1; ימען שמי in v.9).

482

שמעו זאת בית יעקב הנקראים בשם ישראל וממעי יהודה יצאו הנשבעים בשם יהוה ובאלהי ישראל יזכירו לא באמת ולא בצדקה	v.1aα Call to hear v.1aβγ Participle designation followed by a yiqtal verbal clause v.1bαβ Participle designation followed by a yiqtal verbal clause v.1bγ
כי-מעיר הקדש נקראו ועל-אלהי ישראל נסמכו יהוה צבאות שמו	v.2aα v.2aβ v.2b

⁴⁸³ Textual-critically, the MT reading of יהודה וממי יהודה ('from waters of Judah') is emended to וממעי יהודה ('from lions/wombs of Judah') denoting their origin – the combination of יהודה יצאו (v.1aγ) and כי-מעיר הקדש נקראו (v.2aα) contrasts with ופשע מבטן קרא לך (v.8). Literary-contextually, the designations of Jacob-Israel here could be justified in the literary context: (i) in previous chapters, the pair of Jacob-Israel occurs frequently in YHWH's discourses (eg., 40:27; 41:8, 14; 42:24; 43:1; 44:1, 5, 21, 23; 45:4; 46:3) while 48:1aβ particularly echoes 43:1-2. (ii) YHWH himself swears (45:23) and exhorts Jacob-Israel to remember (44:21; 46:8), and Jacob-Israel is appointed as his witness (43:8-13; 44:6-8), which might be alluded to in 48:1bαβ. (iii) Their calling after 'the holy city' (48:2aα) after the announcement of the fall of Babylon (Isa 47) echoes the contrast already made in PI (esp. 2:2-4; 13:1-14:23).

⁴⁸⁴ As McConville, *Isaiah*, 539, observes, 'it is precisely YHWH's purpose in his deliverance of them [Jacob-Israel] through Cyrus to establish righteousness on earth'. It is also noteworthy that the pair of אמת and צדקה occurs only here and Zech 8:8. In Isa 40-55, צדקה occurs in 45:8, 23, 24; 46:11, 12; 48:1, 18; 51:6, 8; 54:14, 17. Among them, it occurs in pairing with 'salvation' in 45:8 (ישע), and in 46:13; 51:6, 8 (ישועה). The co-occurrence of שבע and צדקה in 45:23 and 48:1b contrasts YHWH's swear with Jacob-Israel's. As for the connotations of אמת ('a match between words or appearance and reality...between what one does now and what one does in the future...straightforwardness, transparency and integrity in community relationships') and of צדקה, and the speciality of this pair, see Goldingay, *Message*, 342-3.

Again, structurally, vv.3-5//vv.6b-8 while v.6a falls in the structural centre.⁴⁸⁵ While the motif of former-new things occurs frequently in previous chapters in courtroom scenes to argue for YHWH's sole divinity (e.g., 41:1-4, 21-28; 43:8-13; 44:6-20; 45:20-25), it culminates here in association with Jacob-Israel's condition.⁴⁸⁶ This culmination explains why YHWH has to claim his sole divinity repeatedly in vv.3-8, Jacob-Israel's imperception is explained through their 'stubbornness idolatry, arrogance and rebellion' (vv.4, 5b, 7b, 8b respectively). Moreover, it is also noteworthy that the structural centre (v.6a) exhorts the audience to see and to declare based on what they have heard. As McConville states, "Because they have heard, they have every reason to see and understand."⁴⁸⁷

In vv.9-11, the refinement of Jacob-Israel (v.10) is framed by two למען clauses (vv.9, 11) – the first למען clause emphasizes YHWH's restraining from anger and cutting off Jacob-Israel which should have been the judgmental result for their condition as characterised in vv.1-8, while the second one on YHWH's readiness to act, the sense of which is especially enhanced by the use of twofold למעני and the rhetorical question יהל איך in v.11.

Though v.10 seems out of the context of vv.9-11, it actually picks up and solves the problem of v.4 where the hardness of Jacob-Israel (כי קשה אתה) is depicted through the metaphors of 'an iron neck and 'a copper forehead' (וגיד ברזל ערפך ומצחק נחושה). Both iron and copper are smeltable and refinable metals (cf. צרף, v.10). In v.4, while קשה and ערף usually occurs in a same colon,⁴⁸⁸ and the specialities of Isa 48:4 not only include the breaking up of קשה and ערף into two colas, but also the adding of the metaphor of 'copper-forehead'. As Goldingay observes, the former denotes that they are not merely a people with 'a stiff neck' but 'with an iron bolt in their neck instead of a neck muscle,' lacking the flexibility to turn, while the latter draws attention to their seeing because 'forehead is referred to in connection with the location of the eyes'.⁴⁸⁹ The metal metaphors of v.4

⁴⁸⁵ On the one hand, vv.3-5 parallel vv.6-8 in three ways. Firstly, v.3a//v.6b concerning declaration of former things/new things through the correspondence of הראשנות ('former things') to חדשות ('new things') and מאז ('from old') corresponds to מעתה ('from now'), and both using the verb שמע. Secondly, v.3b//v.7a concerning the realization of prediction with a temporal term: ('suddenly I acted, and they came about'// 'now they are created'). Thirdly, v.4//v.8 (יעד, followed by their 'stubbornness' and 'rebellion' respectively) and v.5b//v.7b (פן תאמר, followed by their 'idolatry' and 'arrogance' respectively) concerning positively and negatively expressed reasons for YHWH's declaration and action. On the other hand, vv.3-5 and vv.6b-8 have *different emphases*. The former emphasizes YHWH has announced and informed, and that Israel has heard (v.3a//v.5a use נגד and שמע and מאז), while the latter emphasizes the *time* of new things (twice עתה, plus its synonymous expositions – לא מאז and לפני-יום in vv.6b-7a, to contrast with the twofold מאז in vv.3-5) and on Israel's having *not known/heard* (לא ידע and לא שמע occurs in reverted order in vv.6b-7a//v.8).

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 198.

⁴⁸⁷ McConville, *Isaiah*, 540.

⁴⁸⁸ E.g., the stereotyped phrase קשה-ערף (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13), and the co-occurrence of the verb קשה and the noun ערף (Deut. 10:16; 31:27; 2 Kgs 17:14; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15; Prov. 29:1; Neh 9:16, 17, 29; 2Chron 30:8; 36:13).

⁴⁸⁹ Goldingay, *Message*, 346.

are picked up in v.10 (הנה צרפתיך ולא בכסף בהרתיך בכור עני). It is debatable concerning how to understand *בכסף*,⁴⁹⁰ while its syntactical parallel or contrast with *בכור עני* ('in a furnace of afflictions') would suggest it be understood as 'not in a silver furnace', which unfortunately does not tease out what exactly should be meant either.⁴⁹¹ However, as the motif of refinement occurs far back in Isa 1:21-26 where their silver has become dross (v.22) and will be smelted away (v.25) when restoring the righteous city Zion, 48:10 might allude back and develop 1:25 by maintaining that they are not to be refined in a way similar to refining silver because, as Calvin maintains, 'if God had refined them like silver, there would be nothing left of them'.⁴⁹² The phrase *בכור עני* occurs separately in Jacob-Israel's time in Egypt, which is referred to as 'iron furnace' (Deut 4:20; 1Kgs 8:51; Jer 11:4) or 'afflictions' (Ex 3:7,17). Hence by recalling Egypt, it characterises Jacob-Israel as a consistently unresponsive and faithless rebel from its origin in Egypt.⁴⁹³ While v.10 picks up the motif of stubbornness that dominates vv.3-8, its frame (vv.9, 11) picks up and solves the problem of vv.1-2, that is, YHWH's name being profaned by Jacob-Israel's lack of truth and *צדק*. Therefore, vv.9-11 are the climax and conclusion of vv.1-11.

To conclude, on the one hand, the imperception theme locates in the structural centre of 48:1-11, as the thematic climax of the theme of former-new things in Isa 40-48, while on the other hand, Israel's imperception is not adjudicated upon simply because of YHWH's care of his own name, praise and glory when this section finishes in 48:9-11.

The three successive imperatives of *שמע* (v.12, 14, 16) respectively draw Jacob-Israel's attention to YHWH as the first and the last (v.12b)⁴⁹⁴ and the creator of heaven and earth (v.13),⁴⁹⁵ to YHWH's declaring his plan through and his rising of Cyrus (vv.14-15), and to YHWH's accessibility in speech and in presence from the beginning (v.16b).⁴⁹⁶ All these can be traced back to chs.40-41 and run through chs.41-44 and 44-48.

⁴⁹⁰ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 195 mentions three proposals in the scholarship: a refinement process that is (i) similar to Jer 6:29-30 (i.e., an in-vain procedure), or (ii) different from refining silver, or (iii) not intended to result in silver? All these three proposals are possible from the perspective of the preposition *ב*.

⁴⁹¹ While Goldingay (*Message*, 350) translates v.10 in this manner, he comments that 'the first indicates that the smelting did not produce very valuable metal, as if it were a process of smelting silver.'

⁴⁹² Referred to by Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 270.

⁴⁹³ Cf. Goldingay, *Message*, 350.

⁴⁹⁴ As Goldingay (*Ibid.*) states, Isa 48:12b put together the assertive 'I am the one' with which 41.4 closes and the succinct 'I am first/I am last' of 44.6, and add a 'yes' ('*ap*'). The line thus manages to be even more emphatic than any of these passages in its brisk claim for YHWH's unique authority from beginning to end."

⁴⁹⁵ The expression, *אף ידי יסדה ארץ וימיני טפחה שמים*, of v.13a highlights the role of YHWH's *hand* in the creation of heaven and earth, while v.13b (*קרא אני אליהם יעמדו יחדו*) emphasizes their responsiveness to YHWH's calling.

⁴⁹⁶ In Isa 40-55, the word 'hide' occurs firstly in 40:27 where Jacob-Israel laments their way is hidden from YHWH, and their right disregarded by him. Later, in 45:15, the people of Egypt, Cush and Sabaeans perceive YHWH as a God who hides himself, while 45:19 YHWH corrects that he did not speak to Jacob-Israel in hiddenness/secret.

4.4.4 The (Im)perception Theme in 44:24-48:22

In 44:24-48:22, the theme of (im)perception is mainly elaborated through YHWH's plan through Cyrus.

Early on in 44:24-28, the introduction to YHWH's speech to Cyrus, YHWH has already designated himself to Jacob-Israel from the perspectives of himself as the creator of heaven and earth, the frustrater of diviners, the confirmer of his servant's word, the announcer of Jerusalem's being rebuilt and of Cyrus as YHWH's shepherd. In this introduction, YHWH's plan through Cyrus, including the redemption of Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, is to be understood in the light of his creative power and triumph. Besides, the contrast between YHWH or his servant and the self-esteemed wise/diviners has hinted at the contrast between true and false perception, the latter of which is further picked up in ch.47.

Then, in YHWH's speech to Cyrus (45:1-7), YHWH reveals the source of Cyrus' power and triumph – purely from YHWH himself (vv.1-2)– and that his calling and equipping Cyrus is for the sake of Israel, and as well for Cyrus' and nations' perception of YHWH (esp. למען תדע in v.3b, and למען ידעו in v.6a). The repetition of ולא ידעתני ('but you did not know me', vv.4b, 5b) highlighted that YHWH can call on someone who has not known him.

The contrast between vv.9-10 (woe to the 'makee' who asks about the work of its maker) and vv.11 (humanity could ask the work of its creator) introducing YHWH's rising Cyrus (vv.11-12) confirms what he has announced in 44:24-45:7. Besides, YHWH's permission for humanity to ask about his work will also contribute to their perception, because vv.9-13 are followed directly by the people of Egypt, Cush and Sabaeans' perception of YHWH (vv.14-17): they will perceive there is a God, who is the only God, among Jacob-Israel, and that the shame is for idolators but not for Jacob-Israel, and that YHWH is a saviour and self-hiding God. YHWH's response in vv.18-24 reveal that he is indeed the only God, though he is not a hidden God especially in terms of his speaking/declaring, and that not only the people of Egypt, Cush and Sabaeans but all humanity shall perceive him. Therefore, in the three subunits of 44:24-45:25, the first one (44:24-45:8) announces YHWH's plan through Cyrus and its effect on Cyrus and the nations' perception of him; the second one (45:9-13) invites the whole humanity to perceive YHWH through his plan through Cyrus, while the last one (45:14-25) presents a development of the nations' perception of YHWH.

In Isa 46-48, YHWH calls upon Jacob-Israel's perception (46:3-8; ch.48) after the portrayal of the fall of Babylonian gods, Bel and Nebo (46:1-2) and after the discourse on the fall of Babylon itself

(Isa 47). While the fall of Babylon in Isa 47 is mainly developed through, and *ascribed to*, their imperception, the exhortations to Jacob-Israel in Isa 48, directly following Isa 47, highlight Jacob-Israel's imperception as a reason for YHWH's declaration to them about former things and new things (48:3-8). The contrast between the judged imperception of Babylon (ch.47) and the un-judged imperception of Jacob-Israel (48:3-8) provokes the question of why YHWH does not judge Jacob-Israel similarly, which is then answered in 48:9-16, that is, for the sake of YHWH's name and glory – YHWH alone as the God. Here witnesses the “recurring theme in Deutero-Isaiah: even though Israel is self-blinded and unfit to be redeemed, the Lord will rescue Israel out of his own compassion and pride and for his own purposes.”⁴⁹⁷

4.5 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 49-55

As mentioned in section 4.3, even though 48:1-8 highlight Jacob-Israel's imperception and sinfulness, ch.48 does not end in a similar manner with ch.47, where Babylon's imperception and sinfulness leads to the fall of Babylon. While 48:9-11 ascribe YHWH's special treatment of imperception and sinfulness to his own name, glory and praise, 48:16-22 hint at the key role of ‘me’ and ‘his spirit’, whom YHWH is now sending, in persuading Jacob-Israel to perceive and the executing of Jacob-Israel's redemption from Babylon. Developing from here, chs. 49-55 unfold how the servant ‘me’ helps Jacob-Israel's, and even the nations', perception of YHWH.

One significant feature of chs. 49-55 is that the dominating pair Jacob-Israel in chs. 40-48 is now shifted to that of Zion-Jerusalem in chs. 49-55. The former directs one's attention more to the origin and beginning of the Israelites and to how the relationship between Israelites and YHWH has established and developed over the history of Israel, which is paramount as YHWH comforts Israelites in chs. 40-48. Now, in chs. 49-55, the dominating pair Zion-Jerusalem directs the audience's attention to their physical home and city Zion-Jerusalem and to the imminence of their journeying home.

4.5.1 Structure of Isa 49-55

Isa 49-55 can be demarcated into three loosely parallel subsections: 49:1-26; 50:1-52:12 and 52:13-55:13, in all of which, there is a servant passage (49:1-6/13; 50:1-11; 52:13-53:12) followed by salvation oracles (49:14-26; 51:1-52:12; 54-55), hence the servant's calling, life and suffering are closely associated with the nation Israel's fate and even with that of all the nations. Besides, there is

⁴⁹⁷ Stern, “Blind Servant,” 227.

a development concerning the servant from ch. 49 (emphasizing more his speech-vocation and mission) to ch. 50 (emphasizing both his speech and suffering) to ch. 53 (a silent suffering servant), while the theme of restoration of Zion-Jerusalem is developed from YHWH's response to Zion's lament with the assurance of her rehabilitation (49:14-26) to the exhortation to Zion to awake and to depart from Babylon (chs. 51-52) and to the exultant confirmation of Zion's restoration (chs. 54-55). The servant theme alternates with the theme of Zion's restoration in a developing way, both reaching their climaxes in chs. 53-55.

In 49:1-26, vv.7-13 function as a transition from vv.1-6 to vv.14-26, because while v.1 and v.13 seem to function as an inclusio,⁴⁹⁸ the titles of YHWH at v.7b (יהוה אשר נאמן קדש ישראל ויבחרך) and v.26 (כי אני יהוה מושיעך וגאלך אביר יעקב) bracket the contents within, and because while vv.7-9a still continue YHWH's speech to the servant like in vv.1-6, vv.9b-13 (with the theme 'the journey back to Zion') is thematically in line with vv.14-26, that is, 'the restoration of Zion'. Besides, without vv.7-13 or 14-26, the purpose of vv.1-6 may be ambiguous, as commentators' varied proposals of the genre of vv.1-6 have indicated; it could be a thanksgiving psalm or a commissioning report. Seitz correctly points out the thanksgiving elements may be found in the response to the servant's despondency, while the commission languages are undeniable in vv.1-3, based on which Kaiser sees vv.1-6 as a royal commissioning report, while Westermann and Melugin a royal-prophetic one.⁴⁹⁹ Seitz suggests both the thanksgiving and commissioning elements should be read bearing in mind the 'retrospective character'.⁵⁰⁰ That is to say, the supreme purpose of vv.1-6 is not to give thanks to God, or to describe how God commissions the servant, but to convey its purpose together with the messages to follow, that is, vv.7-26. The servant's role, either for Israel (to bring them back to YHWH) or for nations (to be a light to them), as described in vv.1-6, is fulfilled through the restoration of Zion (vv.7-26). Only through reading ch.49 as a whole can we understand why there is vv.1-6, and what 'kings will see' and why 'kings will see because of YHWH who is faithful... and he has chosen you' (v.7); and be clearer about the rhetorical situation of ch.49, as will be shown in next section. Therefore, ch.49 is a unit.

⁴⁹⁸ See how the structure of 49:1-13 parallels 42:1-13 in Childs, *Isaiah*, 381 and Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 II*, 152, 167. The latter also observe 49:7-12 parallel 43:14-21 because they both constitute two messenger-formula oracles in which the first, shorter yet complete one (49:7; 43:14-15) is followed and developed by the second, longer one (49:8-12; 43:16-21).

⁴⁹⁹ Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40-66," 428.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

In 50:1-52:12, the theme of darkness and light (50:10; 51:4) connects chs. 50 and 51.⁵⁰¹ Besides, 51:9-52:12 is linked together by the twofold imperatives עורי עורי in 51:9; 52:1 and התעוררי התעוררי in 51:17. Moreover, עמי ('my people') repeats in high frequency in chs. 49-55 (49:13; 51:4, 16, 22; 52:4; 5, 6, 9; 53:8, 9. Cf. only in 40:1; 43:20; 47:6 in chs. 40-48). The same is true of the root נחם while the double imperative נחמו נחמו at 40:1 begins chs. 40-55, the root נחם does not occur again until 49:13, to be followed by a high frequency in chs. 51-52 (51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; cf. 54:11 as the last one in chs. 40-55). These elements further link chs. 51 and 52. Thus, Isa 50:1-52:12 may be taken as a unit.

Each of chs. 53 (a shorthand for 52:13-53:12), 54 and 55 can stand as a separate unit, though they altogether are a unit in parallel with ch.49, chs.50-52. As Goldingay observes, anonymity is a same feature for chs.53-55;⁵⁰² the woman-city of ch.54 is portrayed in relation to the servant of ch.53,⁵⁰³ while ch.55 links back to ch.54 through the concept of ברית (55:3 cf. 54:8,10), and to ch.53 concerning the success of Yhwh's will (55:11; cf. 53:10).⁵⁰⁴

4.5.2 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 49

There occur dialogues between "I" and YHWH in 49:1-13 while between YHWH and Zion in vv.14-26. Besides, the servant in vv.1-13 and Zion in vv.14-26 both express their despondency, and then both are comforted by YHWH.⁵⁰⁵

4.5.2.1 Literary-Thematic Analysis of 49:1-13

Though the qal imperative שמעו or שמע occurs 20 times in Isa, its use together with the suffixed proposition אלי occurs exclusively and densely in the latter part of Isa 44-48 (e.g., 46:3, 12; 48:12,

⁵⁰¹ As Ibid., 447 states, "chap. 51 is but a portion of a longer section running up to the suffering servant poem at 52:13-53:12."

⁵⁰² Goldingay, *Message*, 463-4.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 465-6. He adds, "the collocation suggest not that the servant is to be identified with Zion but that he is the key to Zion's destiny, as he was to Jacob-Israel's in 49.1-6."

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 466.

⁵⁰⁵ The servant's despondency is shown by v.4a (ואני אמרתי לריק יגעתי לתהו והבל כחי כליתי). The *waw* adversative (ו) is translated as 'but' at the beginning of v.4 introduces two synonymous and expanded phrases (respectively two and three words) with three synonyms (הִקְלַל, תְּהוּ, רִיק), which contrast vividly with YHWH's saying of ויאמר לי עבדי אתה ישראל אשר ויאמר לי עבדי אתה ישראל אשר at v.3. Labouring 'in vain' seems to negate YHWH's 'I will be glorified in you'. However, though the servant is despondent at v.4a, he does not lose his trust in YHWH (v.4b). The picking up of מבטן from v.1 in v.5 suggests that the same YHWH who called him is now comforting him by extending his servant-role from among Israel to among nations. Zion's despondency is quoted in v.14, to be followed by the comfort in vv.15-26. Vv.15-26 have four emphases. Firstly, YHWH does not forget them (v.15) but always remembers them (v.16). Secondly, Zion will be refilled with inhabitants who are fostered by kings and queens, despite Zion being barren, exiled and desolate (vv.17a, 18-25). Thirdly, Zion's enemies will be far away (v.17b) and will meet their judgment (v.26a). Fourthly, this will reveal YHWH as the saviour, redeemer, and mighty one of Jacob, to all flesh (v.26b).

16) and in chs. 49-55 (e.g., 49:1; 51:1; 51:7; 55:2, 3). Among all these occurrences in chs. 44-55, 49:1 is the only occurrence that is followed by a human speaker, while others are all by YHWH himself; 49:1 is addressed to אֵיִם and מֶרְחֹק (cf. 41:1) from a global horizon, while all others are to Jacob-Israel from a narrower horizon. These features therefore make 49:1 unique.

The summons in 49:1 directs the audience's attention to the vocation of 'me' and its effect (49:1-7/13). 49:1b recalls the prophet Jeremiah's vocation, while v.2, through metaphorizing 'my mouth' as 'a sharp sword' and 'a polished arrow' – both are military images – depicts the power of YHWH's word, thus vv.1b-2 suggest the first-person speaker here as a prophetic figure.⁵⁰⁶ Later, 'I'/'me' is designated as YHWH's servant, in whom YHWH will glorify (v.3) and who will bring back the perverted Israel to YHWH and who will be a light to nations (vv.5-6) and a covenant to the people (v.8). The servant in 49:1-13 has similar missions and effect with the servant Jacob-Israel of 42:1-9.⁵⁰⁷ Besides, the echoing of 49:5b (אֶכְבֵּד בְּעֵינַי יְהוָה וְאֱלֹהֵי הָיָה עִזִּי) where the servant speaks about himself in 43:4 (מֵאֲשֶׁר יִקְרָת בְּעֵינַי נִכְבְּדָת וְאֲנִי אֶהְבַּתִּיךָ), where YHWH speaks about Israel, indicates the similarity of the servant of 49:5 with the servant 'Israel' of 43:4. Moreover, a vocative reading of 'Israel' in 49:3 would suggest understanding the servant of 49:1-13 as the servant Jacob-Israel of chs.41-48. However, 49:5b where the servant is called to bring Jacob-Israel back to YHWH and 49:6a where the servant is to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel seem to distinguish the servant from Jacob-Israel. Jewish commentators Ibn Ezra, Rashi, and Kimhi all consider the servant here as an individual. This conflicts with a vocative reading of יִשְׂרָאֵל in עֲבָדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (v.3), thus many scholars tend to treat the word 'Israel' as a gloss.⁵⁰⁸ However, as Muilenburg states, 'the poetic parallelism, the witness of the versions, similar passages elsewhere (41:8; 43:10; 44:2, 21), and meter all argue for its retention.'⁵⁰⁹ Williamson's treatment of the 'Israel' in v.3 not as a vocative ('you are my servant, O Israel'), but as a predicative ('you are my servant,

⁵⁰⁶ To take one commentator for an example, Westermann, 208 writes, 'Thus, the two metaphors in vv. 2a and 2b, c must mean that God has endowed the Servant's word with *the power to penetrate* (a 'sharp sword') and *to range far and wide* ('a polished arrow'). This is *exactly the same thing* as is said of a prophet's word in Jer. 23.29 (cf. also Jer. 1.9f), and, in the New Testament, of God's (Heb. 4.12; Rev. 1.16; Eph. 6.17).' Italics added.

⁵⁰⁷ The terminological echoes between chs.49 and 42 are highlighted as follows.

Isa 49		Isa 42	
וְנִתְּנָה לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם	49:6	וְאֶתְנֶה לְבְרִית עִם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם	42:6
וְאֶתְנֶה לְבְרִית עִם	49:8		
לֵאמֹר לְאֶסְרוּ צֵאוּ לְאֲשֶׁר בְּחֹשֶׁךְ הִגְלוּ	49:9	לִפְקֹחַ עֵינַיִם עוֹרוֹת לְהוֹצִיא מִמְּסַגְרֵי אֶסְרֵי מְבֵית כְּלֵא יִשְׁבִי חֹשֶׁךְ	42:7
רְנֹה שָׁמַיִם וְגִילֵי אֶרֶץ יִפְצְחוּ וּפְצְחוּ הַרִים רְנֹה	49:13	וְרְנֹה יִשְׁבִי סֹלַע מְרָאשׁ הַרִים יִצְוְחוּ	42:11

⁵⁰⁸ Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 209) states Israel is added to interpret the text, and he also refers to 44:23 where God says he will be glorified in Israel.

⁵⁰⁹ Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66," 565.

[you are] Israel’),⁵¹⁰ solves the conflict between vv.5-6 and v.3. Further, considering the similarities and distinction between the servant of ch.49 and chs.41-48, McConville maintains this individual prophetic-servant ‘me’ in 49:1-13 takes on the status and role of the corporate servant ‘Jacob-Israel’ in chs.41-48.⁵¹¹

Another noteworthy characterization of the servant is his ‘hiddenness’ (v.2b). Being hidden could mean ‘waiting,’ or ‘for protection,’ or both.⁵¹² The ‘hiddenness’ of the servant here prepares for the ‘astonishment’ at the servant in 52:13-53:12. It is because he is hidden for his servant role that when he appears, no one esteems him as a special servant.

Moreover, while in v.4a the servant voices his despondency which is highlighted by the maintaining and fronting of ואני and by the fronting of לריק and of לתהו והבל כחי before their predicate verbs, he states his trust in YHWH in v.4b.⁵¹³ This faith-based perception (v.4b) comes before his perception of his mission and its effect extending from Israel to nations (vv.5-13).⁵¹⁴

4.5.2.2 A Literary-Thematic analysis of 49:14-26

Vv.14-26 make good use of rhetorical questions, personification, and similes/mixing metaphors. After quoting Zion’s speech, in which she assumes that she has been forsaken and forgotten by YHWH (v.14), YHWH negates Zion’s thought, firstly, by rhetorical questions and answers, in which Zion is personified as YHWH’s children (v.15). Secondly, in v.16, YHWH draws Zion’s attention to the fact that he has engraved her on the palms of his hand, and her walls are continually before him. Here, Zion is simply the name of a place called Zion. Thirdly, personifying Zion as the mother of the people of Judah, YHWH promises Zion that her children will hasten to come back, and that her

⁵¹⁰ Williamson, *Variations*, 151.

⁵¹¹ McConville, *Isaiah*, 550.

⁵¹² See respectively, Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” 428 and Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 208 where he makes a strong case that v.2b must be parallel with v.2a, meaning equipment of the servant, hence ‘protection’.

⁵¹³ As the table shows below, there are echoes between ch.49 and ch.40. Firstly, while the servant claims he has toiled (יגע) in vain (49:4a), the recalling of YHWH’s claim in 40:28-31 where יגע occurs three times may contribute to the shift from 49:4a to 49:4b. Secondly, as YHWH’s recompense (פעלת) is before him (40:10), so is the servant’s with YHWH (49:4b). Thirdly, while Israel complains their משפט is ignored by YHWH (40:27), the servant knows his משפט rests with YHWH. The first two echoes bind the servant’s mission and vindication with that of YHWH while the third echo contrasts the servant of ch.49 with Jacob-Israel of ch.40.

Isa 49		Isa 40	
אני אמרתי לריק יגעתי לתהו והבל כחי כליתי	49:4a	לא ייעף ולא ייגע	40:28aβ (YHWH as the subject)
אכן משפטי את יהוה ופעלתי את אלהי	49:4b	הנה שכרו אתו ופעלתו לפניו	40:10b (YHWH as the subject)
		ומאלהי משפטי יעבור	40:27 (Israel as the subject)

⁵¹⁴ The global horizon of 49:1 is soon picked up in 49:7 and 49:13.

destroyers will be far away (vv.17-18). Then, Zion is again a place in v.19, again a mother in v.20-21, and a combination of both in v.23, 25, 26.

It is from 49:14-26 that we see the family metaphor that runs throughout chs.49-55: YHWH as Zion's mother (49:14-16); Zion as Mother of Zion's children (49:17-22, 25; 50:1-3; 51:18, 20) and kings and queens as Zion's fathers and mothers (49:23). The first metaphor finds its synonyms in the metaphor of 'Daughter Zion' (1:8; 10:32), as a metaphor of vulnerability, hope, and the need for salvation, of Zion, and as a metaphor of YHWH's protection, care and intervention for Zion. By contrast, the metaphor of 'Mother Zion' portrays the city as the source of spiritual and national life for the people of Israel; it emphasizes the idea that Jerusalem provides shelter and sustenance to its inhabitants, and the hope that God's blessings and protection will extend to the city and its residents, hence a metaphor of comfort, nourishment, and divine blessing.

Besides, the end of 49:14-26 confirms again that the restoration of Zion will result in all flesh's knowledge of the relationship between YHWH and Zion.⁵¹⁵ This echoes and testifies 49:1-13 where the servant has a mission to both Israel and nations (vv.5-6), and where kings of nations will see (v.7), and where the restoration of the exiled community will provoke heavens and earth to praise (vv.8-13).

4.5.2.3 *The Perception Theme in Isa 49*

The servant himself is called yet hidden in his role among Israel, though he will be a light to the nations, that is, public in his role to the nations. As shown above, the servant in ch. 49 links backward to the servant in chs. 41, 42, and forward to 52:13-53:12. Seitz observes,

v.7 appears more prospectively related to the final servant poem at 52:13-53:12 than retrospectively afflicted with 42:5-9. The reverse is true of 49:8-12, which shares with 42:5-9 the singular expression "covenant to the people," positively anticipating the servant's success to liberating God's people everywhere, rather than pointing to the destiny of suffering and affliction at the hands of the nations (cf. 49:7 and 52:13-15),⁵¹⁶

He is right about v.7. Concerning vv.8-12, it should be noted that while it positively anticipates the servant's success, it also assumes *לבזה נפש למתעב גוי לעבד משלים* of the proceeding v.7 which indicates the servant's suffering and affliction. The themes of the suffering servant and the seeing of the king are then combined and further elaborated in Isa 52:13-53:12. What the kings will see (v.7) in the context of ch. 49 is then illustrated at vv.8-26. It is noteworthy that titles of YHWH at v.7 (*יהוה אשר*)

⁵¹⁵ וידעו כל בשר כי אני יהוה מושיעך וגאלך אביר יעקב ('Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob'.)

⁵¹⁶ Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66," 428.

קדש ישראל ויבחרך (נאמן קדש ישראל ויבחרך) and v.26 (יהוה מושיעך וגאלך אביר יעקב) bracket the contents within. Kings will see how Israel is redeemed, and then understand YHWH as the only true God. This perception is made possible through YHWH's servant.

4.5.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 50:1-52:12

4.5.3.1 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 50

Isa 50 can be further divided into vv.1-3, 4-9 and 10-11. The questions and answers, together with two different metaphors (Zion as the divorced mother, and Israelites as the children who have been sold), in v.1 suggest that the addressees' mother Zion was sent away not because of a divorce-paper,⁵¹⁷ and that the children, the addressees, were sold not because of debt, but rather both because of the addressees' iniquities and transgressions. The statements in vv.2b-3 demonstrate the effect of YHWH's rebuke. In between, rhetorical questions of v.2a indicate that the addressees do not believe that YHWH who brought them to the current exiled situation can also save them, and that YHWH is persuading them that he, who is mighty in rebuking, is also mighty to deliver. Then, while the focus of vv.4-9 shifts to the servant, vv.1-3 and vv.4-9 are related through the contrasts between the imperception of Zion's children and the perception of the servant. Firstly, while no one was present (ואין איש) or answered (ואין עונה) YHWH when he came and called (v. 2), the servant is there and attentive to YHWH. Even though the phrases יעיר בבקר בבקר יעיר לי אזן לשמע (v.4) and אדני יהוה פתח לי אזן (v.5a) indicate that YHWH takes the initiative to awaken and open the servant's ears to hear, the maintaining and fronting of ואנכי in v.5b⁵¹⁸ suggests that the servant himself does not turn YHWH down. The responsiveness of the servant to YHWH (vv.4-5) is vividly contrasted with the irresponsiveness of the people (v.2a). Secondly, when Zion's children may think YHWH's hand is too short to redeem or has no power to deliver (v.2b), the servant is convinced that God helps and vindicates him so that he will not be put to shame (vv.7-9), even when he suffers the attackers' shaming treatment upon him (v.6). Lastly, vv.10-11 exhort the addressee to fear YHWH and obey the voice of his servant where there is also a contrast between the servant and people: the former trusts and leans on YHWH even when walking in darkness without light, while the latter self-provide light

⁵¹⁷ It is debated whether the divorce paper existed or not.

⁵¹⁸ ואנכי לא מריתי אחר לא נסוגתי

and are asked sarcastically to walk in their self-provided light only to lie down in torment.⁵¹⁹ Therefore, the contrasts between the servant and Zion's children, and the exhortations, in Isa 50, function together to persuade Israel to follow the servant's example and to obey his voice.⁵²⁰

4.5.3.2 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 51-52

What is especially noteworthy is that the three 'escalating appeals' of 51:1-8 – addressed to the 'pursuers of צדק' (vv.1-3); God's own people (vv.4-6); 'knowers of צדק' and those in whose hearts God's law is found (vv.7-8) – find their backdrop in ch. 50,⁵²¹ and are a further development from ch. 50. The first appeal resorts to the ancestral narrative, and especially to Abraham and Sarah, with an emphasis on how YHWH blessed and multiplied them from barrenness.⁵²² Besides, it also recalls the imagery of Eden. They together exhort the addressee to believe that YHWH will re-people Zion as he gave offspring to Abraham and Sarah, and revive the desolate Zion to be like Eden (vv.1-3). The second appeal, vv.4-6, strongly calls for the addressees' attention in terms of hearing and seeing. Observe especially עיניכם והביטו ... שאו in v.6. Besides, it is worth noting in vv.4-5 that the root יצא occurs both before and after the adjective קרוב ('near'). Furthermore, תצא is governed by both תורה and משפטי in v.4, while יצא occurs in parallel with קרוב in v.5. That is to say, the object of their hearing, as indicated by vv.4-5, is the going out, and the nearness, of YHWH's law, משפט, צדק, and salvation. Then, v.6, through the twofold calling upon their seeing⁵²³ – similar to v.4 which has a twofold calling upon their hearing – draws the addressee's attention to the contrast between the impermanence of the heavens/earth/people and the permanence of YHWH's salvation and צדק. The former is depicted vividly through two metaphors, כעשן נמלחו ('will vanish like smoke') and כבגד תבלה ('will wear out like garment'), to be followed by כמו כן ימותון ('like this they will die'). Therefore, vv.4-6 draw upon the perception of the addressees who are called עמי ולאומי to the nearness of YHWH's law and משפט, and his everlasting צדק and salvation. The third appeal, vv.7-8, addresses the knowers (cf. pursuers of vv.1-3) of YHWH's righteousness, to encourage them in their hardship, as indicated by the explicit exhortations אל תיראו and אל תחתו, followed by a כי clause. As observed by Seitz, 'the same language used by the servant to describe his

519

מי בכם ירא יהוה שמע בקול עבדו אשר הלך חשכים ואין נגה לו יבטח בשם יהוה וישען באלהיו	50:10
הן כלכם קדחי אש מאזרי זיקות לכו באור אשכם ובזיקות בערתם מידי היתה זאת לכם למעצבה תשכבון	50:11

⁵²⁰ Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 568.

⁵²¹ Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66," 441.

⁵²² It is noteworthy that the theme of the shift from barrenness/desolation to re-inhabitation, initiated in 49:15-26, is recapitulate in 51:1-3, and later in 53:10 and 54:1-3.

⁵²³ Goldingay, *Message*, 426, observes that the 'seeing' here in 51:6 combines both the senses of the seeing in 40:26 (the creation) and of that in 49:18 (the future), the twice commands of seeing before 51:6.

own conviction of God's vindication (50:9) is here applied to the circumstances of those addressed.⁵²⁴ It is noteworthy that 51:1-8 share with ch.50 some similar phrases – see especially ידִי (50:2) vs וזרעִי (51:5); כבגד יבלו (50:9) vs כבגד תבלה (51:6); עש יאכלם (50:9) vs עש יאכלם (51:8). Ch.50 ends up with a contrast between a believing servant and self-relying people, aiming to persuade the audience to follow the servant's example to trust YHWH in every challenge. 51:1-8 back up this persuasion by salvation oracles which draw the addressees' attention 'backwards and forwards' in time (vv.1-3), and 'upwards' to the heavens and 'downwards' to the earth (vv.4-6), and by the exhortation not to fear.⁵²⁵ The same is true of 51:9-16, 17-23; 52:1-12.

51:9-16 begin and end with the theme of YHWH's creation and salvation (vv.9-10, 16). The appeal to YHWH's ancient treatment of Rahab and the dragons in relation to YHWH's mighty deeds in creation (v.9), and the appeal to YHWH's mighty deed at the Red Sea in relation to YHWH's redeeming the Israelites from Egypt (v.10), work to denote together that, as YHWH established heaven and earth from Rahab and dragons in old days, and redeemed the ancient Israelites from Egypt, so will he re-establish and redeem Zion from her enemies (vv. 16). Then, vv.11-12 parallel with vv.14-15: both are composed of YHWH's promise of salvation and YHWH's announcement of who he is; and they complement each other. The centre of this chiasmic structure of vv.9-16 is the rebuke with sarcasm in vv.12b-13 which strengthen the exhortation not to fear enemies but to trust YHWH. Observe especially the contrast between the description of what they fear ('you fear the man who dies and son of Adam who is made like grass') and of who they forgot ('but you forgot YHWH your Maker, the one who stretched out the heavens and established the earth'). Besides, the sarcasm is further enhanced through the transience of the oppressor whose wrath they fear (v.13b).⁵²⁶ Therefore, vv.9-16 functions again to exhort them not to fear enemies but to trust YHWH.

51:17-23 take up the motif of 'wrath' of v.13 to be integrated with the motif of the 'cup', hence כוס המרתו, though it is not the cup of the oppressor's wrath of v.13, but of YHWH's wrath, which carries the connotation of judgement (cf. Jer. 25:15-29).⁵²⁷ Noteworthy, both 51:17 and 51:22 proclaim that the cup of YHWH's wrath is also a cup of staggering (כוס התרעלה), while עניה ושכרת ולא מיין ('you afflicted and drunken but not because of wine') recall Isa 28:7 and 29:10.⁵²⁸ As drunkenness

⁵²⁴ Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66," 448.

⁵²⁵ This is done by how 51:1-8 start and end.

⁵²⁶ "You fear continually, all the days before me, the wrath of the oppressor who sets himself to destroy! Where is the wrath of your oppressor?"

⁵²⁷ כוס היין החמה in Jer 25:15 is very similar to כוס המרתו in Isa 51:17. The same cup also falls upon Nebuchadnezzar (Hab. 2:16), Judah (Ezk. 23:31–34), Edom (Jer. 49:12; Lam. 4:21). Cf. G. Mayer, "כוס", *TDOT* 7:103.

⁵²⁸ The former states the priests were drunken because of wine, while the latter states prophets were drunken not because of wine but the spirit YHWH poured out so that they did not have perception.

symbolizes imperception in chs. 28-29, that the fury and staggering cup and their drunkenness have now been removed from them in 51:17-23 indicates both the removal of their punishment and imperception. In such a way, the perception theme is woven into the message of salvation and encouragement.

The beginning and end of 52:1-12 both start with imperative appeals and a comment on טָמֵא (vv.1-2, 11-12). In vv.1-2, the charge to put on beautiful garments (52:1) is an ‘unmistakable’ contrast with ‘the garments consumed by moth and worm’ (50:9; 51:8).⁵²⁹ Besides, the appeal to ‘rise’ also vividly contrasts with 51:23 where the tormentor commanded שְׁחִי וְנִעְבְּרָה (‘bow down so that we may pass over’). Moreover, הִתְנַעַר מִדָּפְר of 52:2 (‘shake yourself from dust’) also reverse the saying of 51:23 לעִבְרִים לְעֹבְרִים (‘and you made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over’). While 52:3a echoes 50:1 through נִמְכַרְתֶּם (‘you were sold’), 52:3b announces that they will be redeemed now (תִּגְאָלוּ). Similarly, 52:4-5 looks backward to the time when Israel was in Egypt, Assyria, or now in exile, when YHWH’s name was despised. However, after the transition of v.6, vv.7-10 look forward to the future salvation. As vv.7-10 depict, with (good) news-bearers and (salvation-)proclaimers arriving upon the mountains of Zion, watchmen will raise their voice to sing for joy, because they will see YHWH’s returning to Zion (עֵינַי בְּעֵין יִרְאוּ בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן, v.8). Moreover, the whole of Jerusalem will sing for joy, and all nations will see God’s salvation (לְעֵינַי כָּל הַגּוֹיִם וְרָאוּ, v.10). 52:11-12 end up with an appeal to leave their current place, which puts an emphasis on the contrast with Israel’s ancient exodus: טַמֵּא אַל תִּגְעוּ (‘you shall not touch the unclean’),⁵³⁰ לֹא בְּחִפְזוֹן (‘not in haste’, cf. Ex 12:11) and לֹא תִלְכוּן (‘not flight’). As McConville observes, these three phrases depict Babylon as “the ritually unclean in an allusion to the holiness of Jerusalem,” and indicate “no threat from a pursuing enemy” on the returning journey.⁵³¹

4.5.3.3 The (Im)perception Theme in chs. 50-52

Isa 50 demonstrates the development of the (im)perception theme in various ways. Firstly, the servant’s ears being opened by YHWH contrasts with the condition of Jacob-Israel in 48:8 and 6:10.⁵³² Secondly, the servant’s *knowledge* of sustaining the weary comes from YHWH’s provision

⁵²⁹ Cf. Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” 453.

⁵³⁰ Something new in this appeal puts the exodus in a new light: Egypt is unclean just like Babylon. Thus, this appeal asks the audience to accept a new thing, and to rethink what is like to be in a foreign land.

⁵³¹ McConville, *Isaiah*, 582.

⁵³² Cf. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 234-5.

50:5	48:8	6:10
אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה פָּתַח לִי אָזֶן	גַּם מֵאֵז לֹא פָתַח אֲזָנְךָ	וְאֲזִנֵּי הַכֶּבֶד

of a tongue of the taught (v.4a),⁵³³ while his willingness to suffer is ascribed to YHWH's awakening and opening his ears (vv.4b-5).⁵³⁴ Here in 50:4-5, למודים is used for the servant sustaining the weary and hearing properly hence not rebelling. This denotes the significance of the servant's being taught, which prepares for his exhortation to the audience to hear his voice in 50:10. Thirdly, the exhortation of 50:10 takes up 30:8-14 to reverse the imperception which is ascribed to their listening and reliance.⁵³⁵ Besides, Isa 50 also takes up 8:11-9:6. The similarities they share include the concept of 'fearing YHWH' (50:10, cf. 8:12-13) and the concept of למודים (50:4; cf. 8:16)⁵³⁶ and the imagery of light and darkness. Reading ch.50 in light of 8:16-9:6 highlights the significance of perception/responsiveness (cf.50:1-3) and God-provided light (9:1-6) and leads the audience to expect God to provide light in the new circumstance,⁵³⁷ which will be addressed in 51:1-8.

The perception theme in ch. 50-52 is explicit through the theme of darkness and light in 50:10-11, and the 'seeing' of YHWH's salvation by both Israelites and nations in 52:8-12.

The motifs of 'darkness' (השכים) and 'brightness' (נגה) in 50:10-11 mean 'terrible circumstances' and 'salvation' respectively. The terrible circumstances that either the people or the servant were in have already been hinted at in vv.1-9. For example, the two metaphors in v.1 hint at the people's exiled situation. Besides, YHWH's deeds in vv.2b-3 also take up images of destruction. Note, especially, קדרות (darkness, blackness) and שק (sackcloth) are used in v.3, which have already brought a dark

⁵³³ In v.4a (אדני יהוה נתן לי לשון למודים לדעת לעות את יעף דבר), note the fronting of the subject and also note the purposeful infinitive construct לדעת ('to know') after לשון למודים ('a tongue of the taught').

⁵³⁴ In v.4b-5 (יעיר בבקר בבקר יעיר לי און לשמע כלמודים אדני יהוה פתח לי און ואנכי לא מריתי אחור לא נסוגתי) contrasts with 48:8

⁵³⁵ Cf. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 236.

כי עם מרי הוא בנים כחשים בנים לא אבו שמוע תורת יהוה	30:9	מי בכם ירא יהוה שמע בקול עבדו אשר הלך השכים ואין נגה לו יבטח בשם יהוה וישען באלהיו	50:10
לכן כה אמר קדוש ישראל יען מאסכם בדבר הזה ותבטחו בעשק ונלוז ותשענו עליו	30:12		

⁵³⁶ Apart from the double use of the adjective למוד in 50:4 (in the absolute form), its other occurrences in Isaiah are only 8:16 and 54:13 (though both in the construct form) which leads scholars to read 50:4 in light of 8:16 where the teaching is sealed among the taught. For example, Williamson, *Book*, 108 understands the servant of 50:4-9 as "one of those who witnesses the sealing of the prophetic teaching...and one of those who is 'qualified' to unseal the document."

⁵³⁷

	Isa 8:16-9:6	Isa 50
circumstance	YHWH's hiddenness (v.17)	Zion's children's irresponsiveness to YHWH (vv.1-3)
self-relying action and its result	enquire of the mediums and the necromancers (v.19) darkness (vv.20-23)	kindle fire and provide light for themselves (v.11) torment (v.11)
Darkness	as the result of their self-relying action (v.20-23)	as the result of their irresponsiveness (v.3), and the reason of their self-reliance
Light	The birth of the child	?

connotation into the picture. Moreover, as for the servant's suffering, though 'the agents and purpose of the humiliation are not in focus here,'⁵³⁸ v.6 does suggest the servant was enduring humiliating acts others inflicted upon him.

In the similar terrible circumstances, the servant's and others' responses differ: the former יבטח בשם יהוה וישען באלהיו ('trusts in the name of YHWH and relies on his God') while the latter לכו באור אשכם ובזיקות בערתם ('walk by the flame of your fire, a brand that you have lighted'). Seitz rightly observes that there exists a contrast between 'the servant, who walks without a torch through darkness but is nevertheless a light to the nations (49:6)' and 'those who seek to provide their own light for endeavours.'⁵³⁹ Besides, the contrast between the servant and others is not only in vv.10-11, but also in vv.1-9. While no-one waits for YHWH when he comes, or answers him when he calls, not trusting that YHWH is mighty to save (v.2), the servant mentions he was taught by YHWH, his ears awakened by YHWH morning by morning; he was not rebellious, he did not turn backward when he was suffering, for he believed YHWH would help him and he would not be ashamed (vv.3-9). Besides, while v.1 acknowledges that the Israelites are exiled because of their wrongdoings and transgressions, the servant's trust in YHWH's pardon (v.9) makes it clear that no one can declare them guilty when their God YHWH helps them. Therefore, ch. 50 is rhetorically aiming to persuade people to trust and fear YHWH, and obey the voice of his servant, rather than relying on themselves, so that, as Goldingay observes, 'the community may learn from a model of faithfulness and from the certainty of YHWH's support.'⁵⁴⁰ Through the theme of darkness and brightness, ch. 50 takes the 'darkness' as the situation, the servant's trust in YHWH in spite of suffering as perception, and the people's providing their own light as the imperception.

Concerning chs. 51-52, as narrated above, the dominant 'salvation' theme in these chapters starts by appealing to their hearing and seeing backward and forward, upward and downward, and ends with both Zion's and the nations' seeing YHWH's salvation (52:8-10). Here, the perception theme is appealed to a physical and cognitive sense. Besides, there is some movement from עורי עורי לבשי עז סורו סורו צאו משמם (52:1) עורי עורי לבשי עוז ציון (51:17) התעוררי התעוררי קומי ירושלם (51:9) זרוע יהוה (52:11). Among these four appeals, only the first one is addressed to YHWH, while three are addressed to the exiled people, either in terms of Jerusalem or Zion or unnamed. This reflects the speaker's view that YHWH well understands his people's unbelief or doubts, and how

⁵³⁸ Goldingay, *Message*, 408.

⁵³⁹ Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40-66," 438.

⁵⁴⁰ Goldingay, *Message*, 408.

comprehensively and patiently he encourages them, and urges them to respond with faith like the servant in ch. 50 in YHWH his God.

4.5.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 52:13-54:17

As mentioned in 5.4.1, 49:1-26; 50:1-52:12 and 52:13-54:17 loosely parallel each other in terms of all constituting a servant passage and a passage on the restoration of Zion-Jerusalem.

4.5.4.1 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 52:13-52:13

In chs.40-48, the servant Jacob-Israel is on the one hand appointed with the nations-related mission (42:1-9) and as YHWH's witness (43:8-16; 44:8), while on the other hand they are imperceptive and sinful (42:18-25; 43:22-28; 46:12; ch.48), despite which YHWH still keeps proclaiming salvation oracles to them. Similarly, in chs.49-55, on the one hand, 50:1 claims that it is because of the people's transgressions and iniquities that they have been brought into exile; 50:9 affirms that no one can declare the servant guilty as YHWH has vindicated him; 51:17-23 proclaim that YHWH's cup of fury upon Israel has been moved to their tormentors; 52:1, 11 both mention the unclean, which is regarded as a cultic uncleanness or impurity by Goldingay as associated with Babylonian gods.⁵⁴¹ On the other hand, chs.49-55 are even more urgent on the proclamation on salvation than chs.40-48. Even though earlier chapters ascribe YHWH's redemption of the imperceptive and sinful Jacob-Israel for the sake of his own name and glory (48:9-11), there still leaves a lingering question: how the Israelites' transgressions and iniquities and the cultic impurity of the nations are to be solved, that is, through what or who does YHWH offer the means of purification for his people (cf. in 6:6-7, YHWH offers a burning coal to atone the prophet Isaiah), which is now answered in ch.53.

Ch.53 is often structured by five stanzas with three verses each, that is, 52:13-15; 53:1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12,⁵⁴² or by a middle part (52:1-9) with a prologue (52:13-15) and an epilogue (53:10-12) as its frame.⁵⁴³ Both are defended on thematic grounds.⁵⁴⁴ I take the second view, because 53:10-12

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 459.

⁵⁴² Cf. North, *The Second Isaiah*, 234–246; Lindsey, “The Career of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12,” 313–314; Raabe, “The Effect of Repetition in the Suffering Servant Song,” 77-78; Ceresko, “The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12): Poetry and the Exodus-New Exodus,” 50-51 fn3.

⁵⁴³ Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” 462-468.

⁵⁴⁴ Bergey, “The Rhetorical Role of Reiteration in the Suffering Servant Poem (Isa 52.13-53.12),”: 177. Pikor, (“Theological,” 411) mentions other criteria for structuring Isa 52:13-53:12, including ‘(2) those identifying speakers (the

conclude vv.1-9 and echo 52:13-15. It is a summary and climax of vv.1-9 because of the repetitions of the words describing how, to what extent and why the servant has suffered, see especially the roots דכא (v.10, v.5), חלה (v.10, vv.3-4), מות (v.12, v.9), סבל (v.11,4), נשא (v.12, v.4) and פשע (v.12, v.8). 53:10-12 echoes 52:13-15 through the usage of רבים (which occurs nowhere else in 52:13-53:12 but only at the beginning and the end of it).⁵⁴⁵

52:13 starts with an attention-marker הנה, drawing the audience's attention to something about the servant, though עבדי is not fronted to follow הנה directly but follows the predicate verb ישכיל (cf. 42:1 which starts with הן עבדי). Since both the only two other occurrences of שכל in Isa are in hiphil form like 52:13 and mean 'to understand' (41:20; 44:18), I take this meaning for 52:13 as well.

Understood in this way, 52:13 links the servant's understanding/perception (v.13a) with his exaltation (v.13b). This lines up with 53:11b-12 which relate his knowledge to the justification of 'the many' and to his rewards. Therefore, both 52:13 and 53:11b-12 take understanding/knowledge as a reason for rewards.

Right after portraying the servant's exaltation to the highest degree (v.13), through the prepositional conjunctions (כך...כאשר, 'as...so...'), 52:14-15 link the astonishment of 'the many' at the servant's dehumanised appearance⁵⁴⁶ with the servant's sprinkling⁵⁴⁷ (hence purifying) 'many nations' and with the kings' unprecedented perception. 52:15b indicates the kings will see something untold and understand something unheard, which is in stark contrast to 6:9-10 where people see/hear but do not understand, which also indicates what they will see and understand is totally new/different from what

voice speaking in the song); (3) the poetic ones (stanzas); and rhetorical ones with the focus on (4) recurring words or (5) concentric ones.' In Pikor's thorough study of the structure of 52:13-53:12, he evaluates the limitations of the first four criteria and then proposes his own concentric structure (52:15-53:3; 53:4-7; 53:8-12) which is based on, yet slightly different from, Meynet's concentric structure (52:15-53:3; 53:4-7a; 53:7b-12). Pikor tries to bring out dynamics between each small piece in each of his proposed three concentric parts, which have not been elaborated by Meynet. This, together with other reasons, opens for him a necessity of a slight modification and reinterpretation of Meynet's structure. However, it is surprising that he does not apply these similar dynamics between each of the pieces within each concentric part into between each of these three concentric parts. It is indeed very difficult to draw out a neat structure, not least because of the ambiguity of identifications, the sudden changes of persons, complicated by the relationship between 'we' and 'I' – who are 'we'/'I', and where does the 'we' speech end? – but also because of the repetitions which interlock every piece in 52:13-53:12 so closely with each other.

⁵⁴⁵ If שכל in 52:13 is to be understood as 'to prosper', and if 52:15 reads נוה ('to sprinkle'), then 52:13-15 and 53:10-13 also echo through the motif of 'success' through humiliation and the motif of purification.

⁵⁴⁶ In c.14aβ (כן משהת מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני אדם), the noun with negative connotation (משהת, related to the verbal root שהת, meaning 'to corrupt' or 'be corrupted', hence translated as 'marred' or 'disfigured') governs two synonymous phrases מראהו (lit. 'his appearance [was disfigured] beyond man') and ותארו מבני אדם (lit. 'and his looking [was disfigured] beyond sons of Adam'). As McConville (*Suffering*, 51) states, "he was so disfigured and deformed that he scarcely looked like a human being."

⁵⁴⁷ The unexpectedness of the idea of נוה ('to sprinkle') in current text has prompted the alternative meaning of ('to leap' or 'to startle'), which would parallel שם of v.14a, and 'kings' shutting their mouths' of v.15aβ. However, the idea of sprinkling/purification is not totally unfit in the context, especially in light of the development of his sacrificial suffering to bear 'our' transgressions/iniquities and to make many righteous (vv.4-12). Cf. McConville, *Suffering*, 54-6.

chs. 40-52 have proclaimed, e.g., YHWH's sole divinity, the redemption of Jacob-Israel. As the context of 52:14b is about the servant, so what many nations and kings shall see and understand must also be about the servant.

The rhetorical question of 53:1a functions to invite the audience to believe לשמענתנו. While לשמענתנו is literally 'the hearing of ours' which can both mean 'what we have heard' (NRSV) or 'what he has heard from us' (ESV), I take it as 'report/message', an equivalent of 'what he has heard from us', because the immediate context does not denote the hearing of the 'we'-group, but only a report of their perception of the servant in retrospect; and even v.15b does not highlight the kings' hearing (ואשר לא שמעו and אשר לא ספר להם), but their seeing and understanding.

The parallel relationship between 53:1a and 53:1b suggests that 'our report' is 'the revelation of YHWH's arm' and that it is to the believer that Yhwh's arm has been revealed.⁵⁴⁸ The association of Yhwh's arm almost always with salvation in the immediate context of 53:1 (esp.51:5, 9; 52:10) indicates the report or revelation may also concern salvation, which is later unfolded through the servant.

The depiction of the servant in 53:2-3 develops from his unattractive origin and appearance to his being despised and isolated, which also highlights 'our' attitude/perception about the servant: not looking on, desiring, or esteeming him.⁵⁴⁹ However, אכן (v.4a) embarks on a shift of the tone, and every line of vv.4-6 begins with fronted-noun or pronoun,⁵⁵⁰ emphatically depicting how the we-group has changed their perception of the servant and themselves: 'the servant suffers because of us – our rebellion, iniquities'.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 68-70.

⁵⁴⁹ Although the focus of v.2 is heavily laid on the unattractiveness of the servant in terms of his origin, growth and appearance, ונראה and ונחמדו also indicate our attitude on the servant: neither looking on, nor desiring, him. Besides, as shown below, v.3 forms a chiasmic structure (a-b-c-c-b-a) before the unparalleled end, hence laying the emphasis on our attitude towards him, that is, not esteeming him.

ולא חשבנהו	נבזה	וכמסתר פנים ממנו	וידוע חלי	איש מכאבות	והדל אישים	נבזה
and we esteemed him not	he was despised	and like one from whom one hides one's face	and acquainted with grief	a man of pain	lacking men	he was despised
	a	b	c	c	b	a

⁵⁵⁰ A translation faithful to Hebrew syntax of v.4-6 could be: 'Yet it is our griefs that he is bearing, and it is our sorrows that he is shouldering. However, it is we who considered him stricken, smitten by the Lord, and afflicted. It is he who was pierced because of our rebellion and crushed because of our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace is upon him, and because of his wounds, we are healed. It is all of us who like sheep have gone astray, each to his own way we have turned, but Yhwh has laid on him the iniquities of us all.'

53:7-9 pick up from v.4-6 the theme of substitution/sacrificial suffering and add to it the emphases on the servant's silence amidst suffering (twofold *פיו יפתח*), on drawing 'his generation' and the audience to reflect on his suffering (*וואת דורו מי ישוחח*, v.8) and on the injustice between his action/speech and his treatment (v.9). Since v.7 also testifies to the non-violence and non-deceit of the servant of v.9, vv.7-9 thus work rhetorically to generate a perception of him.

53:10-12 denote the will of Yhwh shall prosper through the servant's reparation suffering; his will includes both the fate of the servant and that of 'the many'. The servant's seeing/knowledge is emphasised in vv.10, 11, respectively denote that it is "out of the anguish of his soul that he sees" and that 'it is his knowledge that brings the many to be accounted righteous.' Goldingay suggests this knowledge includes and extends beyond "knowledge/acknowledgement of Yhwh", and that "the servant's experience of weakness has contributed to his possessing the insight whose fruit will now be described."⁵⁵¹ It is precisely this insight of the servant (cf. the servant's insight in 49:4b; 50:7-9), that encourages him to be submissively silent in his reparation/sacrificial suffering. This silence lines up with the emphasis on kings' not being told in 52:15.

While the beginning and end of this poem highlight the servant's perception (52:13a, 53:11) and rewards (52:13b; 53:10, 12), the portrayal of the servant through the perspectives of we-group and Yhwh emphasizes his *submission* and *silence* in his reparation/sacrificial/vicarious suffering, which respectively in 50:5-6 and 42:2. Simultaneously, ch.53 also emphasises the effect of the servant's suffering/ministry upon the perception of 'we' (53:2-6/11a)⁵⁵² and 'the many' (52:15; 53:11), which echoes 42:1-4⁵⁵³ and 49:1-7. Therefore, ch.53 draws together features of the servant in earlier passages.

4.5.4.2 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 54

Ch.54 is addressed to a female figure. As Goldingay maintains, even though the female figure of ch.54 is differentiated from the male servant of ch.53, they are related in many ways, particularly, 'humiliation-exhalation/shame-beautification', 'peace', 'offspring,' *צדקה/צדק*, 'servant/servants', with these deliberate links suggest understanding the suffering and rewards of the servant as key to the female figure's destiny.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Goldingay, *Message*, 514.

⁵⁵² While 'we'-group speaks throughout 53:1-6 and Yhwh speaks 52:13-15 and at least 53:11b-12, the speaker of vv.7-11a is unclear: it could be the prophet who is identified with and speaking on behalf of 'we', or it could be Yhwh.

⁵⁵³ Stern, "Blind Servant," 229 observes that in Isa 42 the blind servant who has been trapped in darkness will be a light to nations, and similarly, the suffering servant who has been despised will blot out others' sin. For Stern, the suffering servant's suffering and its effect is the way in which the blind servant becomes a light to nations.

⁵⁵⁴ See Goldingay, *Message*, 466.

Besides, though she is not named, the previous chapters (chs.49-52) and particularly, the parallel of ch.53-54 with ch.49 and ch.50-52, invite us to understand ‘her’ as Zion-Jerusalem. However, not-naming ‘her’ explicitly at the outset helps to focus on the metaphor of a mother and a wife with its implications.⁵⁵⁵ A combination of the metaphorical female figure and the material city comes at vv.11-12 where stones, gates and walls denote a material city, while these precious stones are adornment for women’s appearance.⁵⁵⁶ The comparisons between the emphases of 49:14-50:3 and ch.54 (see below) provoke the audience to perceive her new destiny, the relationship between Yhwh and her, and his love and great compassion.

	49:14-50:3	Ch.54
the metaphor of ‘mother’	the children were once bereaved but now returned	the mother was once <i>barren</i> but now prolific
the metaphor of ‘wife’	was sent away because her children’s sins	was once deserted but now back/ <i>reconciled</i> (vv.4-8)
Yhwh in the family metaphor	as Zion’s mother (49:14-15)	as Zion’s husband (v.5)
Characteristics of Yhwh	his mighty power (vv.24-26)	his great compassion (vv.7-8)
Zion’s children are characterized by	sins and unresponsiveness (50:1-3)	Being taught by Yhwh; having great peace (v.14); servants of Yhwh (v.17)

4.5.4.3 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 52:13-54:17

Ch.53 presents we-group’s changed perception of the servant, though it does not articulate what made that change. However, the emphasis on not-being-told but seeing and understanding (52:15), on his unimpressive appearance (52:14; 53:2-3), and on his silence (53:7) might indicate the key to their (im)perception is their seeing of the servant who inactively, submissively and silently accepts unjust suffering. As Clines states, ‘the poem is about seeing, not hearing; so it is about vision rather than verbal communication.’⁵⁵⁷ Besides, the perception of the servant himself, that is, his trust in Yhwh’s vindication (mentioned earlier in 49:4b, 50:7-9, but not in ch.53) underlines his suffering and its rewards. Therefore, ch.53 overall provokes every individual in the audience to obtain a correct perception of the servant: the perception that the we-group has now gained, and the perception which sustains the servant to suffer sacrificially, reparably, and silently.

Ch.54 invites the audience to sing for, and also to perceive, how Yhwh has made the barren mother to be prolific, the deserted wife to be reconciled, how he turned anger to great compassion. The renewed Zion will bear children who will be taught by Yhwh. The links of 54:13-17 back to 53:10-11 through ‘offspring’, ‘servant(s)’ and ‘צדקה’ invite the audience to witness the servant’s reward, and to follow him in servanthood. Besides, 54:17 is the first use of ‘servants’ (plural) in the book,

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Goldingay, *Message*, 521.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 535.

⁵⁵⁷ Clines, *I, He, and They*, 43-4. Cited in *Ibid.*, 506.

and it is significant that it follows so soon after the picture of the suffering servant in Isa. 53. It is also important because ‘servants’ (plural) will come back in 63:15-19 and 65:9, 13-14. After ch.53, it seems that servanthood entails silent, unjust suffering; and perhaps also that true perception comes through such suffering.

4.5.5 Summary

Isa 49-55 develops the perception theme mainly through the servant figure in the plan of Yhwh’s salvation which will not only comfort Zion herself, but which kings will all see as well. In ch.49 the prophetic servant is commissioned to take on the role of the servant Israel to be a light and covenant for nations, while indicating his suffering which further develops in ch.50 and comes to its full force in ch.53. These passages on the suffering servant alternate with the exhortation to the people to trust in Yhwh’s salvation (49:14-24; chs.51-52, 54-55), while Isa 55 concludes the whole DI with Yhwh’s thoughts and ways being higher than the addressees’. Indeed, the thought/way that it is through the suffering servant that people finally come to acknowledgment of and trust in Yhwh is a higher one.

4.6 Conclusion: The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 40-55

As is shown in this chapter, the (im)perception theme is associated with Yhwh’s scheme of comforting the exilic Israelites whose faith crisis is mentioned in 40:27 and 49:14.

Ch.40, the introduction to DI, proclaims that the comfort for, and Israelites’ returning to, Jerusalem will reveal Yhwh’s glory which all flesh will see (40:1-11), and, through rhetorical questions related to perception, it provokes Israelites to perceive Yhwh as the creator with incomparable wisdom and knowledge, as the only God and a God never weary or faint (40:12-31).

In chs.41:1-44:23, the audience is further challenged, firstly, to perceive Yhwh as the governor of creation and history and the international political sphere (41:1-7, 21-29); secondly, to perceive what lay behind their status as Yhwh’s servant (41:8-20; 42:1-9): Yhwh’s protection and provision on the one hand, and the mission commissioned by Yhwh on the other hand; thirdly, to perceive their current blind, deaf and captivated situation (42:18-25), yet with an appointment as Yhwh’s witness (43:10,12; 44:8): it is the redemption of the sinful and captivated Israelites which testifies to Yhwh’s sole divinity and sole saviour, and testifies to Yhwh’s blotting out their transgressions and iniquities. The undertaking of court disputations addressed to nations and peoples, together with the appointment of Jacob-Israel as YHWH’s witness, also indicates that nations and peoples will also perceive YHWH as the only God.

In chs.44:24-48:20, firstly, in 44:24-45:25, Yhwh's plan is revealed in a more concrete way: his triumph through Cyrus is for Cyrus' and the nations' perception of Yhwh (44:24-45:8), hence inviting the whole humanity to perceive him via his plan through Cyrus (45:9-13), and a development of their perception of Yhwh (45:14-25). Secondly, ch.46 and ch.47-48 parallel each other: the fall of Babylon's gods (46:1-2)/the fall of Babylon (ch.47), followed by the address to Jacob-Israel to perceive (46:8-13; ch.48). Each starts with the fall of Babylon's gods and the fall of Babylon is ascribed to their imperception (chs.46-47). In ch.48, Jacob-Israel is also characterized as imperceptive. However, unlike Babylon, Jacob-Israel is assured of YHWH's salvation for the sake of his own name and glory. This thus leaves the question of how this could be possible.

In chs.49-55 the servant-passages are intertwined with Zion-passages, closely linking their fates together. The servant's perception of his mission and his suffering, and his trust in YHWH behind these give him the strength to suffer, which finally elicits the we-group's confession and perception of this servant's mission, which further invites the broader audience to such confession and perception.

Thus, the perception theme in Isa 40-55 is interwoven with the central theme of comforting. There is a development and even a transformation from 42:18-25 to ch.53 concerning the (im)perception theme. The audiences are unavoidably drawn to wonder how this transformation comes, and hence drawn to read the texts in between to answer this question. When the audiences do so, they will find the transformation that lies in YHWH's reiterative salvation oracles to counter against Israel's doubts and suspicions so as to persuade them as well as in the revelation of an individual servant.

Meanwhile, Stern maintains that through the imagery of "light and darkness, the hidden and seen, the witness and the blind or unseeing"⁵⁵⁸ – all related to the (im)perception theme – there is a progression from 'worm' (ch.41) to 'blind servant' Israel (chs.42-48) and to 'the suffering servant' (Isa 49-53, climaxing at ch.53).⁵⁵⁹ In particular, he shows that the "blind servant" of 42:19 is really the same figure as the "suffering servant" of 52:13-53:12. He makes the point that the term "blind" occurs seven times within Isa 42:7-43:8, out of 22 times in the whole OT.⁵⁶⁰ He thinks the idea of the "worm Israel" (41:14) implies blindness, and that that idea is developed first in 41:20 ("so that all may see") and later in the "suffering servant" (53:10b). The motif is part of Isaiah's extended imagery of light and darkness, e.g. in Isa 2 (darkness in 2:18-21) and 8:22-9:1[2]. He concludes:

⁵⁵⁸ Stern, "Blind Servant," 224-5, citing Muilenburg.

⁵⁵⁹ Stern, "Blind Servant," 226.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 225.

“...visual imagery in connection with the two servants...is strong and convincing evidence that Isaiah 53 is a continuation of the ‘blind servant’ prophecies and not a radical new departure.”⁵⁶¹ And Isa 53 is “a bold development of the prophet’s themes...The suffering servant was built using materials from the image of the ‘blind servant’ in a way both subtle and bold.”⁵⁶² Stern’s argument is essentially from language and style. It takes no special view of the composition of Isaiah, but it strengthens the “blindness” theme that runs through the whole book, and is deeply integrated into DI. It also relates to the question whether the figure of the suffering servant stands for Israel itself (rather than an individual). It is a form of the idea of a development of a theme, mainly within DI, but also drawing on imagery in Isa. 2.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 229.

⁵⁶² Ibid, 231-32.

5 The Theme of (Im)perception in Isa 56-66

While many scholars now agree that Isaiah can be read as a whole book, there is no one agreed way of doing it. Sommer undertakes an allusive approach,⁵⁶³ while Rendtorff a canonical-critical approach.⁵⁶⁴ Although Sommer and Rendtorff have different methodologies, interestingly, they both think 56-66 should be read in the light of 1-55, and also that the authors (of 56-66) were able to change and develop themes that they found in those preceding chapters. This fits very well with my thesis about a developing theme, in which the reader can discern both continuities and discontinuities with 1-55 in 56-66.

The perception theme in TI can be investigated through four main passages, firstly, 56:9-57:2 in the context of chs.56-57, secondly 58:2 and 59:9-15 in the context of chs.58-59, thirdly, 60:1-3 in the context of chs. 60-62, and fourthly, 63:17 in the context of 63:7-66:24. The first two passages are selected as there are words falling into category of (im)perception, or as linked to the light and darkness motif, and the clear echoing of Isa 6.

5.1 The Structure of Isa 56-66

There is a degree of consensus on the a-b-a macrostructure of TI that 60-62 stands in the centre surrounded by two symmetrical units 56-59 and 63-66.⁵⁶⁵ I basically agree with Goldingay's structure of 56-66 below, though I maintain that there is an *upward development* from the left to the right in this concentric structure.⁵⁶⁶

a	56:1-8	inclusion of foreigners	66:18-24
b	56:9-59:8	YHWH's rebukes on the community	65:1-66:17
c	59:9-15a recognizing their sins	voices from the community	63:7-64:11[12] praying for mercy
d	59:15b-21	YHWH as warrior and vindicator	63:1-6
e	60	salvation oracle	62
f	61 the gifted individual prophetic discourse		

⁵⁶³ Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*. Also see fn.373 in this dissertation.

⁵⁶⁴ Rendtorff, "Isaiah 56:1," 181-9. In his canonical-critical approach he follows C. R. Seitz, who in turn was indebted to B. S. Childs. Rendtorff believes chs. 56-66 never stood alone, but that the first readers of that section were also reading chs. 1-39 and 40-55. This, then, is a warrant for modern readers also to read the book as a whole.

⁵⁶⁵ Stromberg, *Introduction*, 42-48; Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 2.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 2.

In a, both 56:1-8 and 66:18-24 suggest the inclusion of foreigners in the community of YHWH. While the former emphasizes that there is hope of inclusion and acceptance into God's temple for foreigners and eunuchs, the latter goes further by emphasizing that they will see and proclaim God's glory among the nations, and that there will be priests and Levites from them. Thus, the latter is a development of the former.

In b, 56:9-59:8 and 65:1-66:17 both contain YHWH's rebuke to the community, though the former focuses very much on the wicked or sinners, while the latter is more balanced in rebuking the unfaithful and promising restoration for the faithful. Besides, 65:1-66:17 further identify the righteous (57:2) and the forgiven and healed (57:14-20) as the faithful servants and mourners of Zion. These two parallel with an upward developing movement, functioning to persuade the addressees to choose God's way and path, not only by warning them of bad consequences for the unfaithful, but also by presenting the rewards God reserves for the faithful servants.

In c, 59:9-15a and 63:7-64:11,⁵⁶⁷ as Berges maintains, "While the communal lament of Isaiah 59 is limited to the representation of the unjust conditions without mentioning repentance to YHWH, precisely this move is accomplished in the collective confession of 63.16a: 'Yes, you are our Father!' (cf. 64.7)."⁵⁶⁸ In addition, this perception at 59:9-15a enhance the urgency and necessity of the prayers at 63:7-64:11.

In d, 59:15b-21 and 63:1-6 both depict YHWH as a warrior, vindicator and revenger with motifs of clothing, and affirm that YHWH alone brings salvation; there is no one to help him. However, the former is targeted at the impenitent in Israel with a more general description of the scene, while the later at Edom with more specific and concrete details of the scene.

In the centre of this progressing concentric structure are the salvation oracles (chs.60-62), within which the gifted individual prophetic discourse (ch.61) stands at the centre, as seen by e and f in the table above. In e, both chs. 60 and 62 refer to renaming, while the latter is more detailed and specific than the former.⁵⁶⁹ Besides, ch. 60 depicts a vision of the nations who are drawn by the light and glory of YHWH shining upon Zion for a pilgrimage to it with treasures, while ch. 62 emphasizes the urgency of the restoration and transformation of Zion. At the centre of chs. 60-62, chs. 61 opens with

⁵⁶⁷ Goldingay (Ibid.) understands both texts as prayers. However, the former is more the people's realization, finally the perception, of their sins, their injustice and unrighteousness in the society and their current state of darkness, than their prayers.

⁵⁶⁸ Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 395.

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. 60:18 ("you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise) and 62:2-4 ("you shall be called by a new name ... You shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called my Delight Is in Her, and your land Married")

a proclamation of an individual about his anointment and mission (vv.1-3) and a vision of a future full of peace, joy, משפט and צדקה with both Israelites and foreigners as participants.

Vertically, as Berges states, in the development from a to f, the foreigners' inclusion in God's community to the prophetic accusation and exhortation against post-exilic Israel precedes the salvation oracle, suggesting that "salvation is offered on the one hand to YHWH's disciples from the nations, and on the other hand only to those in Israel who are willing to repent!"⁵⁷⁰ These two aspects are not contradictory, but they together redefine who Israel really is. This is the major distinctive development of the (im)perception theme in TI from PI and DI, which I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter through three major subsections, Isa 56-69, 60-62 and 63-66.

5.2 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 56-59

The previous subsection on the structure of Isa 56-66 shows the unity and progressiveness of these chapters through a concentric structure. In the analysis below, I will investigate the (im)perception theme through subsections 56:1-8; 56:9-57:21; 58:1-59:8; 59:9-15a and 59:15b-59:21.⁵⁷¹

Structurally, 56:1-8 opens and ends with a divine speech formula (56:1, 8) while 56:9-57:21 and 58:1-59:8 are two prophetic indictments to which we-group's confession in 59:9-15a serves as a proper response, followed by Yhwh's proclamation of salvation.

5.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 56-59

5.2.1.1 Isa 56:1-8

With the co-occurrence of three thematic terms of Isa, צדקה, משפט and ישועה, 56:1 links to both PI and DI, because the pair of משפט and צדקה echoes PI while that of ישועה and צדקה echoes DI.⁵⁷² Besides, the verbal pair שמר and עשה in v.1 are repeated in vv.2, denoting that keeping משפט and doing צדקה of v.1 are interpreted as keeping sabbath and not doing evil in v.2. Then, vv.3-7 concern the foreigners and eunuchs in a chiastic order with a divine speech formula in the centre ('let not *foreigners* say... let not *eunuchs* say... For thus says Yhwh ... *eunuchs*... *foreigners* ...'). In the shift of foreigners' fates from v.3aβ to v.7 and the shift of eunuchs' fates from v.3bβ to v.5, 'keeping (שמר) sabbath' and 'holding fast to (חזק) my covenant' (vv.4,6) are the shared characteristics of foreigners and eunuchs.

⁵⁷⁰ Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 395.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. Isa 56-57 is often divided into three middle units: 56:1-8; 56:9-57:13; 57:14-21. See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah*, 68-69 and Uhlig, *Hardening*, 271-274 for evidence of the unity of 57:14-21 with 56:9-57:13.

⁵⁷² Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 181-89.

As the pair of שמר and חזק (vv.4, 6) is synonymous to the pair שמר and עשה of v.1,⁵⁷³ their keeping sabbath and holding fast to Yhwh's covenant (vv.4,6) thus further explain what is the keeping משפט and doing צדקה of v.1a.

Besides, the causal relationship between v.1a ('command') and v.1b ('reason'), the explanatory relationship between v.2 and v.1a, and the ties between vv.1-2 and vv.3-7 together explain why foreigners and eunuchs' behaviour could now lead into a change of their fates: it is because of the approaching/revealing of Yhwh's salvation and צדקה.

Finally, in v.8, the divine speech and the term Israel resume, though the foreigners and eunuchs in vv.3-7 undoubtedly form part of the 'more/others' (עוד) that Yhwh will gather to Israel.

Therefore, 56:1-8 includes the foreigners and eunuchs within 'Israel', challenging both the Israelites' perception and the perception of foreigners and eunuchs. For the former, earlier, only ethnic Israelites were accepted as Yhwh's people; but now, it is those who keep Yhwh's sabbath and covenant who are accepted. For the latter, their lamented fates are antithetically countered-against. This new perception is distinct from earlier passages of Isaiah, and will further develop as Isa 56-66 unfold.

5.2.1.2 Isa 56:9-57:21

There are three addresses in the first round of rebukes and exhortations (56:9-57:21), respectively 56:9-57:2; 57:3-13 and 57:14-21. The first address (56:9-57:2) is directed to 'the beasts of the field and in the forest' to 'come to devour' which leads further to the rebukes on the imperception of three groups of people – the watchmen (צפיו), the shepherd (רעים), and indefinite everyone (by means of אין, 'there is not one') – where terms that fall into the category of perception or understanding (עורים), לא ידעו (מבין, שם על-לב, לא ידעו הבין, לא ידעו) abound. The description of the watchmen (צפיו), immediately followed by two כלם phrases and two negation לא, suggests that *all* the watchmen are *unable* to fulfil their duties (v.10-11ab). Besides, the statement of their lack of knowledge is then followed by a simile that compares the watchmen to dogs, which further develops the characterization of the watchmen – silent yet greedy.⁵⁷⁴ Likewise, the description of the shepherds starts with a statement of their lack of understanding, followed by further characterization of them as seeking their own gain and pleasure.⁵⁷⁵ As the images of 'watchmen' and 'shepherds' commonly stand for the political and

⁵⁷³ A new verb חזק is introduced as a synonym to עשה in v.2, transitioning the pair of שמר and עשה (v.1) to the pair of שמר and חזק (vv.4,6), and synonymising these two pairs.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Uhlig, *Hardening*, 260.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

religious leaders, 56:9-12 targets at the imperception of the leaders in the community. Then, 57:1-2 highlights that no one in the community of Israel takes to heart the perishing of the righteous, hence denoting that the ordinary leaders are imperceptive too. Therefore, 56:9-57:2 depict the imperception of both leaders and ordinary people in the community.

The second address (57:3-13) is aimed at those who practise idolatry and ally themselves with others, which echoes Isa 30. For them, there is no real salvation (57:13a), contrasting with those who rely on Yhwh (57:13b).

The third address (57:14-21) begins with terms reminiscent of 40:1-3, which as McConville maintains, ‘trades on the idea of a physical return of exiles, but here it has become a conventional preparation for a divine word assurance.’⁵⁷⁶ 57:15 denotes that the exalted, eternal, and holy God (these descriptive terms for Yhwh in 57:15 recall Isa 2, 6 and 9) dwells with the contrite and the lowly so as to revive them. 57:16 explains why he will not contend for ever, while v.17 acknowledges his punishment upon their iniquities. Vv.18-19 show Yhwh’s determination to heal and comfort them, while a contrasting result, ‘no peace,’ will be reserved for the wicked. Therefore, 57:14-21 overall denote that among Yhwh’s salvation, comfort and healing are no longer offered on the basis of ethnicity, but by whether they live with a contrite spirit and lowly heart, penitent for their iniquities. The contrast between ‘peace, peace to the far and to the near’ (v.19) and ‘no peace for the wicked’ (v.21) highlights this new defining norm. This echoes the theme of 56:1-8.

Overall, 56:9-57:21 begin with the rebukes on the imperception of leaders and people (56:9-57:2) and end with Yhwh’s exhortation in which healing occurs twice (57:18, 19), while in the middle it is their idolatry and alliance that they are accused of. The imperception-healing deliberately echoes 6:9-10 while idolatry-alliance Isa 28-30. Simultaneously, 57:14 is reminiscent of 40:1-3 and 57:21 of 48:22. Thus, like 56:1-8, 56:9-57:21 also witness the influence of, and develops from, both PI and DI. Like among the pre-exilic community, there exist imperception, idolatry and alliance-making exist among the post-exilic community, and salvation and healing are announced, though a distinct development of the (im)perception theme is the redefinition of who will receive the salvation and healing.

⁵⁷⁶ McConville, *Isaiah*, 642.

5.2.1.3 Isa 58:1-59:8

Isa 59:1-8 follows Isa 58 through the same attention-drawing marker הן (cf. 59:1; 58:3b, 4a)⁵⁷⁷ and the thematic relationship between צדק and יעש (cf. 59:1-2; 58:6-12), hence 58:1-59:8 is taken as a subsection here.

In Isa 58 the introductory vv.1-2 draw attention to the sin of hypocrisy of God's people. An imbedded quoted speech (v.3a)⁵⁷⁸ reveals the rhetorical situation of the people – they are complaining to YHWH of his imperception (לא ראית and לא תדע) of their fasting and humbling, recalling 40:27. However, v.4b raises the accusation that it is exactly their fasting that makes their voice not heard on high (also through a perception word, להשמיע). Their complaining is countered by YHWH's pointing out firstly the nature of their fasting (v.3b, 4)⁵⁷⁹ and secondly the fasting that he has chosen (vv.5-7), between which there lies a stark contrast – the former is to oppress others and seek self-pleasure while the latter is to liberate the oppressed and care for the needy. The ה rhetorical questions at the beginning of vv.5, 6, 7 call upon their perception/understanding of the true fasting – its essence lies at self-humbling and social ethics – and make their ostentatious observance of fasting culpable. Two אז ('then') phrases tell the rewards of true fasting: 'your light', 'your healing', 'your צדק' and 'the glory of YHWH (v.8) are all metaphors of salvation, and Yhwh's responsiveness to their calls and cries (v.9a) are signals of salvation. These rewards also make explicit the purpose of people's fasting which is only implied behind the question of v.3a: they are forcing Yhwh to bring about salvation by fasting. Like the logic of vv.6-9a, vv.9b-12 again relate righteous and compassionate behaviour (vv.9b-10a) with the promise of salvation (vv.10b-12), while vv.13-14 deal with how to honour the Sabbath (v.13) with Yhwh's promises (v.14). Though the thematic turning from 'fasting' to 'the Sabbath' may appear abrupt, there lie similar features in the observance of these two, including that the observant can be indulging in their own delight rather than seeking Yhwh's delight and that the observance of these two are not merely ceremonial but also substantial where the observant's attitudes towards Yhwh and towards other people are closely

⁵⁷⁷ 59:1 יהוה לא קצרה יד ולא כבדה אזנו משמוע (‘behold, YHWH’s hand is not too short that he could not save, nor his ears too dull that he could not hear’). Uhlig, *Hardening*, 269 states, as following and juxtaposed with 58:3b and 58:4a, הן in 59:1 is YHWH’s responses to the people’s complaint of 58:3a, and he even maintains that 59:1 makes explicit what is implied in the complaint of 58:3ab – their complaint is not just about YHWH’s imperception, but more about his ‘saving intervention ... hearing *and* saving’.

⁵⁷⁸ למה צמנו ולא ראית ענינו נפשנו ולא תדע (‘why have we fasted, but you do not see, and we humbled our soul, but you do not know’).

⁵⁷⁹ הן at v.3b and v.4a draws attention to the reality of their fasting: “behold, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your toilers; behold, you fast to quarrel and fight, to hit with a wicked fist” (v.3b-4a).

linked together.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, Isa 58 reveals what is the true observance of fasting and Sabbath, and why their seeking of Yhwh is merely ostentatious hence not receiving response or salvation from Yhwh.

59:1-2 confirms that it is not Yhwh's powerlessness in saving, but rather their iniquities and sins that have separated them from YHWH and made YHWH hide his face from them.⁵⁸¹ Then, 59:3-8 elaborate upon their sins and iniquities in greater detail, where most aspects are a travesty of true fasting, as Uhlig observes,

Instead of giving bread to the hungry (58:7), they hatch eggs that one dies from eating them (59:5). Instead of not pointing the finger (אֶצְבַּע, 58:9), their hands are covered with blood and their fingers (אֶצְבַּע) with guilt (59:3). Instead of avoiding speaking mischief (58:9), their lips speak lies and their tongues utter injustice (59:3, 13). And instead of removing the yoke of oppression [58:6, 9], there is even fiercer violence and bloodshed (59:3, 7).⁵⁸²

Noteworthy, three synonyms (דַּרְךְ, מַעַגְל, and נַחֲיִבָה) in v.8 signify their way of life and their behaviour, while the abb'a' structure relates their imperception of the way of peace to their lack of מִשְׁפָּט. The former could be both the cause and the result of the latter.⁵⁸³ Besides, as 59:8 alludes back to 58:2 with the co-occurrence of מִשְׁפָּט and יַעַד, 59:1-8 serve as an illustration of 59:2.

Therefore, 58:1-59:8 overall answer an embedded question of the people concerning why Yhwh has not yet responded to their prayers and saved them, through the prophetic indictment that their injustice and unrighteousness in their daily life and society could not be overlooked by their ostentatious fasting.

5.2.1.4 Isa 59:9-15a

In 59:9-15a, the prophet identifies with the people, acknowledging their situation (vv.9-11) and confessing their sins (vv.12-15a) on their behalf. As Goldingay observes, this response is not only to 59:8 or 58:1-59:8, but to the whole 56:1-59:8, because the frame of vv.9-11 witnesses the occurrence

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 183-4. The vocabulary links between 58:1-12 and 58:13-14 include especially (i) the root הִפִּיץ (cf. vv.2a, 2b and v.13 – vv.13-14 also use the root עָנַג as a synonym to הִפִּיץ: '[to] delight/take pleasure in'); (ii) the paronomasia between the last word of v.12 (שָׁבַת, 'to dwell in') and the key word in v.13 (שַׁבָּת, 'Sabbath'); and (iii) the inclusio of Jacob (cf. vv.1, 14).

⁵⁸¹ כִּי אִם עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם הִיוּ מְבַדְּלִים בֵּינֵיכֶם לְבֵין אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְהִטְאוּתֵיכֶם הִסְתִּירוּ פָּנִים מִכֶּם מִשְׁמוּעַ. While v.1 denies YHWH's powerlessness, v.2 confirms his hiddenness, though what the people regarded as the imperception, and fundamentally powerlessness, of YHWH, is actually due to their own sins and iniquities.

⁵⁸² Uhlig, *Hardening*, 266. The italic is a rewriting of Uhlig's sentence, "Instead of giving bread to the hungry, (58:7) one dies when eating from the people addressed (59:5)", for the consideration of English grammar.

⁵⁸³ See Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 196-7: "Directly, people are refusing to acknowledge the way that leads to the *šālôm* or well-being of those they are scheming against, in order (for instance) to deprive them of their land by making sure that there is no exercise of judgment or authority (*mišpāt*) in the community of the kind that would stop them implementing their will. This is the way people are making crooked paths for themselves to tread. But indirectly, it is their own well-being they are failing to recognize, they will find that the community's failure to exercise judgment works against them, and they are carving out paths that will turn out to be crooked in their effect on themselves."

of three key words which open Isa 56: משפט, צדקה and ישועה (cf. 56:1b).⁵⁸⁴ Besides, v.9 undertakes ‘light’ and ‘brightness’ as images of salvation, and ‘darkness’ and ‘gloom’ as that of judgment, hence tracing back to 8:21-9:1, whereas the vivid description of their blindness in 59:10 picks up from 6:9-10 and 42:18-25. The latter two occurrences focus more on the state of blindness whereas 59:10 distinctively focuses on its fatal effect – ‘stumbling at noon’ and ‘are like dead men’. In 59:12-15a the Hebrew words משפט and צדקה recur in v.14, and many ‘sin’-related terms have occurred before and with a high repetition ratio in Isa 1, 53 and 59, like פשע (‘transgression,’ or ‘to transgress,’ vv.13, 14; cf. 1:2, 28; 43:27; 46:8; 48:8; 53:12); חטא (‘sin’ or ‘to sin,’ v.12; cf. 1:4, 18, 28; 5:18; 13:9; 29:21; 31:7; 33:14; 38:17; 42:24; 43:27; 53:12); עון (‘iniquity,’ vv.1:4; 5:18; 6:7; 13:11; 14:21; 22:14; 46:21; 27:9; 30:13; 33:24; 40:2; 43:24; 50:1; 53:5, 6, 11; 57:17; 59:2, 3, 12); עשק (‘oppression,’ v.13; cf. 30:12; 54:14); סרה (‘to rebel,’ v.13 cf.1:5); שקר (‘lie,’ v.13; cf. 9:14; 28:15; 32:7; 55:20; 57:4; 59:3). The perception of sins (ועונותינו ידענום, v.12) is a sound summary for vv.12-15a.

5.2.1.5 Isa 59:15b-21

As Yhwh’s response to 59:9-15a, 59:15b-21 declare that having seen their situation, Yhwh himself intervenes and sends a saviour. In vv.15b-16a⁵⁸⁵ the repetitive use of the terms of physical perception once again counters against their accusation of Yhwh’s imperception and confirms his perception (cf. 58:3), while the recurrence of משפט, ישעה and צדקה again reveals what is lacking in society. Like vv.9-11, the twofold repetition of ישועה/ישע and צדקה in vv.16b-17a closely relates צדקה and משפט to ישועה, whereas v.20 distinctively suggests that “the promised salvation is limited to Israelites who turn from transgression.”⁵⁸⁶ While vv.15-18 note Yhwh’s intervention for salvation and judgment with the image of the warrior Yhwh, an image which powerfully emphasizes its urgency,⁵⁸⁷ the

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 208.

על כן רחק משפט ממנו ולא תשיגנו צדקה נקוה לאור והנה חשך לנגהות באפלות נהלך	Therefore, משפט is far from us, and צדקה does not overtake us; we hope for light, but behold, darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
נגששה כעורים קיר וכאין עינים נגששה כשלנו בצהרים כנשף באשמנים כמתים	We grope for the wall like the blind, we grope like those who have no eyes. We stumble at noon like in the twilight; among the vigor, we are like dead men
נהמה כדבים כלנו וכיונים הגה נהגה נקוה למשפט ואין לישועה רחקה ממנו	We all roar like bears; we moan and moan like doves; We hope for משפט, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.

⁵⁸⁵ V.15b: וירא יהוה וירע בעיניו כי אין משפט (‘and Yhwh saw it, and it was evil in his eyes that there is no mam’), v.16: וירא (‘and he saw that there is no mam, and appalled that there is no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his צדקה upheld him.’)

⁵⁸⁶ As Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 197 observes, this is “a qualification absent from other texts featuring Yhwh as warrior.”

⁵⁸⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 198 states that this image draws “on a long tradition nourished by cosmogonic combat myths and traditions about ‘the wars of Yhwh’ (Num 21:14-15; Exod 14:16) commemorated in heroic verse (Exod 15:3-4; Deut 33:2-3; Judg 5:4-5; Ps 68:8-9, 18; Hab 3:3-15) ... includes the violent psychological transformation induced by the anticipation or experience of combat.”

causal relationship between vv.15b-18 and v.19 indicates it is this intervention that results in peoples' fear for Yhwh's name and glory. Finally, vv.20-21 closely relate the redeemer's coming to the repentant Israelites with the prophetic inspiration upon them,⁵⁸⁸ which highlights the significance of living according to Yhwh's words.

5.2.1.6 Summary

To conclude, in the development from Isa 56 to 59, there are some intertwined catchwords/motifs, e.g., שָׁבַת (56:2, 4, 6; 58:13), בְּרִית (56:4; 59:20), מִשְׁפָּט, צְדָקָה and יִשְׁעָה (56:1; 58:2; 59:9, 11, 14), חָפֵץ (56:4; 58:2, 3, 13). Concerning the development throughout these chapters, while 56:1-8 takes the right attitude/behaviour towards Yhwh as the key to define Yhwh's community, Isa 58 further relates the right attitude/behaviour towards Yhwh with that towards other people in the community. In addition, the foreigners and eunuchs in 56:1-8 and the righteous in 57:1-2 are in stark contrast with the watchmen, shepherds, general community in 56:9-57:13 and those who fast and pray in 58:1-59:9 in terms of their behaviours and their fates.⁵⁸⁹

5.2.2 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 56-59

The deliberate structure that the denunciation on the leaders' and the community's imperception (56:9-57:2) precedes the rebukes on their idolatry and political alliance (57:3-11) and the lack of מִשְׁפָּט and צְדָקָה in their daily life and society (58:1-59:8) functions to ascribe all these other sins to their imperception. Besides, the we-group's confession of the situation and sins on behalf of Israelites (59:9-15a) begins with the metaphor of the blind while using the imagery of light/darkness for salvation/judgment (v.9b-10), picking up and developing the imperception theme from Isa 6, 9 and 42. Besides, 'we know our iniquities' (v.12) is followed by their wrong attitude and behaviour towards Yhwh and the people (vv.13-15a). Furthermore, Yhwh's intervention with salvation and

⁵⁸⁸ While some scholars (e.g., Ibid., 201) argue for an individual prophet as the referee of the single 'you' in v.21, I, with Paul (*Isaiah 40-66*, 512-3), argue for the 'collective' sense of the single 'you', who will later be identified with 'the servants of Yhwh' in the later part of TI.

⁵⁸⁹ With regards to their behaviours, the foreigners and eunuchs come to YHWH worship through holding fast to his covenant, observing the Sabbath, ministering to YHWH, loving his name and being his servant, whereas the watchmen, shepherds, and the community seek their own pleasure and help from other gods or nations. Concerning their fates, the previously excluded-from-community foreigners and eunuchs will be accepted as long as they hold fast to YHWH's covenant and observe Sabbath. Though the righteous perish and are taken away, they will enter into peace. However, the watchmen or the shepherds are among the convicted who are doomed to YHWH's judgment (57:11-13, 20-21). The sarcasm is vivid, conveying that though watchmen and shepherd, the guards of the entrance to a community, may exclude foreigners and eunuchs from their community, YHWH has included the latter (the previously-excludee) while excluded the former (the previously excluder).

judgment (59:15b-21) also initiates from his twofold seeing. These all highlight the significance of perception.

Concerning the (im)perception theme, in Isa 56-69, firstly, the audience is invited to a new perception on the definition of Yhwh's people/community, which, as 56:1-8 reveal, is not based on ethnicity (Israel or non-Israel), but rather on keeping Yhwh's Sabbath and following his covenant, which is further paraphrased as choosing what pleases Yhwh, ministering to him loving his name and being his servant. This new definition lines up with the promise of Yhwh's dwelling with the humble and contrite in spirit (57:15), and of light/healing/הקדש to those who fast as Yhwh pleases (58:8), and of Yhwh's salvation to the repentant (59:20). Secondly, as Isa 58 shows, the audience is invited to a new perception on the essence of the observance of 'fasting' and 'the Sabbath', which relates closely the right attitude/behaviour towards Yhwh with that towards other people in the community.

Imperception is associated with seeking personal interest and having faith in other gods or nations and is the source of other sins, while true perception concerns seeking YHWH's delight and having faith in him.

Noteworthy, these two aspects of the development of the (im)perception theme in Isa 56-69 are intertwined with their post-exilic rhetorical setting in which major social problems include how to deal with the relationship between the Israelites and non-Israelites, and relationships among the Israelites.

Thus, all these above indicate that the (im)perception theme can vary in Isaiah in the light of new issues.

5.3 The Perception Theme in Isa 60-62

5.3.1 A Literary-Thematic Study of Isa 60-62

Isa 60-62 stand in the centre of Isa 56-66 with their outstanding visions of the glorification of Zion. It is worth noting that while the second *feminine singular* pronominal suffix stands out in Isa 60 (51 occurrences in 20 verses out of 21 verses)⁵⁹⁰ and Isa 62 (20 occurrences in 8 verses of 12 verses)⁵⁹¹, no occurrences of the second singular pronominal suffix appear in Isa 61. Besides, while the second *plural* pronominal suffix occurs 5 times in Isa 61, clustered in particular in vv.5, 6, 7, none occur in Isa 60 and only one in Isa 62 (v.6). That is to say, the addressee is invoked as a collective in Isa 60

⁵⁹⁰ Only not in 60:8. Besides, v.9 also witnesses one occurrence of 2nd masculine singular.

⁵⁹¹ Isa 62:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12.

and 62 while as an individual in Isa 61. The mentioning of Zion in 59:20 and that of Zion and Jerusalem in 62:1, 6, 7 help to identify the collective “you” in Isa 60 and 62 as Zion/Jerusalem, while the addressees of the good news of Isa 61 are the poor, the captive, the bound and the mourners. Moreover, נגה (‘brightness’) from 60:3, 19 reappears in 62:1, adding to another link of Isa 62 to 60. As observed by Blenkinsopp, Isa 60-62 “as a unit replicates the same envelope scheme (a-b-a) according to which chs. 56-66 as a whole are organized: 56-59, 60-62, 63-66.”⁵⁹²

In Isa 60 vv.1-3 serve as the prologue to Isa 60, inviting Israel to shine because the light has come, and Yhwh’s glory has risen and will be seen, upon Israel. Then, vv.4-9⁵⁹³ call them to see the coming of their sons and daughters with the wealth and tributes of nations. Later, vv.10-18 are characterized by the reversal of nations and Israel’s fates and of Israelite society. Finally, vv.19-22 function as an epilogue and a conclusion to Isa 60, picking up the motifs of light, glory and reversal.⁵⁹⁴ In and among the lines of Isa 60, the six-times repetition of פאר (v.7 [two times], 9, 13, 20, 21) indicates an emphasis is laid on Yhwh’s glorifying and beautifying his sanctuary. Besides, in the syntax of vv.1-2 and 19 (respectively in the prologue and epilogue), ‘light’ and ‘glory’ are equivalent syntactically, that is, the light that has come to Israel can be interpreted with the glory of Yhwh.⁵⁹⁵ In such a way, in Isa 60, Zion is assured of her rising through YHWH’s glorification of its sanctuary and the restoration of its people who are not defined by ethnicity and who are all righteous.

A transition is made at the outset of Isa 61 in that the I-speaker shifts from Yhwh in Isa 60 to an anointed figure in Isa 61. The spirit recalls the expected Davidic king (11:1-5), the servant of YHWH (42:1) and a prophetic speaker (48:16; 59:21), who are all on YHWH’s commission. Structurally, vv.1-3 function as a prologue which introduces the idea that through the anointed figure, good news is proclaimed to the poor, liberty to the bound, joy to the mourners. They will be called the oaks of הצדק and the planting of Yhwh. It is noteworthy that the final line of 61:3 is echoed in 60:21: the former reads וקרא להם אילי הצדק, while the latter כלם צדיקים וועמך; and the former מטע יהוה while the latter מטעי. This denotes “your people”, namely, Zion’s people, in Isa 60 are the possessors of the promises, the “they” in Isa 61. Then, vv.4-7 illustrate in more concrete terms of these promises: they will rebuild the ancient devastations (v.4), foreigners will do the agricultural work for them (v.5),

⁵⁹² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 208.

⁵⁹³ v.4a, v.5ab as introductions, while v.4bcd and v.5c-8 as the main contents, v.9 as epilogue.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Muilenburg, “The Book of Isaiah,” 697 divided it into vv.1-3 (introduction), and vv. 4-9, 10-16, 17-22, each with three strophes of roughly equal length, while Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 203-205 corresponded with Muilenburg’s main divisions, divided it further into 6 sections, constituting vv. 1-3, 4-7, 8-9, 10-16, 17-20, 21-22.

⁵⁹⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 210, observed the connection of Isa 60 with Isa 59 is that ‘the light and glory coming over Zion give vivid expression to the coming of YHVH as Judge and Redeemer in 59:19-20.’

they will be called priests of Yhwh and ministers of God (v.6), they will receive a double portion (v.7, cf. their double punishment in 40:1). Vv.8-9 explain YHWH's anointment and commissioning and salvation arise from his own nature of loving משפט which results in the nations' perception of Zion's offspring as the blessed by YHWH. Last, in vv.10-11, "I" appears again, reassuring them of God's salvation by endorsing the promises above with the phenomena in the nature. Therefore, in Isa 61, Yhwh's promises of salvation and revival are given through the anointed figure to the poor, the bound and mourners in Zion.⁵⁹⁶

Isa 62 proclaims the imminence of Yhwh's action and salvation, which is strongly emphasized firstly by the tidy parallelism of למען ציון לא אחשה and ולמען ירושלים לא אשקוט in v.1a. In v.1b, צדק is again parallel to/interpreted with ישועה, taking the imagery of light, a metaphor of salvation. In vv.1-5 Zion is assured of vindication in the nations' eyes, of Yahweh's delight and of new names. While vv.6-9 set watchmen into unrelenting attention to the safety and establishment of Zion-Jerusalem, vv.10-12 conclude ch.60-62 in ways that "reiterate the theme of the return to Zion that runs through chapters 40-55."⁵⁹⁷

To sum up, firstly, Isa 60 and 62 parallel each other to some extent to bring the focus back to the collective Zion. Secondly, the emphases of the salvation oracles are nuanced from Isa 60 to Isa 62. The emphasis of Isa 60 is laid more on the glorification of the sanctuary, the revival of its cult and reconstruction, while Isa 61 on promises to the needy individuals, and Isa 62 to the whole society, characterized by the new name that Zion/Jerusalem will receive from the nations. Thirdly, in the development from Isa 60 (revival of the sanctuary) to Isa 62 (revival of the whole society), Isa 61 (promises to needy individuals through an anointed figure) plays a significant role.

5.3.2 The Perception Theme in Isa 60-62

In Isa 60-62 the perception theme is closely associated with the central theme of Isa 60-62, that is, the glorification of Zion. Isa 60 reveals that the rising of Zion (due to the shining of YHWH's light and glory upon it) is so visible that nations are drawn to its light and brightness. 60:2 echoes 8:22-9:1 on the counterpoint of darkness and light, though the latter denoted a change within Israel's fortunes,

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Berges, *Isaiah: the Prophet and his Book*, 78, writes "[T]he gift of the spirit to the congregation of the righteous in Zion is the central theme of Isaiah 61" and "hidden behind the identity of the one who has been gifted with the spirit is not an individual but a group", he seems not to distinguish the anointed figure "I" from the group to whom he proclaimed the promises.

⁵⁹⁷ McConville, *Isaiah*, 686.

while the former distinguishes the redeemed people from the rest of the earth in 60:2.⁵⁹⁸ Besides, the combination of the rising of Zion and the ‘pilgrimage’ and ‘light’ metaphor in 60:1-4 recalls the vision of the exaltation of Zion (2:2-5), while its emphases on the gathering of Zion’s sons and daughters, and on the nations’ tributes and wealth to Zion, are closely interwoven with the post-exilic situation. In Isa 60, Zion is called to perceive YHWH’s glorification of Zion through the pilgrimage and tributes that nations pay to Zion.

In comparison to the whole Zion in Isa 60, the addressees of the promises of Isa 61 are narrowed down more specifically to the poor, the bound and mourners in Zion, which corresponds to the exilic or post-exilic situation. The anointment and commission of the prophetic servant for the proclamation of salvation oracles to the needy people in Zion, whose *offspring* will be seen and known by nations as blessed by YHWH.

In comparison to Isa 61, Isa 62 denotes nations and kings will perceive Zion’s קדש and *glory*. YHWH’s delight in and new names for Zion indicates a total overturn of the previous shameful exilic Zion.

Therefore, Isa 60-62 develops from a call to Zion to perceive its glorification which is manifested in the gathering of its population and in nations’ pilgrimage and tributes to Zion, which is the light and the glory of YHWH that will shine upon it (Isa 60), to the nations’ perception of Zion’s blessed offspring (Isa 61) and to the nations’ perception of Zion’s restored קדש and glory (Isa 62). In such a way, the perceptions of Zion and nations are intertwined: they are both to perceive YHWH’s glory.

5.4 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 63-66

The perception theme mainly in 63:17; 64:1b, 3 and 6 with *words* falling into the category of ‘perceiving’ (לב, ידע, שמע, ראה), while chs.65-66 attest the *conceptual* perception theme. This leads us to investigate this theme in 63:7-64:11 and 65-66 to unfold how the perception theme develops throughout, and what roles it plays in, these chapters.

5.4.1 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 63:7-64:11

63:7-64:11 is composed of two major parts, 63:7-14 and 63:15-64:11. The former is mainly a recount of YHWH’s mercies and mighty salvation in history while the latter a prayer to YHWH for the

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 665.

present. The former is recounted to motivate YHWH to answer the prayer in the latter, hence they together persuade YHWH to act.

5.4.1.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of 63:7-64:11

After recalling YHWH's goodness (v.7), 64:8-9 describe the harmonious relationship between YHWH and his people. However, v.10 reveals that the harmonious relationship has deteriorated because they rebelled and grieved his spirit. Then v.11a states ויזכר ימי עולם משה עמו, which is expected of YHWH by the people as represented by the petitioners who are here resorting to YHWH's mindfulness to protest against YHWH at his current seeming absence, and thus vv.11-14 denote the sense that "he is indeed mindful of the days of Moses and his people. But where is then the one who..."⁵⁹⁹

There is a chiasmic structure in v.7, as it is framed by YHWH's חסד and his granting (the root גמל), and centred by טוב לבית ישראל. Besides, חסדי יהוה is paralleled with תהלת יהוה in v.7a, while with רחמי in v.7b. These poetic devices serve to draw the audience's attention to YHWH's loving kindness to Israel.

Vv.8-11a are linked with waw-consecutive verbal flow. However, והמה at the beginning of v.10, breaks this waw-consecutive verbal flow in vv.8-11, functioning as an attention marker. Besides, the harmonious relationship in vv.8-9 is spoiled by the people's rebelling and grieving YHWH's spirit (v.10a), which leads into a contrast of v.10b with vv.8-9: הוא נלחם-בם ('he himself fought against them', v.10b) vs. הוא גאלם ('he redeemed them', v.9), and להם לאויב ('he became their enemy', v.10b) vs. להם למושיע ('he became their saviour', v.8). Furthermore, vv.8-9 highlight YHWH's salvation via the triple להם הושיעם (v.8), הושיעם (v.9) and הוא גאלם (v.9), whereas ימי עולם (v.9a – YHWH's saving in the old days; and v.11a – YHWH's remembrance of the old days) frames v.10 in a way that highlights the seriousness of the people's rebellion. These literary devices in vv.8-11a, including the (breaking of) waw-consecutive verbal flow, attention marker, contrast, repetition and frame, function rhetorically to persuade the audience of YHWH's faithfulness and goodness and of the people as deserving judgment.

⁵⁹⁹ V.11a "presents a variety of textual problems on which there is no consensus toward resolving" (Childs, *Isaiah*, 524), including: who is the subject of ויזכר; what are the roles of משה and עמו; is את in v.11a a direct object marker or a preposition; is it a singular רעה or plural רעי? The most difficult exegetical decision is who is the subject of ויזכר. As Goldingay (*Isaiah 56-66*, 397) states, "while a third-person singular can be used with indefinite subject, suggesting 'people were mindful', it is hard to justify appeal to that usage in this context where a w-consecutive follows on the third-person verb in the preceding line... Indeed, after a description of YHWH's becoming angry with and taking action against Israel, one would almost expect to hear that YHWH then 'became mindful' (zākar; cf. Gen 9.1 [P]; Lev 26.42, 45 [H]). There has to be chastisement; there also has to be mindfulness."

V.11b are composed of two tidy parallels: an interrogative *איה* followed by a definite participle (*השם* and *המעלם*), a word with a preposition (*–מ* and *–ב*), an object marker (*את*) and finally nouns in construct-absolute relationship with a 3ms pronominal suffix. Besides, the interrogative *איה* in v.11b α and v.11b β introduces the further details of the powerful saving deeds of the great YHWH. Then, v.12 and vv.13-14 both start with a participial form of *מלך* (*מוליך* in v.12 vs. *מוליכם* in v.13) and end up with an infinitive construct phrase denoting purpose in relation to ‘name’ (*לעשות לו שם עולם* in v.12 vs. *לעשות לך שם תפארת* in v.14). The three participles opening v.12ab and v.13a focus on YHWH, while the two similes in v.13a β and v.14a α focus on the people that were under the protection of YHWH. They are addressed in the relational term, *עמך*, in v.14b. An image of peace is manifest between the lines. Thus, a development from provoking YHWH’s presence to an image of peace under YHWH’s leading is revealed in vv.11b-14 with the use of parallelism integrated with rhetorical questions, participial verbs, and infinitive construct phrases.

Therefore, every line, contrast, parallel, transition, simile and image are intricately designed in 63:7-14. In particular, v.7 and v.11a echo each other with *זכר* and have a structurally significant role. While vv.8-9 and v.10 form a vivid contrast denoting how and to what extent the harmonious relationship between YHWH and his people has deteriorated, the transitional v.11a concludes the bleak condition of v.10 with some glimpse of hope, while introducing the provoking questions and peaceful image of v.11b-14 with the possibility that YHWH may launch a similar salvation for his people at their current bleak situation as in the event of exodus.

5.4.1.2 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 63:15-64:11

63:15-64:11 can be further divided into two parts: 63:15-19a, 63:19b-64:6 and 64:7-11.

The first subunit (vv.15-19a) is an intricately designed prayer. The request through the imperatives *הבט* and *ראה* at v.15a aims at catching YHWH’s attention, while v.15b indicates they are currently not seeing YHWH’s zeal, might and compassion. Thus, v.15 functions in a way to “simultaneously honour and challenge YHWH”⁶⁰⁰ to look and see from his heavenly holy and beautiful abode, with his zeal, might and compassion, upon his people whose earthly habitation is in no way beautiful, but desolation and ruins. V.16 resorts to YHWH as their father in comparison with their earthly ancestors Abraham and Israel. The image of YHWH as father, in the OT, has the connotations of warm personal relationship and care (Ps 103:13; Isa 63:16) and the mutual commitment between

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 403.

father and child (Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal 1:6).⁶⁰¹ Here, with these connotations in mind, the contrast between YHWH and Abraham-Israel is shown by the structure of v.16,⁶⁰² and also by the image of father itself versus knowing or recognizing. There is no way would a father not know or recognize his child, while earthly ancestors surely do not know their descendants after their passing away. Besides, the final colon in v.16 brings together the frequently occurring words in 63:7-64:11, not least including the *עלום* and *שם*.⁶⁰³ Then, the accusatory question in v.17a seems abrupt. No further evidence is given to support their accusation, but only another request (v.17b), and description of their current miserable state (vv.18-19a), which indicates that the paramount purpose of v.17-19a is to provoke YHWH to act. Besides, as Goldingay observes, *קשה* (only used here and Job 39:16) is only interested in divine responsibility, while the more common *קשה*, *הזק* or *כבד* “allows for an interaction between phenomena (‘his heart was hard’), personal responsibility (‘he hardened his heart’) and divine action (‘YHWH hardened his heart’).”⁶⁰⁴ The choice of word here is noteworthy. Moreover, even though the hiphil verbal forms of *תעה* and *קשה* suggest a causative sense, which is kept in the translations in LXX and Vg, it is also noted that they are used following the interrogative *למה*, a question designed to provoke a response. Furthermore, v.17 recalls Isa 6:9-10. Therefore, when all these are considered, the rhetorical significance of v.17 needs to be noted. As Goldingay rightly states, the petitioner is employing here

any means to goad YHWH into a reaction, charging YHWH with the paradoxical intent of hindering people from revering the one who commands such revering. ... In 6.9-10 the prophet is seeking to provoke the people to respond to YHWH; here the prophet is seeking to provoke YHWH to respond to the people.⁶⁰⁵

Thus, what lies behind the accusatory questions of v.17a is the idea that YHWH *permits* their wandering and not-fearing rather than directly *causing* them. Concerning v.17b, the choice of word *שוב* and images (*שבטי נחלתך*, *עבדיך*) is significant. As Goldingay observes, *שוב*

is what Israel is supposed to do when it wanders from YHWH’s ways and fails to revere YHWH. ... here the verb is used absolutely in the form that is commonly translated ‘repent’ (e.g. Jer 3.12, 14, 22), so that the plea almost urges YHWH to repent.⁶⁰⁶

The petitioners identify themselves as YHWH’s servants and tribes of your possession. Both images emphasize the initiative and authority of YHWH and the passiveness of the people who are to obey

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 404-405. The father image can also connote authority over the child, as in Exod. 20:12; Deut. 21:18-21.

⁶⁰² The a-b-b-a-c structure in v.16 lays the emphasis on c where *עלום* and *שם* recurs and simultaneously contrasts b and a.

⁶⁰³ *שם* occurs in 63:12, 14, 16, 19; 64:1, 6 all referring to YHWH’s name, while *עלום* in 63:9, 11, 16, 19; 64:3, 4, the first three occurrences of which all refer to YHWH’s saving deeds.

⁶⁰⁴ Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 408.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

the master and have no sovereignty over themselves. This enhances the request for YHWH's response so that they may change and be saved. Finally, the contrast between למצער (v.18a) and מעולם (v.19a), the twofold use of קדש in עם קדשך and מקדשך in v.18, and the reoccurrence of שמך in v.19a, all strengthen the note of urging YHWH to act.

Secondly, 63:19b-64:6 is composed of 63:19b-64:2 and 64:4-6. The latter is demarcated by צדק and צדקה (v.4a and v.5a) as well as the repetition of עון (v.5b and v.6b) while the former by a parallel structure of a-[parenthesis]-b-a-b as follows.

a- לוא קרעת שמים ירדת מפניך הרים נזלו-	63:19b
[כקדה אש המסים מים תבעה אש-parenthesis]	64:1a
b- להודיע שמך לצריך מפניך גוים ירגזו-	64:1b
a- בעשותך נוראות לא נקוה ירדת מפניך הרים נזלו-	64:2
b- ומעולם לא שמעו לא האזינו עין לא ראתה אלהים זולתך יעשה למחכה לו-	64:3

As seen above, while the second colon of both 63:19b and 64:2 reads verbatim (ירדת מפניך הרים נזלו) , their first column are both related to wish/hope: 63:19ba expresses a wish⁶⁰⁷ whereas 64:2a⁶⁰⁸ contains a verb falling into the category of 'hoping'. Besides, 64:1b parallel with 64:3 through the (im)perception theme to be followed by a complemented colon: the former denotes 'when YHWH made known his name to his enemies, nations will quake at YHWH's presence,' while the latter 'no one has heard, seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him'. That is, in 64:1b the final colon adds the further outcome of the perception of YHWH's name, while in 64:3 what they will perceive of YHWH. Concerning 64:1a, while the preposition ׀ preceding infinitive construct denotes 1) comparing and 2) temporal,⁶⁰⁹ these two senses are actually combined in its usage in כקדה at the beginning of 64:1a. Hence 64:1 denotes 'like when fire kindles brushwood, fire will cause water to boil, so that you will make known your name to your enemies and nations will quake at your presence.' This means, אש תבעה מים תבעה אש, with a-b-c-c-b-a structure, is a parenthesis to 63:19b and the rest of 64:1. YHWH's tearing apart the heavens and coming down will naturally cause the mountains to quake at his presence and his name to be known to his enemies, just as fire will naturally cause water to boil when fire kindles brushwood. Therefore, 63:19b-64:3 employ the rhetorical strategies of attention marker, verbatim repetition, parallel structure, parenthesis, and analogy, to relate YHWH's theophany with the nations' perception.

⁶⁰⁷ לוא קרעת שמים ('if you have torn apart heavens'). According to Ibid., 411, לוא followed by a qatal verbal form expresses a wish relating to the past, though לוא-קרעת in the context of 63:19b is not one wish reckoned impossible of fulfilment, but rather 'the more impassioned expression', denoting Yhwh should firstly tear apart the dome before descending into the earth.

⁶⁰⁸ בעשותך נוראות לא נקוה ('when you did fearful things we did not hope.')

⁶⁰⁹ HALOT, s.v. "ק," 2:454.

In vv.4-6, there is a striking contrast between what kinds of people YHWH meets and remembers (v.4a) and what kinds of people we are (vv.4b-6). Besides, the lengthiness of their sinfulness is spelt out by ונהטא בהם עולם (v.4b), while the comprehensiveness by the usage of the near-synonyms חטא, טמא and עון, of the repetition of כללנו, and the simile of וכבגד עדים כל צדקתינו – even their צדקה is like filthy garment, not righteous at all (v.5)! Even though כי at v.6b seems to ascribe no one's calling by YHWH's name or rousing to take hold of YHWH (v.6a) to YHWH's hiding his face from them (v.6b), it is noteworthy that it is not YHWH who is to blame, because those who truly repent and seek YHWH would not cease calling YHWH's name until he responds. Thus, though v.6b seems to be a reason for v.6a, it is actually not. This expression is simply a rhetorical way, together with the whole of vv.5-6, to express their desperate sinfulness and its extreme result in order to urge YHWH to act.

Thirdly, each verse of 64:7-11 takes different rhetorical strategies to urge YHWH's response. V.7 resorts again to YHWH-we relationship as father-son, potter-clay and worker-work (v.7); v.8 undertakes three successive imperative colons to be followed by a note of 'we are all your people'; vv.9-10 uses four times of root היה and the synonyms מדבר and שממה (v.9), לחרבה and לשרפת אש (v.10) in contrast to ערי קדשך, ציון and ירושלם (v.9) and to בית קדשנו ותפארתנו אשר הללוך אבתינו (v.9) and מחמדינו (v.10); v.11 closes vv.7-11 with the interrogative ה questions, the adverbial עד מאד, together with verbal roots אפק and חשה, to leave no room for YHWH to say no! Thus, the urge to YHWH to act reaches its climax in 64:7-11.

Finally, it is noteworthy that disparity exists in each of the sub-sections. In 63:15-19a, its final notes ('it seems you have never ruled us') contrasts strikingly with its beginning note (v.16, 'you are our father'). The same is true of the beginning and end of 63:19b-64:6: YHWH's theophany and presence (63:19b-2) contrasts with YHWH's hiding (64:6). Besides, as Uhlig rightly observes,⁶¹⁰ "there is the tension between what YHWH is for the speakers (he is their father, their redeemer and their potter [63:16; 64:7]), and their actual condition ([that is, how the speakers are] they are in a terrible state, a desolate place, maltreated by their enemies [63:18-19a; 64:9-10])." Besides, in the structure of 63:15-64:11, 64:7 and 63:18-19a frame the middle part (63:19b-64:6) while 63:16 and 64:9-10 stands in the centre of 63:15-17 and 64:8-11 respectively. Thus, this intertwined structure in turn enhances that tension. 63:16 is a key verse in showing an emergent understanding of who Judah is and who Israel really is.

⁶¹⁰ Uhlig, *Hardening*, 293-294.

Repetition and contrast of catchwords

Several terms are used repetitively in 63:7-14, in particular זכר four times (63:7, 11; 64:4, 8), היה (63:8, 19; 64:5, 9, 10) and עלום nice times. The way they are used is as follows.

Firstly, זכר occurs both at 63:7-14 and 63:15-64:11. In 63:7-14, it occurs at the beginning of 63:7 (חסדי יהוה יהוה אזכיר תהלת יהוה) and 63:11 (ויזכר ימי עולם משה עמו). While v.7 leads into the remembrance of YHWH's steadfast love, v.11a the remembrance of YHWH's mighty salvation in the event of Exodus in particular. In such a way, it calls to the fore both the abstract and concrete. These two remembrances function as the basis on which the petitioners make their petitions. In comparison, in 63:15-64:6, it is mentioned that YHWH will remember those who walk in his ways (64:4) and prayed that he will not remember their iniquities (64:8). The former is what the people is in need of, hence necessitates the prayer of the latter. Altogether they function to reveal what is worthy of YHWH remembering, what YHWH remembers, as well as what they hope YHWH might not remember so that they might experience YHWH's salvation again.

Secondly, עלום is used with ימי in 63:9, 11 (ימי עולם), with שם in 63:12, 16 (respectively שם עולם and מעולם שמך), with preposition מן in 63:19 and 64:3 (מעולם) in relation to ruling and perceiving respectively, while standing on its own in 64:4 in relation to 'sin'. Through this catchword, the old days of YHWH's mighty salvation and everlasting name of YHWH contrast with their seemingly never having been ruled by YHWH but sinning for a long time. Besides, it connects the ruling of YHWH, the perception of YHWH and sinning.

Thirdly, היה is used in 63:8, 19; 64:5, 9, 10. Only the occurrence in 63:8 refers to YHWH's becoming their saviour, all other occurrences refer to the current miserable and gloomy state of the people, their city and nation. YHWH's becoming their saviour brought them salvation and hope, while the desperate state they have now become needs YHWH's salvation again.

Fourthly, כל is used nine times in 63:7-64:11. 63:7 reads כל אשר גמלנו יהוה while 63:9 and בכל צרתם כל ימי עולם. These three occurrences recall the close relationship between YHWH and his people, either in all the goodness or afflictions, in all the days of old. The three occurrences in 64:5, ונהי כטמא כלנו and ונבדל כעלה כלנו and וכבגד עדים כל צדקתינו depicts a total sinful and bleak situation of the people. Its use in 64:7 (ומעשה ידך כלנו) and 64:8 (עמך כלנו) resorts to their relationship with YHWH to urge YHWH to respond to their petition while in its use in 64:10 (וכל מחמדינו היה לחרבה) once again draws YHWH's attention to their bleak situation. Therefore, overall, כל is used throughout in a pattern of relationship-bleak situation-relationship-bleak situation. It is striking when the corporate כל of 64:7 and 64:8 encounters the distinction between non-servants and servants among them in 65:8ff.

Summary

As analysed above, a variety of rhetorical strategies are taken, together with exodus tradition, YHWH's character, the relationship between YHWH and Israelites, the description of their current bleak and desperate situation, the confession of their sins, etc., to persuade YHWH to hasten to act with his mighty salvation and zeal which was historically witnessed by Israelites. This is the rhetorical mode in which the perception theme is carried.

5.4.1.3 *The Perception Theme in 63:7-64:11*

The perception theme in 63:7-64:11 is, firstly, linked with Israelites' wandering away from, and not fearing, YHWH (63:17). Uhlig thinks 63:17 accuses YHWH of leading them astray and hardening their hearts from fearing YHWH, and similarly, he interprets 63:4-6 as YHWH's causing them to sin by stating that their not calling YHWH's name is simply because YHWH has hidden his face from them.⁶¹¹ However, it is noteworthy that before the accusation of 63:17, the petitioners have already said in 63:10 that it is they themselves that rebelled and grieved the spirit of YHWH, so that YHWH became their enemy and fought against them, which means that 63:17 is simply saying in a *rhetorical* way: "YHWH, why do you allow us to be astray and without a heart of the fear in you?" Similarly, even though 64:6b writes, *כי הסתרת פניך ממנו ותמוגגנו ביד עוננו* ('for you have hidden your face from us and you have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities'), 64:4b-5, 8 describe their confession of their sins and their prayer for YHWH's forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, 63:4b would rather be the outcome, than the cause, of 64:4-5.

It is noteworthy that as the petitioners know the hardness of their hearts in 63:17, which is a conceptual perception of their fundamental problem, so they know clearly YHWH's might, salvation and kindness to them, and that it is their sinfulness which had deteriorated their relationship with YHWH yet he still remembers them and will save them. That is why they resort to all these, confess their sins, and pray that YHWH may not be terribly angry with, or remember for ever, their sins.

Secondly, 63:19b-64:3 suggests that just as when YHWH comes in his theophany, mountains will tremble at his presence, so when YHWH reveals himself to his enemies, all the nations will know there is no other God beside YHWH, which is as natural as the fact that fire causes water to boil when fire kindles brushwood. Therefore, the perception theme here contributes to their praying for YHWH to reveal himself as if their current suffering is also due to his enemies' imperception of YHWH.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 295.

Therefore, in 63:7-64:11, through echoing 6:9-10 the petitioners perceive their hardness of hearts; through remembering the exodus tradition, they perceive how good, mighty their God YHWH is, while perceiving how desperate their current situation is through reflecting their current state: in such a way, perception theme plays a significant role in their urging YHWH to act.

5.4.2 The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 65

5.4.2.1 A Literary-Thematic Analysis of Isa 65

65:1-7 characterize and contrast strikingly YHWH's nearness to his people and their rejection of him (vv.1-5) and announce justly YHWH's judgment/repayment upon them (vv.6-7). V.1 characterize the people through three לֹא verbal phrases⁶¹² to introduce their unwillingness of worshipping YHWH in contrast to YHWH's willingness to be near to them. Further, v.2a titles them as "a rebellious people", and v.2b explicates their rebellion as "walking upon the way (הַדֶּרֶךְ) that was not good, pursuing their own thoughts (מַחְשַׁבְתֵיהֶם)." The way- thoughts language here recalls 55:8-9 which contrast YHWH's way-thoughts with the people's. While these two texts have nuanced emphases, they both indicate the audience should choose to follow YHWH's way and thoughts rather than their own ones. The statement in v.3a concerning their provocation of YHWH is elaborated further through the description of their behaviour in vv.3b-5a. These behaviours indicate their practices of non-Yahwistic cults, including sacrificial worship (v.3b), seeking guidance from the dead (v.4aα), non-Yahwistic cultic sexual practices (v.4a), ritual impurity (v.4b) and self-deemed holy separation (v.5a).⁶¹³ V.6a introduces sternly (הִנֵּה כְתוּבָה לִפְנֵי) YHWH's determination to act and repay (vv.6b-7). The divine speech formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה at the outset of v.8 introduces into a distinguishment of fates between YHWH's servants who have sought YHWH and the people who have abandoned YHWH in an alternating way (vv.8-16), followed by a vision of new heavens and a new earth (the new Jerusalem) stored for YHWH's chosen ones (vv.17-25). It is the servants, the seekers, of YHWH who are called the chosen offspring of Jacob (v.9), and YHWH's people (v.10), and who will inherit the ancient promises to Abraham and the patriarchs (vv.9, 21-22. cf. Gen.15:5; 28:13-14).

⁶¹² The first two לֹא phrases (לֹא בִקְשָׁנִי and לֹא נִשְׁאַלֵנִי) are both in active sense. While the third one is in passive sense in MT (לֹא-קָרָא בְשִׁמִּי), there are textual attestments to its active form (see Goldignay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 426 fn2). Besides, as McConville (*Isaiah*, 705) observes, "'looking,' 'seeking' and 'calling on my name' amounts to a characterization of genuine worship that recurs throughout the chapter." Moreover, not only the other verbs in v.1 but also those in v.2-3a that are used to characterize this people are all in active sense. Thus, I take the end of v.1b as 'a nation that did not call upon my name.'

⁶¹³ Cf. McConville, *Isaiah*, 706.

5.4.2.2 *The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 65*

With regards to the (im)perception theme, ch.65 depicts that among Israel there are a group of people who are imperceptive to YHWH's calling and presence (vv.1-2) and to what his eyes really delight in (v.12b) by conducting non-Yahwistic cults (vv.3-5) and seeking other gods for fortune (v.11). Besides, ch.65 also calls into a new perception of who Israel, or the servants and people of YHWH really are. They are not defined by ethnicity, but by their seeking of YHWH and choosing what he delights in.

5.4.3 **The (Im)perception Theme in Isa 66**

It has been widely agreed and commented on how ch.66 conclude TI, DI and PI. My aim in this section is to demonstrate how ch.66 works as a rhetorical unit persuading the audience of something through the rhetorical strategies and in relation to the perception theme.

Ch.66 consists of three small rhetorical units – each with a discernible persuasion – vv.1-6, 7-17 and 18-24. What each of them tries to persuade the audience of is similar, though the persuasion is based on different grounds, yet with similar structures (each of them can be further divided into three sub-units) and all with various rhetorical strategies and in relation to the perception theme.

5.4.3.1 *Isa 66:1-6*

The first small rhetorical unit, Isa 66:1-6, is demarcated by the inclusios formed by *חרד* (vv.2, 5), *בית* (v.1) vs *מהיכל* (v.6), and *אמר יהוה* (v.1) vs. *קול יהוה* (v.6) and more fundamentally by the discernible intent of persuasion when reading vv.1-6 together. It can be further divided into vv.1-2, 3-4, 5-6. The rhetorical strategies applied in these verses, and the unity of vv.1-6, and how the perception theme is involved, are shown as follows.

Firstly, the prophetic rubric and the rhetorical questions at the outset of 66:1 effectively draw the audience's attention to wonder what is wrong with the house that they are building for YHWH. Besides, the prophetic rubrics, *כה אמר יהוה* and *באם-יהוה*, frame the allusion to the Solomon's temple and prayer at his dedication of the temple. While Solomon questions "does God really dwell on the earth. Behold, heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain you; how much less this house I have built" (1 Kgs 27), YHWH says "the heavens are my throne and the earth my footstool. ... All these my hand has made; thus all these came to be" (Isa 66:1-2). The former indicates how Solomon humbly admits that what he has built is trivial, while the latter highlights that all come into being because YHWH made them so. That is to say, the focus is not on how great or trivial the temple is,

but rather on how everything comes from YHWH the creator God, who is also the maker of the new heavens and new earth. Then, with a syntactic emphasis on the object of אֲבִיט v.2b emphasizes that in comparison with the temple or the house that they are building for YHWH, it is for the poor with the contrite spirit trembling upon YHWH's word that YHWH is looking.

Secondly, vv.3-4 depict the behaviour and outcome of a group of people who are opposite to whom YHWH is looking for at v.2b. The parallelism of v.3b and v.4aα summarizes the nature of their behaviour and YHWH's determination upon them. Moreover, v.4aβ-4b, led by יֵעַן (because), ascribes their behaviour and outcome to their being imperceptive to YHWH's calling/speaking (they do not respond when YHWH calls and speaks) and YHWH's seeing (they do what is evil in YHWH's eyes, what YHWH does not delight in). It is ironic that בָּחַר, a term that usually depicts the special relationship between YHWH and his people, is now used here three times in vv.3-4 respectively in the summary of the nature of their behaviour, of YHWH's determination upon them and in the reason of their outcome.

Thirdly, the call to hear in v.5a is rhetorically enhanced by what follows it, that is, the sarcasm of אֲהִיכֶם and the threefold קוֹל which hasten rhetorically the judgment upon אֲהִיכֶם. Besides, חָרַד in v.5 and v.2, and the temple in v.6 linking back to the house in v.1, make vv.1-6 a discernible unit highlighting the significance of having a contrite heart trembling upon YHWH's words and being perceptive to YHWH's speaking and seeing. As Blenkinsopp maintains, what 66:1-6 are against are neither the temple, nor the project of building it, but rather the temple personnel who are practicing syncretistic religion or those who bring these sacrifices to the temple.⁶¹⁴

Therefore, as analysed above, vv.1-6 undertake various rhetorical and the perception theme to persuade the audience to be attentive to YHWH's looking and speaking, and to perceive what he is against and what he looks for. This persuasion starts from what temple personnel were concerned about, in particular, the temple, sacrifices and what they deemed as clean and holy, hence allowable in the temple. However, YHWH simply overturns all these and clarifies what he really looks for.

5.4.3.2 *Isa 66:7-17*

Vv.7-17 can be further divided into vv.7-9, 10-14, 15-17. The rhetorical strategies in, and the unity of, vv.7-17, and how the perception theme is involved, are explained as follows.

⁶¹⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 296.

Firstly, vv.7-9 start with something that is not within people's usual perception realm (v.7), while ending with what is sure and certain from the perspective of YHWH (v.9). The pair of היל and ילד repeats fourfoldly in vv.7-9. Besides, v.7a and v.7b are led by the same בטרם, v.8aβ and v.9 start with the interrogative ה (האני and היוחל ארץ), while between v.7 and vv.8aβ-9 is v.8aα where two מי rhetorical questions in relation to the perception theme draws on the audience's thinking and reasoning. Throughout vv.7-9, the latter lines keep interpreting and clarifying the former ones. In such ways, vv.7-9 denote: Zion's being in labour and giving birth means the land/the nation is in labour and giving birth; and furthermore, all these are enabled by YHWH. The parallelism established in every line, the personification of Zion, land and nation, the use of repetition, the literary and theological movement, the two parallel endorsements at the end of both lines of v.9 (אמר אלהיך and יאמר יהוה), and the מי-questions in relation to perception theme all contribute rhetorically to the effect that their perception is provoked to understand that YHWH will repopulate Zion shortly.

Secondly, vv.10-14 start with two parallel imperatives (שישו and שמחו) calling the addressees, who are further identified as אהביה and המתאבלים, to rejoice with Jerusalem. Besides, v.10 contains three synonymous verbs, שיש, גיל, שמח. The final one takes both an imperative and a noun form. The cluster of these indicates the irresistibility of 'rejoicing'. Besides, the two parallel lines of v.11 led by the same למען and v.12 led by כי further explain the reasons for the invitation to rejoicing. The reoccurrence of the prophetic rubric in v.12, followed by the already attention-catching marker הנני, effectively catches the audience's attention. The metaphors (כנחל and כנהר) are also carefully chosen to evoke the sound effect. Besides, the two participles in v.12 bring a liveliness to the image: the action of YHWH in a participle form (נוטה) denotes YHWH is continuing to extend her peace like a river, while the liveliness of the vehicles is demonstrated by the participle שוטף. In addition, through the use of the threefold repetition of נחם, and of the analogy of a man comforted by his mother, v.13 underlines that 'you' will be comforted in Jerusalem. Then, the perception theme comes again in v.14, linking the seeing with the heart's rejoicing, which is further vividly expressed through the simile of bones sprouting like grass. In such a way, the hand of YHWH will be known to his servants. Therefore, vv.10-14 together have identified those who love and mourn for Zion with his servants, who will see, rejoice and know YHWH's hand, that is, his power of salvation and deliverance.

Thirdly, in comparison with the elevated tone about rejoicing for those who love and mourn for Zion, that is, his servants, vv.15-17 present a complete opposite fate for his enemies. V.15 starts with an attention-catching marker כי-הנה. The images of fire and chariots like a whirlwind bring to the fore

the theophany in judgment. The juxtaposition of two synonymous nouns in construct and absolute relationship, like in *בהמה אפו* and in *בלהבי אש*, led by an infinitive construct verb *להשיב* suggesting purpose, depicts God's coming in such a terrifying manner. Moreover, v.16 adds to the forcefulness of that phenomenon by the use of *חרב* and *ורבו חללי יהוה*. The identity of his enemies announced at v.15 is delayed until v.17 as the syncretistic practicers who sanctify and purify themselves but follow the one in the midst to the gardens to practise abominations. The phrase *נאם יהוה* at the end of v.17 endorses and marks the end of this sub-unit of judgmental scenery at the syncretistic practicers.

Therefore, the persuasion of vv.7-17 starts with impossible things from peoples' perception realm which are actually sure from YHWH's perspective (vv.7-9), to be followed by the command for *כל-אהביה* and *כל-המתאבלים* to rejoice with reasons and purpose supplied (vv.10-14) as well as by the dire judgment oracle for the unfaithful (vv.15-17). The perception theme is invoked to rouse their reasoning and understanding in v.8a and is referred to as the purpose of YHWH's great salvation and repopulation of Zion. As a whole, vv.7-17 function to persuade the audience to be aligned with *כל-אהביה* and *כל-המתאבלים* and his servants, and to distinguish themselves from his enemies, that is, the practicers of syncretistic cults. They also function to transform their understanding of who Zion really is.

5.4.3.3 *Isa 66:18-24*

The final small rhetorical unit, vv.18-24, can also be further divided into three sub-units: vv.18-19, 20-22, 23-24. They each are demarcated by a link word, respectively, by *כבודי* (vv.18, 19); *אמר יהוה* (vv.20, 21) or *נאם-יהוה* (v.22); and *כל-בשר* (vv.23, 24).

Firstly, vv.18-19 announce the coming of the ingathering of nations through the survivors from, and sent to, the nations, in relation to YHWH's glory. V.18 starts with a pre-position of a first-person pronoun *ואנכי*.⁶¹⁵ Though most Bible translations follow LXX to add a verb *ידע* ('to know') between *ואנכי* and *מעשיהם ומחשבתיהם* in v.18a, there are no Hebrew texts that support this addition. The syntax of v.18a is actually a deliberate rhetorical technique, aiming to signal something very important: it is because of the thoughts and deeds of the unfaithful (as mentioned in vv.15-17) that the ingathering of nations is coming (as elaborated in vv.18-23).⁶¹⁶ This is a reversion to, and a development of, the beginning of TI – foreigners are acknowledged by YHWH and why. Then,

⁶¹⁵ It is noteworthy that in both the first two parts (vv.1-7, 7-17), YHWH speaks in the first person in their first and second sections (vv.1-2, 3-4; 7-9, 10-14), while YHWH is referred to mostly in third person in their third sections (vv.5-7, 15-17). Here, at the outset of the final part (vv.18-19), YHWH again returns to speak in the first person: *כבודי* and *ואנכי* in v.18, *ושמתי* and *ושלחתי* and twofold *כבודי* in v.19.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 512-13.

v.18b announces the nations' future perception ('they will come and see my glory'), while in v.19 YHWH sends out survivors from the nations as missionaries to the nations for those who do not have such perception before to have it now. Here, the perception theme enters the picture in relation to the mission of survivors to nations. Commentators agree that the survivors here are not those who survive YHWH's judgment in vv.15-17, but are gentiles⁶¹⁷ coming from, as well as being sent to, the nations, as מהם in v.19b clearly indicates. What is the sign (אות) and what is my glory (כבודי) that survivors will proclaim, and that nations will see? It is noteworthy that אות is framed by כבודי in vv.18-19 and that אות and כבודי only occur together in Num 14.22 referring to the same thing, that is, the great deeds YHWH did in Egypt and the wilderness. Here in Isa 66, it is difficult to deduce from the text what exactly the sign refers to, though it is undoubtedly that אות will be recognizable and reflects כבודי. Though Goldingay proposes different possibilities of the referents of אות, he concludes that "'splendour' and 'sign' do refer to the same reality."⁶¹⁸

Vv.20-22 take the language of temple rituals, as shown especially by the offering (מנחה), the mention of 'clean vessels', and 'priests and Levites'. Besides, the standing of offspring and name is ensured through an analogy to the standing of the new heavens and new earth that YHWH is making. The new heavens and new earth are not referred to here in a cosmological sense, but rather the reference is to the peoples, inclusive of both Israelites and foreigners who are faithful to YHWH.

In vv.23-24, though כלי־בשר is mentioned twice, it is noted that only the faithful are to be saved, while the rebellious will endure eternal judgment. Two synonyms, יבאו and ויצאו, respectively at the beginning of the second line of v.23 and the first line of v.24, depict the picture of coming to worship YHWH and going out to see the corpses of the rebellious. What a stark effect of warning and persuasion it was likely to have had on the audience. No less effect on the audience is made by the climax from the two negative parallels לא תמות ואשם לא תכבה to the strong comment of והיו דראון לכל בשר. The word ראה at the beginning of v.24 cannot avoid a connotation of understanding. They do not just see the dire condition of the rebellious but also understand the significance and the way to avoid the same fate.

Therefore, vv.18-24 demonstrate two opposite fates for two groups of people. They are not categorized by nationality but rather by those who are responsive and perceptive to YHWH and those who are not. Survivors who understand the sign (אות) will be sent to the nations. Thus the

⁶¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 514-15, commented that in light of 45:20, these survivors "are people who have escaped the crushing of the nations by the Babylonians and/or the Persians"; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 314.

⁶¹⁸ Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 514. See 513 for his proposals of 'the sign'.

nations and islands who have not heard about YHWH or seen his glory will now hear and see. However, among them, some will be priests and Levites while some others, the rebellious against YHWH, are destined for everlasting judgement.

5.4.3.4 The Perception Theme in Isa 66

As analysed above, the three rhetorical units in Isa 66 start from different grounds but use a similar structure and all link with the theme of perception to proceed their persuasion.

Vv.1-6 correct the misunderstanding or misconception of the temple personnel who highly regard the temple and sacrifice but hate and exclude their brothers in the name of YHWH. They are indulged in their own way, yet disregard YHWH's calling out and seeing of all their behaviour and sacrifice.

Vv.1-6 function to persuade its audience to possess a contrite heart trembling upon his words, for that is what he really looks for.

Vv.7-17 draw on the audience's perception to ponder over the wonder of repopulating Zion in a glimpse of time which is impossible for human beings but sure and certain for YHWH, to be followed by the call for rejoice to all who love and mourn over for Zion, as well as by a destroying depiction of the practisers of non-Yahwistic cults. This will result in his servants knowing the hand/power of YHWH. Therefore, vv.7-17 persuade the audience to believe in YHWH's might, power and promises of salvation while loving and mourning for Zion rather than to choose the non-Yahwistic cults.

In vv.18-25, the perception of YHWH's glory will be extended to nations through survivors, so that nations and islands who have not heard about YHWH or seen YHWH's glory will hear and see, and will in return, bring all the brothers of Israelites to Jerusalem as an offering to YHWH, which are like the offerings Israelites bring to YHWH with clean vessels, not like those depicted in vv.3,17. They will worship YHWH, and simultaneously they will see the dire condition of the rebellious against YHWH.

The persuasion also works through the development throughout these three small rhetorical units. Firstly, it noteworthy that the unfaithful are described in quite similar terms throughout the three units – his enemies (v.6, 15) and the rebellious against YHWH (v.24) – while the faithful are called the poor, contrite in spirit, trembling at his words in vv.1-6, as those who love and mourn for Zion, and his servants in vv.7-17, and as survivors, your brothers, priests and Levites and worshippers of YHWH in vv.18-25. The elaboration of the faithful sheds lights on how we can be faithful to YHWH, while the essence of the unfaithful is to be YHWH's rebellious enemies. This development contributes to the persuasion of the audience to be faithful with some concreteness. Besides, with

regards to the unfaithful, vv.1-6 is elaborate on characterizing them, vv.7-17 on their judgment, while vv.18-25 only briefly mention their thoughts and deeds as well as their eternal judgment. This progression from the elaboration of behaviour to that of judgment to a summary of behaviour and outcomes concerning the unfaithful also effectively dissuade the audience from being unfaithful. Moreover, in terms of the perception theme, vv.1-6 correct misperception, vv.7-17 draw on perception, while in vv.18-24, perceiving YHWH is extended to nations. This development witnesses the role of perception in effecting the above persuasions.

5.5 Conclusion

In Isa 56-66, the perception theme develops through its three major subsections, and is closely to be associated with the social issues occurring in the post-exilic period, including the integration of foreigners into YHWH's community, religious affairs and conduct, and the full restoration and glorification of Zion. It is by addressing these issues that the audience are called to a new perception of the definition of YHWH's people/community, and a new understanding of who Israel really is. They are no longer defined by ethnicity. They are characterized as the foreigners and eunuchs who observe the Sabbath and YHWH's covenant, ministering to him and being his servants in 56:1-8, and as those who are of a contrite and lowly spirit in 57:14, and as those who seek YHWH's pleasure rather than their own pleasure in their fasting and observance of the Sabbath in ch.58, and as those who confess their sins and perceive their sin as the root of their current situation in ch.59, and as the righteous Israel in chs.60-62 and as the servants of Yhwh in chs.63-66 who are the humble and contrite in spirit and trembling at YHWH's words (66:2, 5).

6 Conclusion

The theme of perception and imperception occurred significantly as the message of the mission of the prophet Isaiah of 8th century BCE (6:9-10) develops in relation to different groups of people and different other motifs throughout the three main divisions of Isaiah. It is recognized by some scholars as a way in which Isaiah could be understood as a unity. However, there was a gap in the scholarship tracing systematically how this theme unfolds throughout Isa and why it unfolds in such a way. This dissertation has sought to answer these two questions with a literary-thematic approach. The different developments of the theme throughout Isaiah, to some extent, demonstrate the hints of their historical, or the first layer of the rhetorical, audience, situation, and purpose, while the final form of the book of Isaiah transcends its historical situations and speaks into other similar rhetorical situations.

In PI, in particular in Isa 6-12 and 28-35, imperception is connected with 1) the judgement of Israelites, and 2) with the political and religious leaders of the kingdom of Judah who do not have faith in YHWH but rely on their political alliances on the occasions of their national crises of 732BCE (Isa 6; 7:1-8:29) and 701 BCE (Isa 28-29) and 587 BCE, and 3) with the earthly kings' arrogance (Isa 10:5-34), while the perception is related to the ideal king and his קִדְּוָה as well as the salvation of Israelites (Isa 9:1-6; 11-12).

In DI, the theme is linked more with the servant figure, because under the exile situation the political and religious leaders did not play as significant role as they did when Judah existed as an independent kingdom. The servant Israel should have been perceptive of the mission to enable others to perceive (42:1-9). However, as DI unfolds, the servant Israel is the most blind and deaf (42:18-25), whose imperceptiveness is compared to the idols' imperceptiveness (Isa 44), which in turn enhances the highlighted theme in DI, that is, there is no other God besides YHWH. In the second half of DI, that is, Isa 49-55, it is revealed that the truly perceptive servant is the one who has faith in YHWH in their bleak exiled situation, trusting that though they are currently in the darkness of exile, YHWH will bring them to home one day, and that there is reward for their perception (Isa 49, 50-52, 52:13-53:12).

In TI, the theme is related to the servants and YHWH's community, redefined not according to their ethnicity but to whether they do קִדְּוָה , have a contrite heart or tremble at YHWH's word. Embracing foreigners while not including all Israelites fitted well with the post-exiled situation when Israelites needed to consider their relationship with non-Israelites who had been living in their homeland while

Israelites were exiled. Besides, the reoccurrence of the ignorance of the priests and prophets who are mentioned in terms of ‘watchmen and shepherds’ (56:9-10), the clarification of true fasting and sabbath observance (Isa 58) and the fact that neither the temple nor the sacrifices were the most paramount (66:1-6), all cohere well with the post-exilic situation when rituals were re-emphasized as a sign of Israelites’ repentance and home-rebuilding.

Therefore, on the one hand, Isa1-39 contrasts the imperception of political and religious leaders with the perception of ideal kings, DI the imperception of the servant Israel with the perception of the individual servant, TI the imperception of the non-servants with the perception of the servants, which respectively reflect their pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic historical situations, the first layer of the rhetorical situation. On the other hand, the final form of Isaiah transcends its historical situations and speaks into other similar situations. In addition, a perceptive person has the characteristics of trusting YHWH, being humble, reflective, and responsive. By contrast, an imperceptive person is the one who trusts himself or others, who is arrogant, not learning or responding.

There are some other threads of continuity and discontinuity in the theme of (im)perception among PI, DI and TI. Firstly, while PI, DI and TI show the continuity of the theme of (im)perception, the concrete things that they misunderstand or misperceive speak of discontinuity. In PI Israelites did not perceive that in the circumstances of crises, what they should do is rely on and trust YHWH rather than call upon political alliances or turn to idols (chs.7, 28-32). In DI, the exilic Israelites misperceived that God was not seeing their suffering (40:27); they did not perceive that YHWH their Lord was still the sole sovereign God who was in charge of the current political situation, including their being exiled in Babylon and the upcoming rise of Cyrus over the nations. In TI, the re-definition of YHWH’s community in Isa 56:1-8 and of the true fast in Isa 58 is to correct their previous understandings that YHWH’s community equals Israelites and that fasting can be discrete from social responsibilities. Besides, the response of 65-66 to 63:7-64:11 also corrects their misunderstanding that all Israelites will inherit the promise of salvation by emphasizing that only the faithful can.

Secondly, the continuity also includes the light-darkness theme, while some implications with nuanced different emphases show the discontinuity. The light and darkness imagery has two occurrences in PI. One is in Isa 2:5 and the other in 8:16-9:6. In the former, the light of YHWH that Israel should walk in is associated with the word and the teaching of YHWH which denotes a way or

lifestyle of משפט and צדק.⁶¹⁹ In the latter, light and darkness symbolize respectively salvation and judgment: the darkness has the dimensions of the political, social darkness and spiritual blindness, whereas the light comes with the Israelites' liberation from the political yoke and with the birth of an ideal Davidic king who is called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' and whose rule is characterised by משפט and צדק.⁶²⁰ Light and darkness in 40-55 are related respectively to the servant's mission 'to be a light to the nations' and the peoples' situation of blindness and bondage in 42:6-7; 49:6.⁶²¹ Then, in 50:10-11, the light-darkness motif takes on new metaphorical and spiritual senses: it is a metaphor of their suffering exiled situation, while pointing to the significance of spiritual reliance on, and trust in, God. The association of light with משפט, צדק, torah and salvation from Isa 2:5 and 8:16-9:6 is continued in DI, whereas the new development in DI from PI is the servant's role. In TI, and particularly in 58:8, the image of light is associated with healing, which alludes to Isa 6:9-10. Before this association at 58:8, the healing motif has already occurred in 57:18, 19 in the context that God will revive the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the contrite and that he will heal those who were struck by him because of their iniquities, and that this healing is extended to the far and to the near. Besides, the light is a symbol of salvation, deliverance and restoration in ch.60. The calling to shine is not so much the ethical imperative as God's promise. This light is a reflection of YHWH's glory (60:1); it will draw nations to come to Zion (60:3). This light is not the sun or moon, but YHWH himself (60:19). While the light from the sun or moon may be strong or weak, seen or unseen, there would be no fading for this light, but it is everlasting (60:20).

Thirdly, the motif of the hidden God in relation to the perception theme also shows its continuity and discontinuity. The former is demonstrated in God's hiding himself due to people's iniquities (1:15; 8:17; 45:14-15; 54:7; 59:2; 64:6), while the latter in that several times in TI God says I looked/called but no one was there (63:3, 5; 65:12).

To conclude, I have shown that the book has developed the theme of (im)perception in accordance with its different times and situations. The basic concept of (im)perception proved capable of nuance and variation. There was both continuity and change. This means that the theme of (im)perception in Isaiah cannot be summed up in a single text; nor can it be described simply as the sum of disparate texts. Rather, it takes the book as a whole to articulate the theme. So when we think of the

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Kil, "Light and Darkness," 119-123.

⁶²⁰ Cf. Ibid., 174-178.

⁶²¹ See Ibid., 226-231 for the elaboration of the 'light' image in 42:1-13.

foundational text of 6:9-10, its full meaning is not disclosed by an exegesis of its immediate context, but only by a perusal of the whole book. The reason that the theme can be so flexible and all-pervasive is that it is undergirded by an absolutely basic premise, namely the vision of the God YHWH (as in 6:1-3). It is because Isaiah the prophet had seen YHWH in his vision that the whole book of Isaiah could ultimately come into existence, as a unity despite its variations, with the theme of (im)perception playing an essential part.

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