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Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets : a comparative study of the earliest stages of the Isaiah tradition and the Neo-Assyrian prophecies

Jong, M.J. de

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CHAPTER 2

THE ISAIAH TRADITION IN THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD

This chapter deals with the issue of which parts of First Isaiah can be dated to the Assyrian period, i.e. the eighth-seventh century. The chapter begins with an analysis of Isa 6-8 and Isa 28-32, because these two complexes play a key role with regard to the question of the extent to which one may find early prophetic words within First Isaiah.¹ In this way, these complexes provide an ideal battleground for defending my views against the radical position (as taken by Kaiser and Becker) and the more traditional position (as taken by Wildberger and Barthel). My main thesis is that within both complexes a distinction can be made between material from the Assyrian period on the one hand, and a thorough reworking of this material on the other. This reworking, which is of a literary and redactional character, can in my view be plausibly situated in the period following the downfall of the Judaeian state in the sixth century. It will be demonstrated that the Isaiah tradition in the Assyrian period has a quite different profile than its later, probably exilic, reworking.

After analysing Isa 6-8 and Isa 28-32, I deal with the rest of First Isaiah in search of early material. Instead of dealing with every chapter, I concentrate on parts of Isa 5, 9-11 and 13-23.² The analysis focuses on the supposedly early material included within these chapters in relation to its later literary-redactional context. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the Isaiah tradition in the Assyrian period, which in my view originated as a series of prophetic words that were preserved in the form of small collections, and that, in the seventh-century were revised in the form of three textual compilations.

¹ Barthel 1997: 25; similarly Höffken 2004: 139.

² Isa 12, 24-27, 33, and 34-35 are left out, because these are usually perceived as late texts. Furthermore, Isa 36-39 will not be discussed here, since an analysis of these chapters would exceed the bounds of this study. Nevertheless, Isa 36-37 (2 Kgs 18-19) will be taken into account in chapter 6.1.2. Finally, Isa 1-4 in my view consists of material that belongs to later redactional reworkings of the developing book of Isaiah. In section 2.3.7, I will discuss 1:4-8 as a text postdating the Assyrian period.

2.1 *Isaiah 6-8*2.1.1 *Isaiah 6:1-8:18 as a Literary Composition*

Isa 6:1-8:18 is traditionally perceived as a memoir of the prophet Isaiah, written in the aftermath of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis.³ Nowadays, this textual unit is generally considered to be a redactional complex, but there are good reasons to regard 6:1-8:18 to some extent as a unit on its own. First, 6:1 begins with a first-person account, which ends in 8:18. Second, 8:18 presumes Isa 7 in some form as it refers to the children's names (7:3, 7:14, 8:3).⁴ Third, sometime during the development of the Isaiah tradition, a compositional ring of material has been arranged around Isa 6-8.⁵ If one takes for a moment 6:1-8:18 as an independent unit, one may be struck by the insight that this text presents itself as an account of Isaiah's prophetic ministry *as such*.⁶ It gives an account of Isaiah's prophetic career from its beginning to its end, starting with Isaiah's commissioning in Isa 6 and ending with his withdrawal from public life after having fulfilled his prophetic task (8:16-18). The presentation of Isaiah's ministry in 6:1-8:18 is of a reflective, interpretative character. It presents a view of Isaiah the prophet in retrospect. This portrayal of Isaiah, in my view, has become of fundamental importance in the development of the Isaiah tradition as a whole.

The composition presents Isaiah as having been ordered by Yahweh *from the outset* to announce judgement to the people (6:9-11). According to the compositional perspective, Isaiah's ministry started with the announcement of judgement (6:11), and ended with its realisation (8:17).⁷ Uwe Becker, in my view, is right to qualify 6:11 and 8:17 as 'eine sachliche wie literarische Klammer, die den Hauptinhalt des jesajanischen Predigt umschließt'.⁸ In other words, the account ranges from Isaiah's commission to proclaim disaster (6:9-11), to his withdrawal when the task had been completed (8:17).

6:9-11 describes the disaster as a divine punishment because of the people's refusal to listen. Furthermore, the passage explains that the people rejected Isaiah's message because Yahweh made them unsusceptible. Isaiah's commission, prepared for by the vision in 6:1-8, is presented in 6:9-11 as directed against the people. Isaiah is depicted as standing in opposition to the people, referred to as 'this people' (הָעָם הַזֶּה). This is, as elsewhere, a pejorative depiction. The same term occurs in 8:11, stating that it was Yahweh who forced Isaiah to dissociate himself from 'this people'. This refers to the vision of Isa 6, understood from the perspective of 6:9-11. Both 6:9-11 and 8:11 imply that the vision led to a radical reorientation of the prophet: Yahweh positioned him opposite to 'this people' and commissioned him with a message of doom for 'this people'.⁹ The identity of the recipients

³ Barthel 1997: 38.

⁴ Barthel 1997: 232.

⁵ See Sheppard 1985. The apparent oddity that Isaiah's commission is narrated only in chapter 6 can be explained from the redactional development of the Isaiah tradition. Barthel (1997: 83) suggests that the material in Isa 1-5 does not represent a stage of Isaiah's career prior to the vision of Isa 6, but contains a complex based on Isaianic prophecies that is structured around the *Denkschrift*.

⁶ Becker (1997: 73) argues that Isa 6 and 8 present a (later) picture of Isaiah's 'gesamte prophetische Wirken'.

⁷ Becker 1997: 73.

⁸ Becker 1997: 75.

⁹ Jones 1993: 158-159.

of the prophetic message, ‘this people’ in 6:9-10 and 8:6, 11-12, must be sought within the compositional perspective. Within the depiction of Isa 6 and 8, הָעָם הַזֶּה refers to the people in general as standing in opposition to Isaiah and his followers (8:16).¹⁰ According to 8:11-15, the disobedience of ‘this people’ caused the destruction of both Northern Israel and Judah. This suggests that ‘this people’ is not a precise identification but a general category. It depicts the disobedient people that are punished by Yahweh because they have rejected his words delivered by the prophet.¹¹

8:16-18 is formulated as a conclusion to Isa 6-8. Isaiah is presented as withdrawing from public life after he has delivered Yahweh’s message of judgement. The message is to be sealed and preserved (8:16).¹² Meanwhile, now the fate of the people has been destined and Yahweh’s judgement has become irreversible, Isaiah is presented as waiting and hoping for Yahweh’s salvation (8:17).¹³ The phrase ‘Yahweh is hiding his face’ (8:17) indicates not only the hopelessness of the situation, but also the interruption of communication between Yahweh and the people after the prophet’s resignation.¹⁴ 8:16-18 presents Isaiah as having fulfilled his prophetic task. The image of the prophet as presented in 8:16-18 is evidently a literary construct.¹⁵

The depiction of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry in 6:1-8:18 is likely to be from a later hand. The text gives an interpretation of Isaiah’s prophetic activity. Because it has become part of a much larger complex, it is tempting to read Isa 6-8 as representing one stage of Isaiah’s prophetic career. However, it is still discernable that at some stage in the course of development, Isa 6-8 presented an account of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry *as such*. The account presents a retrospective view on Isaiah’s ministry. It reflects on disastrous events that are interpreted as a divine punishment for the disobedience of the people, announced by the prophet Isaiah. Whereas 6:1-11 and 8:1-18 focus on the disobedient people (הָעָם הַזֶּה), 7:1-17, as will be argued below, presents Ahaz, representative of the Davidic dynasty, as an example of the disobedience mentioned in 6:9-10.

¹⁰ The other occurrences of this motif in First Isaiah (9:15, 28:14, and 29:13-14) confirm that הָעָם הַזֶּה refers to the people as a whole.

¹¹ The designation ‘this people’ (הָעָם הַזֶּה) as a pejorative depiction occurs in First Isaiah (6:9-10; 8:6, 11-12; 9:15; 28:11, 14; 29:13-14). It further occurs frequently within two other complexes, in Jeremiah and in the Pentateuch traditions that deal with the disobedience and stubbornness of Israel. The occurrences of this motif in First Isaiah, Jeremiah and the Pentateuch traditions, are characterised by a remarkable uniformity. In all cases, Yahweh’s anger is aroused against his people because of their disobedient and stubborn rejection of his blessings, and the prophet (Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah) is positioned between the people and God. Although Moses is depicted as a successful intercessor, the Pentateuch traditions make clear that the destruction of the people is eventually unavoidable (Exod 32:34; Deut 31). This becomes a reality within First Isaiah and Jeremiah. The development of the motif of הָעָם הַזֶּה, in my view, lies in the reflection on the disasters that had befallen Judah and Jerusalem in the early sixth century.

¹² Isa 8:16 intends to suggest that Isaiah’s testimony was faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. See Kaiser 1981: 190.

¹³ The phrase ‘I will wait for Yahweh, I will hope in him’, expresses hope for salvation in a hopeless situation. See Williamson 1994: 99-100; Barthel 1997: 237; contra Becker 1997: 75.

¹⁴ See particularly Ezek 39:23-29, and the explanation by Renz 1999: 120-121.

¹⁵ Cf. Barthel 1997: 233, with regard to 8:18.

Although 6:1-8:18 as a redactional composition is of a later date, it contains earlier material. Beneath the compositional surface another layer is discernible, most clearly so within 7:1-17 and 8:1-18. It cannot be denied that 7:1-17 and 8:1-18 contain prophetic sayings of a remarkably positive character, namely 7:4-9a, 7:14b.16 and 8:1-4. Furthermore, it is evident that these positive sayings have been embedded in a literary context displaying a negative tendency (7:9b, 13-14b.17; 8:5-8). The most convincing explanation is that within 7:1-17 and 8:1-18 earlier prophetic sayings have been provided with a new literary context. The early prophecies have some distinct characteristics: they display a positive message for Judah and its king Ahaz, they are associated with 'sons' bearing symbolic names (7:3; 7:14; 8:3), and they are historically related to a particular situation, the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis (734-732 BCE). By contrast, the later literary context in which they have been integrated is marked by a negative tendency. Furthermore, the reworking disconnected the prophetic activity from the original historical situation, turning it into a more general presentation of Isaiah's prophetic ministry. The profiles of the prophetic material and the literary context are clearly distinctive. Furthermore, the text gives cause for a literary-critical separation between an earlier level of prophetic material and a later level of literary composition.

The distinction between earlier, prophetic material and later, compositional passages can be applied further. Isa 8:9-10 is a fragment that can be associated with the earlier, prophetic oracles included in 7:1-17 and 8:1-18. Furthermore, the vision report of 6:1-8 can be interpreted against the background of this early material. The prophetic oracles intend to encourage Ahaz (and the Judaeans) during a political crisis. The vision report of 6:1-8 can be read against the background of these oracles, as being intended to affirm Isaiah's legitimacy as a prophet who proclaimed encouragement in a critical situation. By contrast, a range of passages from Isa 6-8 can be identified as having been composed as part of the literary-redactional reworking of the earlier material, i.e. 6:9-11, 7:9b, 7:13-14a.17, 8:5-8, 8:11-15, and 8:16-18. Whereas the early material in origin related to a particular historical situation, the composition of Isa 6-8 transcended these particular events and presented Isaiah's activities as a paradigm for his prophetic activity as an announcer of divine judgement.

2.1.2 *Isaiah 7:1-17*

Oracular Material

7:1-17 is a narration about the prophet Isaiah and King Ahaz, in which Ahaz is depicted as an example of the disobedience mentioned in 6:9-10.¹⁶ Two textual markers indicate the relation between 6:1-11 and 7:1-17. In the first place, the reference to Uzziah in 7:1 makes a connection with 6:1 and suggests in this way that the events heralded in 6:9-11 begin to

¹⁶ Isa 7:18-25 contains additional material, marked by the redactional formula *בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא* (7:18, 21, 23). 7:20, introduced by the formula *בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא*, may go back to an earlier prophetic announcement, and can be associated with the oracles of 7:4-9a*, 7:14b.16 and 8:1-4* (Wagner 2006: 250-252, 293). Isa 7:18-19 is likely to stem from a later redaction (Wagner 2006: 250). The expression 'land of Assyria' in juxtaposition with Egypt is suggestive of a later provenance (cf. Isa 11:16; 19:23-25; 27:13; Jer 2:18.36; Lam 5:6; Hos 7:11; 9:3; 11:5.11; 12:1; Zech 10:10-11).

take place in 7:1-17. Secondly, the exclamation שִׁמְעוּ in 7:13 echoes 6:9. 7:1-17 can be regarded as a composition with a dynastic-critical tendency. Various indications suggest however that it is not a textual unity *aus einem Guß*.

1) 7:1 refers to a war (מִלְחָמָה) waged by Aram and Israel against Jerusalem, which however failed. The following verses describe however the *threat* that Aram posed to Ahaz and his people by settling on Ephraim (7:2), and the *plan* of Aram to invade Judah in order to replace Ahaz (7:6). The oracle however insists that this plan will not come true (7:7). Whereas the oracle deals with Aram's aggressive intent, the narrative introduction in 7:1 goes further by referring to an actual assault.

2) 7:9b and 7:13-14a quite unexpectedly address a plural subject, whereas Ahaz is addressed in the singular throughout (7:4, 5, 11, 14b, 16). The oracles addressed to Ahaz in singular forms (7:4-9a, 14b.16) are encouraging. The plural passages however display a profoundly dynastic-critical tendency.

An explanation for these apparent disparities may start with 7:10, 'Yahweh went on to speak to Ahaz'. This clearly stems from the compositor's hand. Although the phrase contrasts with the immediate context where Isaiah is speaking, it is less clumsy than sometimes suggested,¹⁷ since it continues 7:3 (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה). The phrase 'Yahweh said' in 7:3 introduces a first encounter between Isaiah and Ahaz, whereas the phrase 'Yahweh went on to speak' in 7:10, creates a second scene, parallel to the first one. This arrangement is indicative of an editor/composer who neatly arranged the material at his disposal, the oracles of 7:4-9a and 7:14b.16. The earliest material embodied within 7:1-17 consists of two oracles to Ahaz. The oracles do not reflect any criticism against Ahaz, but rather encourage him in a straightforward way. They were however incorporated in a composition that displays a theme of threat and disaster.¹⁸

In the following, I will discuss how the oracles have been reworked into a new composition. 7:1-17 consists of two scenes, 1-9 and 10-17, each of which has at its core an oracle addressed to Ahaz. The first oracle, 7:4-9a, probably consisted of the following text:

^{4*} Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint
because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands.

^{5*} Because Aram has plotted evil against you, saying,

⁶ Let us invade Judah, terrify it, and cleave it open for ourselves
and make the son of Tabeel¹⁹ king in it!²⁰ –

⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.

^{8a} For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin,

^{9a} and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

¹⁷ Wildberger 1972-82: 268: 'V. 10 [erweckt] den Eindruck einer (eher ungeschickten) redaktionellen Naht'. Cf. Werlitz 1992: 169, 170, 173.

¹⁸ Barthel 1997: 63, 151-153.

¹⁹ טַבְּעֵל, 'good for nothing', is usually understood as a tendentious vocalisation of original טַבָּאֵל, 'God is good', as in Ezra 4:7; cf. Zech 6:10, 14, and Isa 7:6 LXX.

²⁰ The suffixes are feminine, suggesting that Judah here means the land of Judah, rather than the people of Judah; see JM § 134g.

The original word is an oracle of encouragement for Ahaz. The prophet encourages the king in a threatening situation, which can be inferred from the oracle itself. Furthermore, the threat is described in 7:2-3a*, an early note on the historical setting of the oracle.²¹ The oracle has been expanded in various ways. Some minor additions were made in 7:4 and 5 to explicitly identify the aggressors as Rezin and Pekah.²² A further addition consisted of 7:8b, 'within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people', which interrupts the coherence of 7:8a and 9a and does not make sense within the scope of the oracle.²³ The most significant addition to the oracle is 7:9b: 'If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all'. It is unlikely that 7:9b belonged to the original oracle. First, it addresses a plural subject, in contrast to the oracle, which is addressed to Ahaz in the singular (7:4, 5 suffix).²⁴ Second, the conditional threat expressed in 7:9b contrasts with 7:4-9a as an oracle of encouragement. The oracle exhorts Ahaz to persist in his policy of neutrality and not to give in to the pressure of the anti-Assyrian coalition.²⁵ 7:9b on the other hand introduces a condition of faith addressed to a plural subject. The terminology of 7:9b suggests the following explanation. The verb אָמַן alludes to Yahweh's promise to the Davidic dynasty.²⁶ In 2 Sam 7:16, Yahweh says: 'Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure (אָמַן ni.) forever before me; your throne shall be established forever'.²⁷ 7:9b reformulates the Davidic covenant by changing the promise into a negative condition. In this way, it gives a new twist to the oracle to Ahaz.²⁸

The second scene, 7:10-17, can be equally explained from the suggestion that an original oracle of salvation was secondarily reworked into a context of threat. The birth oracle concerning Immanuel is a straightforward announcement of salvation.²⁹ Its immediate context however consists of threatening words that announce judgement over the

²¹ According to 7:2 the army of Aram is camping in the country of Ephraim, which corresponds to Aram's plan to invade Judah in 7:6. The house of David is referred to in the singular (contrary to 7:13). Furthermore, the name of Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub (7:3a), is likely to represent an early tradition (Barthel 1997: 166). It forms a clear analogy with the 'sons' with symbolic names in 7:14 and 8:3. The name Shear-jashub can be interpreted as alluding to the destruction of Judah's enemies Ephraim and Aram (Høgenhaven 1988: 82; Wagner 2006: 141, note 45; the interpretation of 10:21 is secondary).

²² 7:4b explicitly mentions Rezin and Pekah as the referents of 'these two smouldering stumps of firebrands', see Werlitz 1992: 215, 219; Barthel 1997: 133. Furthermore, the grammatical correspondence of אָמַן and יָעַץ suggests that 5b is a later addition too, see Irvine 1990: 152.

²³ Werlitz 1992: 199, 214, 250. The possibility of 7:8b as a seventh-century addition will be discussed in 2.4 below.

²⁴ Werlitz (1992: 160) notes that 7:9b in recent literary-critical contributions often is taken as secondary to 9a. Hardmeier (1979: 48-54; 1981: 236-238) argues that 7:9b addresses Isaiah's disciples, who are, in his view, the real recipients of the *Denkschrift*.

²⁵ Barthel 1997: 165-166.

²⁶ With regard to 7:9b, MT has the most original reading (with e.g. Symmachus, Theodion). Some of the versions (e.g. LXX) appear to reflect a variant Hebrew text, reading תְּבִינִי (בִּין hi.) instead of תְּאִמְנִי (אָמַן ni.). This can be explained as a secondary reading, which attempted to make sense of the corrupted reading preserved in IQIsa^a (כִּי לֹא תְאִמְנִי אִם לֹא תְאִמְנִי), as was argued by Menzies (1998).

²⁷ See also 1 Sam 25:28 and 1 Kgs 11:38.

²⁸ Barthel 1997: 133-139.

²⁹ Barthel 1997: 141.

house of David.³⁰ The original oracle consisted of 7:14b.16. By contrast, 7:15 is a later *relecture* of the oracle that focuses on the figure of Immanuel himself rather than on the events of which he was a portent.³¹

^{14b} Look, the young woman is pregnant and is about to bear a son,
and you must name him Immanuel,
¹⁶ for before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good,
the land before whose two kings you are terrified will be deserted.

7:14b.16 is the announcement of a sign, which takes the form of a birth oracle. It consists of the following elements: 1) statement (or announcement) of pregnancy, beginning with *הנה*; 2) announcement of the birth of a son; 3) order for name-giving; 4) explanation of the portentous meaning of the name, beginning with *כי*.³²

Ahaz is the recipient of the birth oracle (*אתה*, 7:16). Since within birth oracles the order of the name-giving is always directed to the addressee of the oracle,³³ the subject of the ambivalent form *וְקָרָאתָ* in 7:14b must be Ahaz.³⁴ The form is to be read as *וְקָרָאתָ* ‘you must name’. The much-adopted reading of a third person feminine singular is to be rejected on form-critical grounds. Besides, it requires a change of the consonant text to *וְקָרְאָהָ*.³⁵ The reading of a third person feminine singular corresponds with the later *relecture* of the birth oracle. Immanuel was disconnected from Ahaz as name-giver in order to make the announcement valid for later times. Whereas in the original oracle Yahweh’s benevolence implied by the name Immanuel applies to Ahaz, the alternative reading ‘she will name him’ creates the possibility of interpreting Yahweh’s benevolence as referring to a circle different from the king and the sinful people.³⁶

The two oracles of encouragement, 7:4-9a* and 7:14b.16, are closely related. Both address Ahaz and are intended to support him in an urgent situation. The name Immanuel refers to the imminent rescue from the aggressor and reinforces the exhortation to resist the anti-Assyrian coalition and the promise of salvation by Yahweh. The verb *קוּץ* in 6 and 16 establishes a connection,³⁷ and the ‘son Immanuel’ forms a contrastive parallel with the ‘son of Tabeel’.

³⁰ Barthel 1997: 139.

³¹ 7:15 is a later interpretation of 7:16; see Werlitz 1992: 182-186; Barthel 1997: 142; Wagner 2005: 75-76; 2006: 73. Whereas the phrase in 7:15 is interpreted as indication of moral responsibility, its original meaning (7:16) refers to the age of discrimination (Herbert 1973: 65). According to 7:15, Immanuel must suffer hardship in order to be able to choose the good and to reject the evil.

³² Cf. Barthel 1997: 141-142; Wildberger 1972-82: 289; contra Höffken 1980: 323, note 5.

³³ Barthel 1997: 141-145.

³⁴ Barthel 1997: 122; Müller 1974: 39.

³⁵ Cf. Gen 29:35; 30:6; 1 Chron 4:9. MT *וְקָרָאתָ* is a second person feminine (cf. e.g. Gen 16:11), which is impossible in this context. 1QIsa^a *וְקָרָא* is likely to be an adaptation to Isa 8:3 (or 9:5). The readings of the versions derive either from MT *וְקָרָאתָ*, read as second person masculine or third person feminine, or from 1QIsa^a *וְקָרָא*, imperative or third person singular (impersonal).

³⁶ Barthel 1997: 178, 180.

³⁷ The meaning of *וַיִּקְצֹץ* in 7:6 is disputed. The root *קוּץ* II hi. is supposed to mean ‘to demolish’ (KB); however, derivation from *קוּץ* I hi. ‘to frighten’, ‘to horrify’ is perhaps preferable, see Wildberger 1972-82: 266; Barthel 1997: 120.

The birth oracle of 7:14b.16 is a straightforward announcement of salvation for Ahaz.³⁸ 7:14a (יִצְחָק) however seems to introduce a word of judgement in reaction to Ahaz's disbelief.³⁹ Within the composition, 7:13 functions as an accusation against Ahaz, which is followed by an announcement of judgement introduced with יִצְחָק (7:14-17). In this way, the birth oracle is incorporated in a literary context that gives the oracle a new twist. Isaiah's critical encounter with Ahaz in 7:10-13 is followed by an announcement of judgement in 7:14-17. The plural addressee in 7:13-14a evidently disrupts the dialogue between Isaiah and Ahaz. These verses give a negative twist to the oracle of salvation. The house of David, addressed in plural, is accused of stubbornness. The exclamation שָׁמַעְתִּי in 7:13 echoes 6:9. The Davidic dynasty, represented by Ahaz, is accused of the kind of behaviour mentioned in 6:9. The plural forms imply that the criticism applies not only to Ahaz, but also to the Davidic dynasty as a whole. The composition reflects the view that the kings of Judah, represented by Ahaz, by their continuous disobedience and lack of trust have exhausted the patience of Yahweh and his prophets, represented by Isaiah.⁴⁰ 7:13-14a is connected with 7:9b. Both passages are in the plural and display a dynastic-critical tendency. So, both scenes, 7:1-9 and 7:10-17, contain an oracle of salvation for Ahaz that is enclosed in a literary framework characterised by threat and criticism.⁴¹ Whereas the oracles address Ahaz, the plural passages address the Davidic dynasty as a whole.⁴² Isaiah's opposition to the Davidic dynasty in 7:1-17 parallels his opposition to the people (הָעָם הַזֶּה) in 6:9-10 and 8:6, 11-12. To some extent, the people are included in the compositional perspective of 7:1-17 as well. The lack of faith, exemplified by Ahaz, will cause disaster both for the dynasty *and* for the people (7:17).⁴³ The criticism in 7:1-17 is not directed at Ahaz's foreign policy in particular, but to the policy of the Davidic dynasty in general, which ultimately resulted in disaster.

Literary Composition

7:1-17 contains two oracles addressed to Ahaz that were reworked into a composition that criticises the Davidic dynasty, exemplified by Ahaz, and announces its destruction. In the following, I will demonstrate that 7:1-17 has been composed with an eye to the descriptions of Ahaz and Hezekiah found in 2 Kings. In three cases, a connection can be established.

³⁸ So also Wagner 2005.

³⁹ Barthel 1997: 146.

⁴⁰ See Barthel 1997: 172-173. The reference to 'my God' in 7:13 points at a break between Yahweh and Isaiah on the one hand and the Davidic dynasty on the other; Wildberger 1972-82: 288; Wagner 2006: 161.

⁴¹ See Barthel 1997: 150.

⁴² Williamson (1998b: 251) notes that the plural form of address 'suggests that the whole "house of David" is in view, not just Ahaz as an individual'. 7:1-17 adds a further dimension to 6:9-10 (1998b: 250).

⁴³ 7:9b alludes to the motif of the disobedient people. The condition of trust means trust in Yahweh. The accusation of lacking trust in Yahweh occurs especially with regard to the people of Israel in the wilderness (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23; 2 Kgs 17:14; Ps 78:22, 32, 37; 106:24). Despite the signs Yahweh showed them the people did not believe (e.g. Num 14:11). In Isa 7:1-17, the lack of trust (אֵין־הִי.) is indirectly connected with the 'sign' (אֵימָה) given by Yahweh.

1) 7:1 is almost completely identical to 2 Kgs 16:5.

2 Kgs 16:5	Isa 7:1
Then	In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah
came up	came up
King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel	King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel
to wage war on Jerusalem;	to Jerusalem to attack it,
they besieged Ahaz	
but could not	but could not ⁴⁴
prevail over him.	mount an attack against it.

It is mostly agreed that 7:1 is dependent on 2 Kgs 16:5. A clear indication for this is that in 7:1-17 the Northern Kingdom is referred to as ‘Ephraim’ (7:2, 5, 8, 9, 17), and its king as the ‘son of Remaliah’ (7:4, 5, 9), whereas in 7:1 the names ‘Israel’ and ‘Pekah, son of Remaliah’ are used, following the common usage of the book of Kings. With the narrative introduction of 7:1 based on 2 Kgs 16:5, the redactor/composer of 7:1-17 gave a slightly different twist to the events. The prophetic material at his disposal, 7:2-3a*.4-9a* and 7:14b.16, deals with the *threat* posed to Ahaz by Aram and Ephraim, and leaves open whether an actual assault took place. The report of 2 Kgs 16:5, taken up in Isa 7:1, makes things more explicit by referring to a military assault by Aram and Israel. The redactor/composer of 7:1-17 however changed the report of 2 Kgs 16:5, by turning the focus from Ahaz to Jerusalem. In 2 Kgs 16:5, the object of assault is Ahaz: ‘they besieged Ahaz, but could not prevail over him’.⁴⁵ In 7:1, the assault is launched against Jerusalem.⁴⁶ This change of focus from Ahaz to Jerusalem can be explained as part of the royal-critical tendency of 7:1-17. The assault was thwarted, not because of Ahaz’s merits, but for the sake of Yahweh’s city Jerusalem.

The connection with 2 Kgs 16 reveals more. The beginning of 16:5 וְאָז (‘then’) continues the dating of 16:1, ‘In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.’ Whereas 2 Kgs 16:1 refers to ‘Ahaz son of Jotham’, Isa 7:1 extends this to ‘Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah’. This is remarkable, since it is highly unusual that a third generation is mentioned in a dating formula. This exceptional feature reveals a specific meaning of the reference to Uzziah. Its purpose is to create a link with Isa 6, which dates Isaiah’s vision to ‘the year King Uzziah died’ (6:1). The connection suggests that the events announced in Isa 6, particularly in 6:9-11, begin to take place in 7:1-17.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Contrary to 2 Kgs 16:5 (יָבִילָהּ), Isa 7:1 continues the singular (יָבִיל).

⁴⁵ יָבִיל in combination with לָחֶם means ‘to prevail (over)’ and refers to a human being (Num 22:11; 1 Sam 17:9, 33; Jer 1:19; 15:20), except in Isa 7:1.

⁴⁶ לָחֶם עָלַי is frequently used with respect to cities (Deut 20:10, 19; 2 Kgs 12:17; 19:8; Jer 32:29; 34:1, 7, 22).

⁴⁷ This resembles the interpretation of Williamson (1998b: 244-254, 269-270) who understands 7:1-17 as reflecting on the fall of the Davidic dynasty in 586 BCE and as intending to explain the disasters in the light of the announcement of 6:9-10.

2) The two other parallels are with the Hezekiah stories of 2 Kgs 18-20 (Isa 36-38). The first is the detailed description of the location where Isaiah is to meet Ahaz, 7:3b. This resembles the location of 2 Kgs 18:17 (Isa 36:2) where the Assyrian delegation takes up position: ‘(at the end of) the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field’. Such detailed topographical indications are exceptional in the Hebrew Bible and the close similarity in wording points to a relation of literary dependency. The description has its natural position within the context of 2 Kgs 18:17 (Isa 36:2). In this story, the exact locality is of utmost significance. The Assyrian delegation is posted outside the city of Jerusalem (18:17), and a Judaeian delegation gets out of the city to negotiate (18:18). Their conversation is however audible for the Judaeian people on the city wall (18:26). The credibility of this scene depends on the precise position of the Assyrian delegation at a strategic spot, outside, but close to, the city wall. For Isa 7:1-17, by contrast, the place where Isaiah is to meet Ahaz is hardly relevant at first sight. Its significance lies in the parallel it creates with the Hezekiah story. The similarity in location establishes a comparison between Hezekiah and Ahaz, who both face an enemy assault, and who are both put to the test: trusting in Yahweh or not.

3) The third connection relates to the *אִימָן*, the sign for Ahaz.⁴⁸ Ahaz is ordered to ask for a sign (7:11), and the sign given to him is the birth of a son to be named Immanuel (7:14b.16). However, the description of the sign in 7:11 does not correspond to the sign actually given. 7:11 refers to a confirmatory sign, a sign confirming the accompanying prophetic message, and the qualification ‘deep as Sheol or high as heaven’, points to its miraculous character.⁴⁹ This resembles the receding shadow (2 Kgs 20:8-11; Isa 38:7-8, 22), a confirmatory sign of a miraculous character, requested by Hezekiah. The actual sign of 7:14b.16 is of a different character.⁵⁰ It is not an unusual feature of the child’s conception or birth, but sets a time-limit for the fulfilment of the announcement, before the child reaches the age of discretion.⁵¹ The description of the sign as a miracle by the redactor/composer (7:11) hardly evolved from the material at his disposal (the birth oracle), but can be explained as a purposeful reference to 2 Kgs 20 (Isa 38), where Hezekiah asks for a sign from God. The argument between Isaiah and Ahaz concerning the request for an *אִימָן* (7:11-14) deliberately contrasts with Hezekiah’s pious request for a sign.⁵²

In these three cases, 7:1-17 borrows from 2 Kgs 16 and 18-20 (Isa 36-38).⁵³ The two latter cases show that 7:1-17 deliberately mirrors the Hezekiah stories. The disobedient

⁴⁸ See Ackroyd 1982: 17-18.

⁴⁹ Barthel 1997: 171-172.

⁵⁰ Berges 1998: 111.

⁵¹ Roberts 1977a: 477. The character of the *אִימָן* mentioned in 2 Kgs 19:29 (Isa 37:30), which also sets a time-limit (within three years), is comparable to the sign of the newborn son Immanuel (7:14b.16).

⁵² Contra Barthel 1997: 171.

⁵³ Kaiser 1981: 143-144, 164; Werlitz 1992: 225-231; Becker 1997: 29-31, 36-38, 40-41; Ackroyd 1982: 19-20, tentatively. By contrast, Barthel (1997: 63) holds that 2 Kgs 18-20 (Isa 36-39) is dependent on Isa 7:1-17, and uses this as an argument for a pre-exilic dating of 7:1-17 (cf. Barthel 1997: 135, note 74).

Ahaz is contrasted with the faithful Hezekiah.⁵⁴ Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh and asked for a sign, Ahaz refused a sign and did not trust. Isa 7:1-17 uses the example of the disobedient Ahaz, who represents the Davidic dynasty as a whole, to explain the disaster that overcame both dynasty and people.

Early Material versus Later Composition

Although 7:1-17 to some extent is a *Fremdkörper* within Isa 6-8, several cross-references point to the unity of Isa 6-8 on a redactional-compositional level. The reference to Uzziah in 7:1 links the composition of 7:1-17 to Isa 6. This connection is corroborated by the parallel between 7:13 and 6:9 (אֲנִי עָמָד) – the prophet stands in opposition to the disobedient people ('this people', Isa 6 and 8), and to the disobedient royal house (Isa 7). Furthermore, the characterisation of Isaiah's sons as 'signs' in 8:18, not only refers to Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:3), but also to Shear-jashub (7:3) and probably to Immanuel (7:14) as well.⁵⁵ A third connection is found in 8:10, which summarises the prophetic words of 7:5, 7:7 and 7:14 (see below).

The connections between 7:1-17 and Isa 6 and 8 lie on two levels. First, on a compositional level, Isa 6-8 forms a redactional unity. Whereas 6:1-11 and 8:1-18 focus on the disobedient people (אֲנִי עָמָד), Isa 7 presents Ahaz, representing the Davidic dynasty, as an example of the disobedience announced in 6:9-10. The message of the composition is that Yahweh brings destruction and disaster over the people of Judah and the royal house, because of their stubborn, recalcitrant attitude and lack of trust. Secondly, both Isa 7, and 6 and 8, have at their core, material that can be related to actual prophetic activity in the eighth century. 8:1-4 lies on the same level as 7:4-9a and 7:14b.16, and 8:9-10 is to be associated with this material as well; finally it will be argued that 6:1-8 belongs to this earliest level too.

Because 7:1-17 builds upon other material, in particular the Hezekiah stories, the composition cannot date from an early period. Furthermore, since 7:1-17 depicts Ahaz as the negative counterpart to Hezekiah, it is highly unlikely that it was composed shortly after the events of 701, caused by Hezekiah's foreign policy.⁵⁶ Instead, the composition is likely to refer to the disastrous events of the early sixth century, the collapse of the state of Judah and the end of the Davidic dynasty. Ahaz typifies the disbelief of the Davidic dynasty, and 7:9b, 13 and 17 are to be read from an *ex eventu* perspective that explains the end of the dynasty as due to lack of faith and disobedience.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The thesis that 7:1-17 depicts Ahaz as an antitype of Hezekiah was proposed by Kaiser (1981: 143), and worked out by Becker (1997: 24-60). According to Becker (1997: 47), 7:1-17 aims to show that Ahaz's disbelief caused the end of the dynasty.

⁵⁵ Only Immanuel is explicitly referred to as a 'sign' (7:14a); 8:18 apparently takes Immanuel as another son of Isaiah.

⁵⁶ Contra Barthel 1997: 155-157.

⁵⁷ Werlitz 1992: 229-230. The way in which Ahaz's disobedience functions as an explanation for the downfall of the dynasty and disaster for the nation (7:17) is to some extent comparable to the depiction of Manasseh in 2 Kings, whose wicked behaviour effectuated the disaster (2 Kgs 21:11-15; 23:26-27; 24:2).

7:1-17 concludes with an announcement of judgement (7:17).⁵⁸ The phrase ‘Ephraim’s removal from Judah’ (סור אֶפְרַיִם מֵעַל יְהוּדָה), refers to the division of the Davidic Kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 12).⁵⁹ Something worse is announced here: the destruction of Judah and the end of the Davidic dynasty. In 7:17, finally, the oracles of encouragement (7:4-9a*, 14b.16) are turned upside down completely.

2.1.3 *Isaiah 8:1-18*

Oracular Material

It is commonly agreed that 8:1-4 relates to the activity of the prophet Isaiah. The passage consists of two parts, 8:1-2 and 8:3-4, both focusing on the symbolic name or phrase Maher-shalal-hash-baz. This means something like ‘quick booty, fast spoil’.⁶⁰

¹ Then Yahweh said to me, Take a large tablet⁶¹ and write on it in common characters,⁶² ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’.

² And I took⁶³ reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.

³ And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;

⁴ for before the child knows how to say ‘father’ or ‘mother’, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.

The historical background of this material is the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis (734-732 BCE), which is similar to that of the oracles within 7:1-17.⁶⁴ The announcement of disaster for Aram and Ephraim effectively encourages Ahaz and the people of Judah. In 8:1 Isaiah is commanded to perform a symbolic act. The reference to the witnesses in 8:2a is likely to be an original element of the report.⁶⁵ The function of the witnesses probably was to testify afterwards that Isaiah indeed had predicted the punishment of Aram and Ephraim.⁶⁶ 8:3-4 resembles 7:14b.16, and the intent of the two oracles is similar too: Aram and Ephraim will

⁵⁸ Barthel (1997: 181) argues that 7:17 announces judgement not only for Aram and Ephraim but also for Judah’s king and people. The expression בוא על with Yahweh as subject denotes disaster for the addressees (Barthel 1997: 146). The combination of בוא (qal or hi.) plus על and יום, with Yahweh as instigator, always refers to disaster: Jer 51:47, 52; Amos 4:2 (cf. 1 Kgs 21:29; Jer 9:24; 17:18; 46:21; Zeph 2:2). 7:17b, ‘the king of Assyria’, is a later, historicising, addition.

⁵⁹ A parallel expression is found in 2 Kgs 17:21, ‘when Yahweh had torn Israel from the house of David (קָרַע מֵעַל בֵּית דָּוִד)’. In that context, Israel’s separation from Judah and its exile are connected as a first and second step of the same process: separation led to exile (see 2 Kgs 17:22). In 7:17 a similar association between separation and exile may be implied.

⁶⁰ The name is sometimes explained from Egyptian military language; see Wagner 2006: 168.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the term גְּלִיזָן, see Wagner 2006: 50 note 30.

⁶² Cf. Gray 1912: 142-143, ‘an ordinary stylus’, which would mean that Isaiah is ordered to write in ordinary letters.

⁶³ For this translation, cf. Barthel 1997: 184, 186.

⁶⁴ Barthel 1997: 187-188.

⁶⁵ Contra Becker 1997: 94. The fact that both witnesses occur in 2 Kings (Uriah in 2 Kgs 16:10-16; Zechariah in 2 Kgs 18:2) could however be taken as an indication that 8:2b is secondary.

⁶⁶ Wildberger 1972-82: 317.

be punished by Assyria because of their threat against Judah. The imminence of the punishment is even more strongly emphasised than in 7:16.⁶⁷ The correspondence between 7:14b.16 and 8:3-4 can be explained by the fact that both are birth oracles. In both cases a newborn son receives an auspicious name, which encourages king and people in a threatening situation.

Later Material

In this section I concentrate on 8:5-8 and 8:11-15 (for 8:16-18, see 2.1.1 and 2.1.5). As in 7:1-17, where the earlier oracles 7:4-9a and 14b.16 were incorporated in a new literary context, 8:1-4 received a twist with the extended passage 8:5-8. The phrase ‘Yahweh spoke to me again’ (8:5) is a compositional bridge introducing a new prophecy. 8:6-8 is a literary extension to the earlier word (8:1-4) from the hand of the redactor/composer. The announcement against Judah’s enemies was complemented with an announcement of punishment against Judah itself. The additional ‘prophecy’ has a fine balance between accusation and announcement, both in metaphoric language:

Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently and smoothly,⁶⁸
Therefore, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River mighty and many.

This passage reflects the rejection of the prophetic message by the people.⁶⁹ The expression ‘waters of Shiloah’ is a metaphor for Yahweh’s blessings: the people are accused of having rejected Yahweh and his blessings.⁷⁰ A similar accusation is found in Jer 2:13, ‘my people have forsaken me, the fountain of living water’. The accusation is followed by the announcement that the people will be consumed by raging water.⁷¹ 8:7b-8 continues the announcement of 8:7a. 8:8a takes up the threat against Judah introduced in 8:7. The phrase ‘to reach up to the neck’ does not indicate deliverance, but stresses the dangerous depth of the flood.⁷² 8:8b carries on with the image of the river as referring to the Mesopotamian king, ‘its wings’ probably meaning the riverbanks that stand for the flanks of the king’s army.⁷³

⁶⁷ The time indication of 8:4 means: before the child speaks its first words.

⁶⁸ Cf. Clements 1980a: 96. Both accusation (8:6) and announcement (8:7) contain a water metaphor, with *לֵאמֹר וְיִשְׁשׁוּ* (‘gently and smoothly’, taking *יִשְׁשׁוּ* as a by-form of *יִשְׁשׁוּ*) paralleling *הַעֲצוּמִים וְהַרְבִּיִּם* (‘mighty and many’). The phrases ‘Rezin and the son of Remaliah’ (8:6bβ) and ‘the king of Assyria and all his glory’ (8:7aβ) are later, historicising additions, meant to establish a link with the situation as depicted in 7:1-17; cf. Dietrich 1976: 65, and see note 138 below.

⁶⁹ Barthel (1997: 196) acknowledges the reflective character of 8:6-8, but regards it as reflection by Isaiah himself on the lack of effect of his words.

⁷⁰ See Nielsen 1989: 45; Wildberger 1972-82: 324. The ‘waters of Shiloah’ do not stand for the Davidic monarchy (contra Barthel 1997: 203; Irvine 1990: 190-191). Various passages from First Isaiah contain similar accusations with *מָאָס*, ‘to reject’: 5:24, the people have rejected Yahweh’s torah, and 30:12, the people have rejected Yahweh’s word.

⁷¹ For the image of the destructive flood depicting an enemy invasion, see Isa 28:15-18; Jer 47:2; Nah 1:8; and cf. Isa 30:28, where Yahweh is pictured as a raging flood that destroys Assyria.

⁷² Wong 1999: 426-427.

⁷³ Barthel 1997: 207; Wong 1999: 427.

The person addressed in 8:8b ‘your land’ (אַרְצֶךָ) must be Immanuel,⁷⁴ likely to represent the Davidic dynasty.⁷⁵ In this way, the announcement of 8:8b corresponds to the dynastic-critical tendency of Isa 7 (especially 7:17). 8:5-8 forms a conceptual unity: the introduction (8:5) is followed by a balanced accusation and announcement (8:6-7*), an extension of the announcement (8:7b-8a), and a concluding remark (8:8b). The depiction of disaster does not correspond to the situation of Judah’s submission to Tiglath-pileser III in 734. Instead, it may refer to a disastrous situation as a *vaticinium ex eventu*. The prophecy against Judah in 8:5-8 is a later expansion of the oracle against Ephraim and Aram, from the perspective that what counts for Ephraim counts for Judah as well. This is indicative of a later view, when both kingdoms had come to an end, and historical parallels were drawn (cf. 8:14 below).

The announcement of judgement in 8:5-8 must be interpreted in connection with 6:9-11: ‘this people’ will be punished because of their disobedience. The designation ‘this people’ functions on the level of the redactional composition of Isa 6-8, not within a supposed eighth-century setting.⁷⁶ By referring to הָיָה הָעָם הַזֶּה, 8:11 takes up the theme of 8:5-8. The passage 8:11-15 is composed from a later point of view as well.⁷⁷ The depiction in 8:11 of Yahweh’s hand overpowering Isaiah and preventing him from going the way of the people refers to the vision report of Isa 6,⁷⁸ from the perspective of 6:9-11. The vision is presented here as illustrating Isaiah’s opposition to the disobedient people (‘this people’) to whom he announces disaster.⁷⁹ In 8:11 Isaiah is warned not to go the way of the people, which implies that they have gone astray.⁸⁰ Whereas in 8:5-8 Judah’s destruction is announced, 8:11-15 presents two possible reactions to this announcement of disaster. 8:12-13 addresses a plural subject, not explicitly identified, but to be designated as ‘the faithful’. They stand in opposition to ‘this people’, i.e. the sinful nation. The faithful probably are the same as the prophet’s ‘disciples’ mentioned in 8:16. They are summoned not to call קִשְׁרָה, ‘conspiracy’ or ‘high treason’ what the sinful people call קִשְׁרָה. This represents the reaction of the sinful people to the announcement of judgement (8:5-8). The people reject the prophecy of judgement (and the prophet proclaiming it) by calling it ‘high treason’, an offence against the state. Similar reactions to ‘true prophecy of judgement’ are found in Amos 7:10 and Jer 38:1-4. The true prophet of judgement is accused of conspiracy against the state. The point of 8:11-15 is that this is the wrong reaction to the prophetic message.

⁷⁴ Wong’s suggestions (1999: 429) to separate אִמְּנוּאל from the immediately following אֵל עִמָּנוּ, and to regard the prophet Isaiah as the addressee, are unconvincing. The prophet functions as mediator of the oracle not as recipient. Moreover, אֵל עִמָּנוּ does not make sense in an isolated position.

⁷⁵ According to Barthel (1997: 207-208), Immanuel is a fictive addressee; Sweeney (1996a: 173), suggests Immanuel symbolising Judah.

⁷⁶ According to Barthel (1997: 201-202), הָיָה הָעָם הַזֶּה refers to the Judaeans who supported the plot of Rezin and Pekah against Ahaz. The conspiracy mentioned in 8:12 is then taken as referring to this plot. See Barthel 1997: 224; Irvine 1990: 203. However, the ‘waters of Shiloah’ (8:6) refer to Yahweh’s blessings, not to the Davidic dynasty, and 8:12 cannot be convincingly understood as referring to a conspiracy against Ahaz.

⁷⁷ Becker 1997: 111.

⁷⁸ Barthel 1997: 87. Cf. ‘the hand of Yahweh was strong upon me’ (Ezek 3:14); ‘the hand of Yahweh was upon ...’, as introducing a visionary experience (Ezek 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1; cf. 2 Kgs 3:15).

⁷⁹ Barthel 1997: 220.

⁸⁰ See also Isa 30:11; and cf. Isa 65:2; Jer 7:23-24; 18:15.

The faithful, in opposition to ‘this people’, are therefore summoned to refrain from this reaction and from fearing the wrong thing. The sinful people fear the foreign enemy and regard the prophetic announcement that the enemy will destroy them as high treason. However, they do not realise that the foreign enemy is an agent of the real actor, Yahweh, who is determined to destroy the people. The faithful are urged to fear Yahweh; then they will be saved. Whereas for them Yahweh will be a sanctuary, a safe place (8:14),⁸¹ he will be a stone of stumbling, a cause for destruction for the sinful people of Israel and Judah.⁸²

Far from being a report of an eighth-century controversy, 8:11-15 deals with the right view of history. It explains that Yahweh himself brought disaster over ‘the two houses of Israel’. Behind the Assyrians and the Babylonians stands Yahweh, who was determined to punish the sinful people. Instead of qualifying this view as high treason, conspiracy against the state, the readers or hearers of the message should focus on Yahweh as the real actor in history. The wrong reaction of the sinful people to the announcement of judgement and the right reaction of the faithful, is part of the reflection of the composition of Isa 6-8.

The disasters are no longer restricted to Judah’s enemies (8:1-4), but affect Judah and Jerusalem. This extension reveals a later perspective, far exceeding the Syro-Ephraimite crisis.⁸³ 8:14-15 explicitly states that the destruction includes Northern Israel, Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Whereas Northern Israel was dealt with in 8:1-4, the extension of 8:5-8, 11-15 makes clear that Yahweh’s judgement similarly applies to Judah and Jerusalem.

The expressions ‘stone of blow’ and ‘rock of stumbling’ are paralleled in Jer 6:21, Ezek 7:19 and 44:12.⁸⁴ The phrase ‘both houses of Israel’, which occurs only here, implies the view of Israel and Judah as being twin nations, and refers to the collapse of both national states. It was probably after the termination of the national states of Israel and Judah (i.e. after 586 BCE) that such historical parallels were drawn.

Isa 8:9-10

The passage 8:9-10 is a *Fremdkörper* between 8:5-8 and 8:11-15:

⁹ Band together,⁸⁵ you peoples, and be dismayed; listen, all you far countries;
gird yourselves and be dismayed; gird yourselves and be dismayed!

¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught;
speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

Enclosed within the announcements of judgement against Judah, the nations of the world are addressed. The change of perspective is indicated by the use of the terms עַם and אֲרָץ:

⁸¹ MT 8:14 makes sense and must not to be changed; so also Wagner 2006: 52 note 37.

⁸² Barthel (1997: 227) shows that this announcement of judgement turns the traditional depictions of Yahweh (i.e. Yahweh as rock of rescue) upside down.

⁸³ This is agreed by Barthel 1997: 225.

⁸⁴ Cf. especially Jer 6:21: ‘See, I (Yahweh) am laying before this people (הַיָּהוָה הַקָּטָן) stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble; parents and children together, neighbour and friend shall perish’.

⁸⁵ רָעוּ can be derived from רָעָה II ‘to band together’ (Wildberger 1972-82: 329), or from an otherwise unknown qal of רָעַע ‘erhebt den Kriegsruf!’ (Müller 1974: 47), or from רָעַע ‘to be evil’ (Barthel 1997: 195-196).

contrary to הָעַם הַזֶּה in 8:6, 11-12 (the people of Judah), עַמִּים refers to foreign nations, and contrary to אֶרֶץ in 8:8b (the land of Judah), אֶרֶץ in 8:9 means ‘world’. Furthermore, 8:9-10 takes up the oracles of encouragement of 7:1-17.⁸⁶ 8:10 is a construction of three phrases from the oracles: רָעָה ... כִּי יֵעָן (7:5), לֹא תִקְוּם (7:7) and עָמְנוּ אֵל (7:14). This suggests that 8:9-10 is close to the oracles concerning the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis. The fact that 8:10 quotes only from the oracles of encouragement suggests that 8:9-10 preceded the literary reworking of Isa 6-8 focusing on the people’s disobedience and subsequent disaster. 8:9-10 is to be related to the oracles of encouragement. Various authors have attributed 8:9-10 to an Assyria Redaction.⁸⁷ The Assyria Redaction is regarded a redactional interpretation and extension of earlier, Isaianic material, dating from the later part of the seventh century, against the background of Assyria’s loss of imperial power. The case of 8:9-10 however is somewhat different, since Assyria is not mentioned. Nevertheless, 8:9-10 is characterised by the same euphoric voice found in passages probably belonging to the Assyria Redaction, which proclaim the downfall of Assyria (14:24-27, 30:27-33, 31:4-5.8-9).

Early Material versus Later Composition

8:1-4, representing early prophetic material, and 8:9-10, a passage close to the prophetic material, have been reworked into the larger literary unit of 8:1-18. Whereas the early material is supportive and positive (Judah’s enemies will be destroyed), the later reworking is characterised by a perspective of judgement against Judah. My analysis of 8:1-18 resembles that of Kratz (2003b: 11-13). Kratz regards 8:1-4 as representing the earliest layer. This material, in his view, identifies Isaiah as a prophet of salvation. At a secondary stage, Isaiah was turned into a prophet of judgement:

Erst im Rückblick, im Rahmen der weiteren literarischen Überlieferung, ist aus dem Heilspropheten ein Gerichtsprophet und aus dem Heilsorakel ein Mittel zur Verstockung des Volkes geworden. Der Übergang vom einen zum andern ist in der Fortsetzung von Jes 8,1-4 in 8,5-8 mit Händen zu greifen.⁸⁸

In the opinion of Kratz, 8:5-8 and the *Denkschrift* as a redactional unit in general have turned the original meaning of the oracles of salvation upside down.⁸⁹

2.1.4 Isaiah 6:1-11

Connection between Isa 6:1-8 and 6:9-11

My analysis of Isa 6 focuses on the character of the connection between 6:1-8, the vision report, and the following verses 6:9-11, the ‘message’ Isaiah is to deliver. Before discussing

⁸⁶ See Müller 1974: 47-48; Irvine 1990: 193-194. The language of 8:9 reflects the motif of the *Völkerkampf*, a mythical depiction belonging to the Zion tradition.

⁸⁷ See Barthel 1997: 208-212, following Barth.

⁸⁸ Kratz 2003b: 12.

⁸⁹ Kratz 2003b: 13.

this issue, however, I deal with the later update of the message in 6:12-13ab α .⁹⁰ This passage is usually considered as displaying a late perspective.⁹¹ 6:12-13ab α is an addition to 6:11, which gives a more explicit account of the total destruction of Judah and the deportation of the people.⁹² If 6:12-13ab α is a *relecture* of 6:1-11, the latter is of course from an earlier date than the former. Various scholars have argued that 6:1-11 must be of a pre-exilic origin, since the addition of 6:12-13ab α , reflecting the events of 586 BCE, is to be exilic.⁹³ This argument, in my view, is not convincing. That 6:12-13ab α is later than 6:11 does not mean that 6:11 must be pre-exilic. Both 6:11 and 6:12-13ab α imply the disastrous events of the sixth century. Whereas 6:11 focuses on the destruction in rather general terms, 6:12-13ab α makes a different point, emphasising the complete emptiness of the land. 6:12-13ab α may date from a late exilic, but also from a post-exilic period,⁹⁴ and 6:9-11 can be equally dated to after 586 BCE.⁹⁵ That 6:12-13ab α dates to after 586 BCE and that 6:9-11 dates to before 6:12-13ab α , does not imply that 6:9-11 dates to before 586 BCE.⁹⁶ The question remains of whether 6:1-11 is a literary unity or whether a distinction is to be made between 6:1-8 and 6:9-11.⁹⁷ A plain reading of 6:1-11 gives the impression that Isaiah volunteers to go (6:8) before he knows what an impossible message he is to deliver (6:9-11). Furthermore, as it is formulated the message of 6:9-10 is hardly communicable at all. Scholars therefore widely agree that 6:9-10 is not really a prophetic message, but either a reformulation of what was from the outset the message Isaiah was to deliver, or a revision of his prophetic message based on his reflection on the lack of effect of his ministry.⁹⁸ Either way, scholars maintain the Isaianic character of 6:9-11.

A recent proposal by Joosten illustrates this line of argumentation. Joosten takes 6:9-10 as a pseudo-quotation;⁹⁹ instead of being a real word of Yahweh, it represents what Isaiah, through his experience of a long and ineffective ministry, had discerned to be Yahweh's intention.¹⁰⁰ 6:11, on the other hand, is taken as reporting a real conversation between Isaiah and Yahweh, which initially followed Yahweh's original message that later was replaced by its revision (6:9-10). The original word of Yahweh (replaced by the reflection

⁹⁰ 6:10b β and 6:13b β are generally considered to be late additions, introducing a hopeful perspective in a context of judgement (e.g. Wagner 2006: 66).

⁹¹ Williamson 1994: 35-36; Barthel 1997: 75-77, 93; Wagner 2006: 252-255.

⁹² Kaiser 1981: 134; Becker 1997: 64-65.

⁹³ Williamson 2004: 195-197; Wagner 2006: 119.

⁹⁴ The motif of the emptiness of the land played a role in the post-exilic period (see e.g. Lipschits 2005: 374). The verb קָרַח pi. is further attested in Jer 27:10; Ezek 11:16 and Joel 4:6.

⁹⁵ I agree with Williamson (2004: 195-197) that in view of 6:12-13ab α as a later addition, the position of Kaiser and Becker that 6:9-11 is of post-exilic origin, is unlikely (see Kaiser 1981: 134; Becker 1997: 64-65). This does not imply however that 6:1-11 in its entirety must be pre-exilic.

⁹⁶ This is important to emphasise, since according to Wagner (2006: 119) the relatively earlier date of 6:1-11 compared to 6:12-13ab α is the only argument on which a pre-exilic dating of 6:1-11 in its entirety can be based.

⁹⁷ 6:10 is sometimes regarded as a later extension to 6:9.11 (Becker 1997: 81-82), but this is not entirely convincing.

⁹⁸ See Barthel 1997: 87-94.

⁹⁹ Joosten 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Joosten 2001: 239-242.

of 6:9-10) was a prophecy of judgement against Judah.¹⁰¹ This line of argument – taking 6:1-8 and 6:11 as representing a direct encounter between Yahweh and Isaiah, and 6:9-10 as a reflection from the hand of Isaiah at a later point in his career – apparently rescues 6:1-11 as Isaianic. However, the argumentation fails to convince. 6:9-10 can only be regarded as Isaiah's reflection on his failed ministry if his ministry aimed at repentance. Yet, 6:11 clearly suggests his prophetic message consisted of announcements of punishment and destruction. More importantly, this line of thought requires extensive speculation. On the part of the recipients it must be speculated that they did not listen (which in the case of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis is hardly plausible). Moreover, on the part of the prophet it must be speculated that Isaiah, forced by his own experiences, no longer was able to take Yahweh's words in their plain sense, but pondered upon Yahweh's real intentions behind them. In my view, 6:9-10 cannot be read as a real message, but neither as Isaiah's own reflection on his prophetic ministry. The latter view turns Isaiah into a theologian who became the interpreter of his own prophetic message. Others have suggested that 6:9-11 represents Isaiah's reflection on his own ministry, provoked by his experience that the people had rejected his message. Isaiah learned to understand that his preaching was ineffective through Yahweh, and reinterpreted his mission as to harden the people in order to effectuate the coming judgement.¹⁰² This would however imply that Isaiah became rather cynical, believing that Yahweh had made the people unsusceptible in order to punish them.

On the contrary, 6:9-11 makes sense if understood as a reflection on the disasters of the early sixth century. The passage makes clear that the disasters are to be understood as Yahweh's punishment, which was not accidental but inevitable. According to 6:9-11, Yahweh was determined to punish his people, because of their sins, and the prophet had to announce the unimaginable. The likeliest origin of the thought that Yahweh was determined to destroy his land and people is the experience of destruction and disaster of the early sixth century BCE.

Isa 6:1-8 as an Independent Unit

Whereas the vision report is intended to legitimise Isaiah as a speaker and actor on behalf of Yahweh, the subsequent passage, 6:9-11, reflects on the disasters as divine punishment for the disobedience of the people. It is difficult to ascribe the different intentions of 6:1-8 and 6:9-11 to a common denominator.¹⁰³ Many scholars acknowledge that 6:1-11 goes back to two entirely different experiences: the first being Isaiah's visionary experience as the basis for 6:1-8, the second Isaiah's later experience of the ineffectiveness of his prophetic

¹⁰¹ Joosten 2001: 239-242.

¹⁰² This argument is called the *Rückprojizierungsthese*, see Hesse 1955: 84: 'So, wie Jesajas Verkündigung tatsächlich aussieht, ist sie nicht zu verstehen, wenn man Kap. 6,9f wörtlich nimmt'. According to Barthel (1997: 110), Isaiah solved the difficulty of his message being rejected by explaining his prophetic failure as due to the paradoxical intervention of Yahweh. Barthel 1997: 92: 'Die faktische *Wirkung* des Prophetenwortes erscheint im Verstockungsauftrag *fiktiv als Zweck* und wird auf diese Weise in Jahwes vorgängiger, planvoller Absicht verankert'. Cf. also Hardmeier 1981: 248.

¹⁰³ See in particular Berges 1998: 98-99.

ministry as the basis for 6:9-11. They maintain nevertheless the literary unity of 6:1-11.¹⁰⁴ Some scholars however have proposed a distinction between 6:1-8 and 6:9-11, on literary-critical, redaction-critical, but mainly intent-critical grounds.¹⁰⁵

In my view, 6:9-11 belongs to the literary reworking of the earlier material within Isa 6-8. 6:1-8, on the other hand, represents an earlier stage. Although at present the hardening order of 6:9-10 takes a central position within Isa 6,¹⁰⁶ the vision report can very well be read as an independent unit.¹⁰⁷ The report describes a visionary experience pinpointed to a specific moment, the year Uzziah died (6:1). Furthermore, the report has a theme of its own: Isaiah's encounter with the holy Lord, which resulted in the prophet's transformation. From a dramatic perspective, the vision report consists of two scenes: 6:1-4 and 6:5-8. The first scene describes Yahweh as a powerful and majestic king; the second describes an act of purification involving Isaiah. Whereas in the first scene Isaiah is a spectator, he becomes a participant in the second. The first scene is marked by an inclusion of הַבַּיִת and הַהִיכָל (6:1 and 4) both referring to the temple. The second scene is marked by an inclusion of וְאָמַר (6:5 and 8). The action taken by the seraph purifies Isaiah, and Yahweh includes him in the heavenly court. If we focus on the pattern built by the narrative forms, the composition of the vision report appears to be the following:

A	6:1	וְאָרְאָה	וְאָשְׁמַע	6:8	A'
B	6:2	seraph description יְנוּפֵף	seraph description וַיִּנְּףֵף	6:6	B'
C	6:3	seraph shouts: <i>holy</i>	seraph says: <i>purified</i>	6:7	C'
D	6:4	קוֹל הַקּוֹרֵא	קוֹל אֲדֹנָי	6:8	D'
E	6:5	וְאָמַר אֹי לִי כִּי נִדְמִיתִי	וְאָמַר הֲנִי שְׁלֵחֲנִי	6:8	E'

The narrative pattern discloses a focus on Isaiah's transition. At first, he sees Yahweh worshipped by the seraphs, and reacts: 'woe is me! I am lost'. After having been purified by the act of a seraph however he hears Yahweh speaking, and reacts: 'Here am I; send me!' This contrast indicates the aim of the report as to present Isaiah as the legitimate speaker and actor on behalf of Yahweh.¹⁰⁸ The vision report is intended to present Isaiah as

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Barthel (1997: 106) admits that the vision report displays a purpose of its own (the 'Begegnung Jesajas mit Jahwe') and was included in the larger literary composition by a shift of focus to Isaiah's 'Beteiligung am Vorhaben Jahwes mit "diesem Volk".' With respect to the vision report, Barthel (1997: 107, note 187) acknowledges: 'daß die Erinnerung der ursprünglichen Erfahrung hier ein stärkeres Eigengewicht bewahrt hat'. Barthel (1997: 103) furthermore agrees that the vision report does not anticipate the harsh message of 6:9-11. Nevertheless, Barthel refuses to regard the vision report independently of its literary context. In my opinion, Barthel has not applied to Isa 6 a similar, critical approach to the one he successfully applies to 7:1-17.

¹⁰⁵ See Berges 1998: 94-102; Becker 1997: 81-89. Becker (1997: 81) points out that Kaiser's arguments to regard 6:1-11 as later theological reflection (1981: 121-123, 133) in fact apply to 6:9-11. See further the considerations of Deck 1991: 168.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Barthel 1997: 72-73.

¹⁰⁷ No argument based on the literary form of Isa 6:1-11 can be raised against a distinction between 6:1-8 and 6:9-11, since 6:1-11 does not apply to any *Gattung* (1 Kgs 22:19-22 is not a helpful parallel; see Wagner 2006: 115-116).

¹⁰⁸ Berges 1998: 97. Barthel's suggestion (1997: 96-105) to restrict the vision report in a strict sense to 6:1-7, eliminates its climax: Isaiah being prepared to speak and act on Yahweh's behalf.

being commissioned by Yahweh: Isaiah speaks and acts on behalf of Yahweh, the great king.¹⁰⁹

The imagery of 6:1-8 is suggestive of a temple setting.¹¹⁰ Yahweh is depicted as a king on a throne of huge dimensions.¹¹¹ The seraphs in attendance around him are to be understood as uraeus-like figures, divine figures in the form of winged snakes.¹¹² The accompanying shaking and smoke (6:4) are indicative of Yahweh's epiphany.¹¹³ Isaiah, initially terrified, is purified by the act of one of the seraphs, and in this way he is prepared for being commissioned.¹¹⁴ This is not a vision of judgement as some have argued.¹¹⁵ On the contrary, the imagery supports the interpretation of 6:1-8 as a vision with a positive, encouraging, intent. First of all, the seraphs are protective figures.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the image of Yahweh's fearsome radiance (6:1-4) does not necessarily imply that Yahweh is angry with his own people.¹¹⁷ It is much more likely that Yahweh's fearsome appearance as sovereign king points to his decision to take action against Judah's enemies. The motif of Yahweh's lordship, paralleled in texts such as Ps 24:7-10 and Ps 29, indicates 'die Kriegsmächtigkeit Jahwes im Streit gegen andere Völker'.¹¹⁸ Yahweh's epiphany as a mighty and fearsome king in texts resembling the imagery of 6:1-4, such as Ps 18:6-17, deals with Yahweh's violent actions against Judah's enemies. Understood in this way, the vision of 6:1-8 completely corresponds with the earlier prophetic material, discussed above: 7:4-9a, 7:14b.16 and 8:1-4.¹¹⁹ In 6:5-8, Isaiah, who is one of the people, not someone

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Brueggemann 1998: 59-60: 'The throne room of God is the policy room of world government. There is business to conduct. ... There are messages to be sent. The government of Yahweh ... needs a carrier.' Deck (1991: 168) agrees that if the function of the report was to confirm the legitimacy of the prophet over against his hearers, 6:8 makes for a good conclusion.

¹¹⁰ Keel 1977: 47-56; Wagner 2006: 87.

¹¹¹ See Podella 1996: 189; Keel 1977: 124.

¹¹² For the seraphs, see Keel 1977: 70-115; Mettinger 1999; Provençal 2005; Wagner 2006: 87-95. The background of the seraph motif is the Egyptian uraeus serpent, well attested in eighth-century Palestine on seals, as was demonstrated by Keel (1977). The position of the seraphs as standing above Yahweh (6:2), is reminiscent of the image of the uraei as protective figures on Egyptian and Phoenician chapel friezes. In Isa 6, the seraphs use their wings to cover themselves from Yahweh's consuming holiness, which underscores Yahweh's supreme holiness (Mettinger 1999: 743). Provençal (2005) shows that in the ancient Near East deities were depicted as surrounded by lower deities, often in the shape of serpents or dragons, whose function was to protect. In ancient Egypt, the uraeus-snake was such a figure, part of the Pharaoh's regalia. The uraei serpents are cobras mythologically portrayed with wings (2005: 373-375).

¹¹³ Keel 1977: 121-123.

¹¹⁴ Wagner 2006: 94-95.

¹¹⁵ Contra Knierim 1968: 55; Hartenstein 1997: 3, 26-29.

¹¹⁶ Keel 1977: 54, note 43; Wagner 2006: 92-93. Sass (1993: 213) notes regarding the uraeus-figures on pre-exilic Hebrew seals: 'the being was meant to hover over the name, providing divine protection'.

¹¹⁷ Becker 1999: 149-150; cf. Hardmeier 1981: 241.

¹¹⁸ Wagner 2006: 102. Related to Yahweh's violent actions against Judah's enemies, are his benefactions for, and protection of his people (Wagner 2006: 102, 109). For a discussion of the motif of Yahweh's lordship in connection with Ps 24:7-10 and Ps 29, see Wagner 2006: 99-102.

¹¹⁹ The motif of Yahweh as king of the whole earth in 6:3 (see Wagner 2006: 105, 107), particularly resembles 8:9-10, which is close to the prophetic material within Isa 7* and 8*.

opposed to them, is purified and commissioned as Yahweh's envoy to the people. This adds to the expectation of an encouraging message.¹²⁰

The vision report (6:1-8) proclaims Isaiah's legitimacy as Yahweh's envoy. Its role in the Isaiah tradition was to underscore the prophet's credentials as a spokesman of Yahweh.¹²¹ Isa 6:1-8 is to be understood in relation to the early prophecies of 7:4-9a, 7:14b.16 and 8:1-4. The prophecies encourage King Ahaz and the people of Judah and announce the destruction of Judah's enemies. The vision report portrays the bearer of these messages as Yahweh's trustworthy envoy.

The Vision turned Upside Down

The account of Isaiah's commissioning (6:1-8) is likely to date from the Assyrian period.¹²² In its later version, the vision has been given a new twist. Whereas the function of the account of Isaiah's commissioning was to present Isaiah as Yahweh's legitimised messenger, 6:9-11 focuses on the people's lack of attention and their punishment. In 6:5-8, Isaiah is pictured as one of his people. 6:9-11, on the contrary, presents Isaiah in opposition to the people. This turn of focus is marked by the introduction of a new category, *הַקָּטָן הַזֶּה*. The pejorative designation displays the perspective that the disasters that befell Judah are to be understood as Yahweh's punishment because of the people's disobedience. In this way, 6:9-11 changed the original meaning of the vision report in exactly the same way as the composition of 7:1-17 changed the original meaning of the oracles included, and as 8:1-18 gave a twist to the original meaning of 8:1-4. 6:9-11 reflects on a disastrous situation, as does 7:1-17, which focuses on the end of the Davidic dynasty, and 8:1-18, which refers to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem (8:14-15). The prophetic figure presented in 6:1-8:18 is to announce the incomprehensible until it has become a reality (6:11). When his ministry is completed he hopes and waits for Yahweh's salvation in the midst of disaster (8:17). This line of thought is far removed from the eighth-century prophet and must be qualified as a product of later interpretation.

2.1.5 Evaluation

In this section I have argued that within Isa 6:1-8:18 two basic layers are to be discerned, the one represented by early prophetic material – 7:2-3a.4-9a*; 7:14b.16; 7:20; 8:1-4, to which 8:9-10 and 6:1-8 are to be related – the other consisting of a later, literary reworking of the prophetic material.¹²³ The two layers can be shortly characterised by 8:1 on the one hand, and 8:16 on the other. In 8:1, Isaiah appears as a prophet who performs a symbolic act, whereas in 8:16 he is portrayed as having codified his message as a testimony for future times. Whereas the earliest level in all probability relates to the activity of a historical prophet, the later account is a literary elaboration that displays a new view of the prophet

¹²⁰ Keel 1977: 55, note 43: 'Man könnte sogar sagen, daß Jesaja, nachdem er Jahwe geschaut hatte und am Leben geblieben, ja von seiner Unreinheit (...) gnädig befreit worden war (6,5-7), eher eine Heilsbotschaft erwartete und sich deshalb so willig zur Verfügung stellte.'

¹²¹ Berges 1998: 97.

¹²² The imagery, in particular the seraphs, points to the Assyrian period; see Wagner 2006: 121-122.

¹²³ This distinction builds on ideas presented by others. Various scholars have proposed, in different ways, a distinction between earlier and later material within Isa 6-8, see Barthel 1997: 118-183; Becker 1997: 21-123; Berges 1998: 94-117; Clements 1980a: 96-100; Hardmeier 1979.

and his commission. In 8:1, Isaiah is to write down a single saying on a tablet; 8:16 deals with the codification of the prophetic preaching as such, which functions as a testimony for future generations. The testimony and teaching (תְּעוּדָה, תּוֹרָה) mentioned in 8:16 are likely to refer to the composition of Isa 6-8 itself.¹²⁴

The earliest layer consists of prophecies of encouragement. Isaiah's role during the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis as inferred from these prophecies to a great extent resembles the role the figure of Isaiah plays in the Hezekiah story of 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37).¹²⁵ The earliest version of the Hezekiah story (2 Kgs 18:17-19:9a.36-37, usually referred to as the B1-story; see chapter 6.1.2), is likely to date from the seventh century.¹²⁶ This story pictures Isaiah as a prophet proclaiming salvation to the king in a situation of national disaster. This resembles the role Isaiah played according to the earliest material within Isa 6-8. Although the Hezekiah story in its earliest version is not an historical account, the correspondence of the portrayal of Isaiah with the early material in Isa 6-8 is of traditio-historical relevance. In the seventh century, the prophet Isaiah was not yet known as a prophet of judgement.

The composition of Isa 6:1-8:18 refers to a terrible situation for Judah and Jerusalem (8:14-15), which implies the devastation in the early sixth century, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem, the collapse of the Judaeen state, the end of the Davidic monarchy and the exile of the upper class. The view that Isaiah was the author of Isa 6-8, either shortly after the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis or at a later stage in his career, is to be rejected.¹²⁷ Neither can the composition be explained as a reflection on the events of 701.¹²⁸ The way in which Isaiah is presented in Isa 6-8, in particular 6:9-11 and 8:16-18 suggests a later compositional milieu. The prophet is presented as still hoping for Yahweh in the midst of a situation in which disaster has become inevitable. The composition is intended to show that the disaster was not due to the failure of the prophetic message, but the result of the people's disobedience decided on by God: the punishment was inevitable.¹²⁹ The disasters that befell Judah in the sixth century, interpreted as divine punishment for the disobedience of the people and the royal dynasty, induced theological reflection, which resulted in a new

¹²⁴ Barthel 1997: 236.

¹²⁵ Barthel 1997: 166.

¹²⁶ Gonçalves 1986: 441.

¹²⁷ If the oracles of 7:4-9a, 14b.16 and 8:1-4 represent Isaiah's message during the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis, it is difficult to imagine how the king or the people could have rejected it. 6:9-11 and 8:5-8 are better understood as the product of later reflection. It is unlikely that Isaiah himself was responsible for the new interpretation that turned the original meaning of the oracles upside down. The image of Isaiah as a prophet *and* the interpreter of his prophetic message telescopes two different stages that are better explained separately. The view of Isaiah as a prophet-theologian may be attractive from a biblical theological point of view, but is exegetically and historically implausible.

¹²⁸ The announcement of disaster over the Davidic dynasty (7:17) and the inclusion of Jerusalem in the disasters announced (8:14-15) cannot be explained from a 701-perspective. Besides, the seventh-century reception of 701 is marked by a positive and glorifying tone: Jerusalem's deliverance is emphasised rather than the destruction of the land.

¹²⁹ Berges (1998: 101) points out that 6:9-10 is not a theodicy (contra Becker 1997: 85-86), but an evaluation of the prophetic commissioning in reaction to the disastrous situation of the Babylonian exile.

image of the prophet as messenger from Yahweh to warn the people, and, as his message was rejected, to announce Yahweh's judgement.¹³⁰

The literary composition of Isa 6-8 is in all probability to be dated to after 586.¹³¹ The text presents a reworking of the prophetic tradition resulting from the reflection provoked by the disasters of 586, and is best situated in the exilic period.¹³² The exilic dating of Isa 6:1-8:18 is furthermore confirmed by terms and concepts used in the reflective, literary passages within Isa 6-8. The clearest case is 6:11. The exclamation 'how long, O Lord?' reflects a situation of crisis. The expression occurs as lamentation in Psalms and as outcry in the prophetic books, and indicates a time of tribulation.¹³³ In the answer of Yahweh, the utter destruction of the cities and the land is announced in terms that elsewhere refer to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The following parallels may be noted: 1) 'cities without inhabitants' (עָרִים בְּלֵאֵי יוֹשֵׁב),¹³⁴ 2) the verb שָׂאָה referring to the devastation of cities and land,¹³⁵ 3) desolation 'without human beings' (בְּלֵאֵי אָדָם);¹³⁶ 4) the land becoming a desolation (שְׂמִימָה).¹³⁷ The correspondence does not only consist of the use of similar terms, but also of a similar theme: it is Yahweh's will that Judah is devastated, because of its disobedience.

The depiction of the prophet Isaiah as a preacher of disaster to a disobedient people is the product of theological reflection and came into being through an extensive reworking of the Isaiah tradition in the exilic period. Within the process of the exilic reworking of the Isaiah tradition, the composition of Isa 6:1-8:18 probably takes a relatively early place. The literary reworking of the earlier, prophetic material not only revised the original meaning of the prophecies, but also disconnected them from the events of 734-732, in order to provide an account of Isaiah's prophetic ministry from beginning to end. The literary reworking of Isa 6-8 dehistoricised the earlier material.¹³⁸ It is likely that 6:1-8:18 to some extent

¹³⁰ Collins 1993: 49-50.

¹³¹ Becker 1997: 78-79.

¹³² Williamson (2004: 193-195) rightly points out that Becker's arguments for dating 6:9-11 and 8:5-8:17 to the early post-exilic period (Becker 1997: 78, 87) are problematic. This does not however imply that we have to assume a pre-exilic dating for 6:9-11 and related passages. A late exilic or early post-exilic dating of the *Grundbestand* of Second Isaiah (which takes up the theme of 6:9-10) leaves room for a post-586 dating of the complex 6:1-11, 7:1-17, 8:1-18, and comparable literary complexes of the earlier prophetic material. I agree with Berges (1998: 99), who suggests that the order of hardening in 6:9-10 is to be seen as an exilic reflection aiming to excuse Yahweh's prophet.

¹³³ See Ps 6:4; 13:2; 74:10; 79:5; 80:5; 82:2; 89:47; 90:13; 94:3 and Jer 4:21; 12:4; Dan 8:13; 12:6; Hab 1:2; Zech 1:2. Cf. Roberts 1977a: 474-481, with examples from Mesopotamian lament.

¹³⁴ Cf. Jer 2:15; 4:7, 29; 9:10; 33:10; 34:22; 44:2 (referring to the cities of Judah) and Jer 26:9 (referring to Jerusalem).

¹³⁵ The verb in this meaning further occurs only in 2 Kgs 19:25 (Isa 37:26). That passage is part of the later, exilic, extension to the Hezekiah story of 701. The twofold occurrence of this verb in 6:11 has led to the suggestion that תִּשְׂאָה is a corruption of תִּשְׂאָר, 'the land is left desolate' (Williamson 1994: 249).

¹³⁶ Cf. Jer 32:43; 33:10, 12, referring to the land of Judah.

¹³⁷ The combination of שְׂמִימָה with הָאֶרֶץ only occurs in Isa 1:7 and 6:11. More frequently it is the combination of שְׂמִימָה with אֶרֶץ, referring to the land of Judah becoming a desolation: Jer 4:27; 10:22; 12:11; Ezek 6:14; 12:20; 15:8; 33:28-29 (cf. Lev 26:33).

¹³⁸ At a later stage, when the composition of Isa 6-8 had become part of a larger literary complex, it became to some extent rehistoricised through a series of additions. This section of the book was

functioned as a model for similar reworkings of other parts of the Isaiah tradition, such as Isa 28-32. In the rest of this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate that the reworking of Isa 6-8 does not stand in isolation, but can be compared to various other texts within First Isaiah that announce the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, such as the complex of 28-32*.

2.2 *Isaiah 28-32*

2.2.1 *Isaiah 28-32 as a Literary Complex*

The literary complex of Isa 28-32 is the result of redactional elaboration and contains different kinds of material.¹³⁹ Previously, scholars have identified three kinds of material. a) A basic literary layer, believed to consist of words of Isaiah: 28:1-4.7-22; 29:1-4.9-10.13-16; 30:1-16; 31:1-4. b) Passages to be related to a seventh-century redaction: 29:5-7(8); 30:27-33; 31:5.8-9; 32:1-5.15-20. c) Post-exilic passages proclaiming salvation after the punishment: 28:5-6; 29:17-24; 30:18-26.¹⁴⁰ In general, I agree with this view on Isa 28-32. However, I propose a refinement of the passages of category a), by distinguishing between the early prophetic material and its literary reworking or transformation in response to the sixth-century disasters.¹⁴¹ This reworking probably is to be dated in the exilic period and was a formative stage of the Isaiah tradition. A certain number of reflective texts, traditionally attributed to the 'writer-prophet Isaiah', in fact belong to a later reworking of the Isaiah tradition. Whereas the Isaiah tradition in the seventh-century revision probably developed into several small textual compilations, it was in all likelihood the literary reworking of the exilic period that first created some substantial literary complexes. I therefore propose a distinction between a) material deriving from eighth-century prophetic activity, b) seventh-century passages addressing the theme of Yahweh's destruction of Assyria, c) a literary-redactional reworking of the earlier material, situated in the exilic period, and d) post-exilic extensions proclaiming eschatological salvation:

presented as focusing on the fate of the Northern Kingdom and as relating to the events of 734-732. In order to create this connection, a series of historical identifications was added: 7:4b ('because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah'), 7:5b α ('with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah'), 7:17b ('the king of Assyria'), 8:6b β ('and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah'), 8:7a β ('the king of Assyria and all his glory'), similarly 9:8a β ('Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria'), 9:10a ('Rezin').

¹³⁹ Barthel 1997: 255.

¹⁴⁰ See the overview in Stansell 1996: 68-69.

¹⁴¹ Cf. for instance Beuken's division of Isaiah 30 into three main blocks (Beuken 1997). Beuken attributes 30:1-17 to Isaiah and regards 30:18-26 as a post-exilic, written composition. 30:27-33, in his view, may be earlier than 30:18-26. I accept Beuken's threefold division (in my view, 30:27-33 is part of the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition). With respect to 30:1-17, I propose however a refinement of Beuken's position. On the one hand, this passage clearly contains sayings that can be connected with the situation of 705-701 BCE. On the other, these sayings are presented in a reworked form, which postdates the Assyrian period.

THE ISAIAH TRADITION IN THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD

a) sayings and oracles (oral background)	b) anti-Assyrian texts (first revision)	c) disobedience-judgement (literary reworking)	d) later extensions
28:1-4 28:7b-10, 12* 28:14-18* 29:15 30:1-5*. 6-8* 30:15* 31:1-3*	30:27-33 31:4-5.8-9 + 32:1-2	28:7a.11-13 28:14-22* 29:1-4(6).9-10 29:13-16 30:9-11.12-14 30:15-17 32:9-14	28:5-6 29:7-8 29:17-24 30:18-26 32:15-20

The passages from category d), likely to date from the post-exilic period,¹⁴² are not taken into account here. Category c) is where I depart from the traditional position. The literary complexity of the passages of category c) renders their attribution to Isaiah unlikely in my view. The passages not only have a reflective character, but also contain indications of literary elaboration. Whereas I agree that Isa 28-32 in its core contains material deriving from prophetic activity,¹⁴³ this early material is to be distinguished from its later literary reworking. Before discussing the presumed early material I will argue that an analogy can be drawn between Isa 28-32 and Isa 6-8. In both cases, prophetic material has been incorporated within a literary complex that is marked by reflection and elaboration on the earlier material. Various characteristic features of the literary reworking are pointed out:

1) 28:12-13 and 30:15-17 present a vision on prophecy. First, in both passages a quotation is included that is to represent ‘prophecy of old’:

^{28:12} This is the resting place – give rest to the weary; this is the place of repose.

^{30:15} Thus says the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel: In sitting and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength.

The immediate context however insists that this ‘prophecy of old’ has been replaced by a prophecy of judgement. In 28:12b-13 and 30:15b-17 it is stated that because the people refused to listen they would be severely punished by Yahweh. Both passages present the ‘prophecy of old’, which promises salvation, as a passed stage. In this way, they reveal a retrospective point of view. According to this view, prophecy has become prophecy of judgement. This forms an analogy to the transition visible in Isa 6-8, where the earlier positive, encouraging prophetic words at a later stage were turned upside down. Passages belonging to this stage probably reflect on the sixth-century disasters, explaining Judah’s terrible fate as being due to Yahweh’s punishment because of the people’s disobedience.

2) 30:8 is of significance for the transition from the earlier material to the later literary reworking. On the one hand, 30:8 concludes the passage 30:6-8*, an early note concerning

¹⁴² Barthel 1997: 259.

¹⁴³ Becker (1997: 223-268) challenges the common view that Isa 28-32 contains early, prophetic material, by arguing that Isa 28-32 (apart from 28:1-4*.7b-10*) is in its core a late (post-exilic) complex. See Williamson 2004: 198-199, for a critical review of this position.

a prophetic act of inscribing a symbolic name. On the other, at a later stage, 30:8 was extended with 30:9-11: the message is to be preserved as a testimony to the people's stubborn disobedience. The documentation functions as proof of the rejection of the message by the people (cf. 6:9-10). The original act of inscribing a saying has been generalised into the written documentation of the prophetic message as such. The expression *עַם מָרִי* in 30:9 refers to the motif of the recalcitrance of the people and their long-lasting rebellion against Yahweh.¹⁴⁴ The refusal to listen occurs in confrontation with the prophetic word. The transition from 30:8 as the conclusion of 30:6-8* to its *relecture* in 30:9-11 forms an analogous case to the transition from 8:1, concerning the inscription of a single symbolic name, to 8:16, concerning the documentation of the prophetic message of judgement as such.

3) Within the literary context of Isa 28-32, the *woe*-word against Samaria (28:1-4) is juxtaposed by that against Jerusalem (29:1-4). Taken together, the two *woe*-words indicate the view that what counts for Samaria (28:1-4) counts for Jerusalem as well (29:1-4). This juxtaposition can be compared to 8:1-4 and its extension in 8:5-8. In the course of the literary development of the Isaiah tradition, earlier prophetic sayings against Ephraim and Samaria (8:1-4, 28:1-4) were complemented by words announcing judgement over Judah and Jerusalem (8:5-8, 29:1-4).

Apart from these indications of a distinction between the earlier prophetic sayings and their later literary reworking, a more general account of the reflective character of the literary complex of Isa 28-32 (passages of category c, above) can be given. Whereas the complex probably ended in 32:9-14 with a description of the disasters that befell Jerusalem in the sixth century ('the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted', 32:14), this conclusion is prepared for in various preceding passages with a reflective character. In some of these passages the motif of *הָעָם הַזֶּה*, 'this people' occurs again (28:11, 14; 29:13-14). 28:11-13 in various ways displays a literary, reflective character. First, it appears to present a *relecture* of the preceding saying, 28:7b-10, which is an earlier prophetic word. The 'unintelligible speech' (28:10) is reinterpreted as an utterance in a foreign language, indicating the invasion of an enemy army. Furthermore, whereas the preceding saying is addressed to (part of) the religious establishment, the announcement of disaster in 28:11-13 is addressed to the people (*הָעָם הַזֶּה*). The people are accused of having rejected Yahweh's blessings (represented by a quotation of 'prophecy of old') and their severe punishment is announced. The following oracle, 28:15-18*, originally directed at the political leaders of Jerusalem, has begun to function as an announcement of disaster in a more general sense. Through the motif of *הָעָם הַזֶּה* taken up in 28:14, the political leaders are connected with the

¹⁴⁴ The terminology and concepts in 30:9-11 confirm a later (probably exilic) provenance: 1) *מָרִי* indicates the stubbornness of the people (cf. Deut 31:27; Neh 9:17; Ezek 2:5-8; 3:26-27; 12:2-3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3; 44:6). 2) For *פָּקֵד* ('lying'), cf. Jer 5:12. 3) The accusation that the people did not obey Yahweh's torah, is paralleled in Isa 1:10; 5:24; 8:16 (cf. Isa 42:24; Neh 9:29; Jer 6:19; 9:12; 26:4; 32:23; 44:23; Dan 9:10, 11; Zech 7:12). 4) *אָבָה שָׁמַע* 'they refused to listen (i.e. to Yahweh's torah)' is paralleled in Isa 1:19; 28:12; 42:24; Lev 26:21; Ezek 3:7; 20:8 (cf. Ps 81:12). 5) For *טֹרֵךְ הַרְרִיךְ*, cf. Exod 32:8; Deut 9:12, 16; 31:29; Mal 2:8. 6) The reference to 'seers and prophets' implies the concept of a long-lasting rejection of the prophetic message by the people. These elements are characteristic of the later motif of the disobedient people.

people accused in 28:11-13, and the extended, literary reworking of the oracle in 28:19.21-22* renders a more general sense to the announcement.

Further literary-reflective passages are 29:9-10 and 29:13-14. 29:9-10 is thematically related to 6:9-11, as it expresses the relation between the recalcitrance of the people as their own action and their recalcitrance as caused by Yahweh.¹⁴⁵ In the present literary context the imperative plural of 29:9 seems to address the foreign nations of 29:7, but this is a secondary reading, which became possible only in the course of the redactional process, when 29:7 and 8 had been added to 29:1-6. 29:9-10 is intended to address the same subject as 6:9-11: 'this people', that is the people as a disobedient and sinful entity, which is in agreement with the intent of 29:1-6. The people are described as being unable to read the signs of the imminent judgement (they are stupefied and blind). 29:13-16 begins with a word of Yahweh addressed to 'this people' (הָעָם הַזֶּה). The term refers to the people as a sinful entity. Various indications point to the redactional character of 29:13-14. First, the saying has a parallel in 8:6-8. In both cases, the people are accused of having offended Yahweh. The accusation that their hearts are far from Yahweh (29:13) concurs with passages condemning them because of their evil and stubborn hearts.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the phrase 'I will again do amazing things (וְיַסְרֶנּוּ לְהַפְלִיאַי)' in 29:14 suggests this is not an isolated oracle, but a literary passage referring to another passage. The connection may be found within the literary complex of Isa 28-32, either 28:21 (with פִּלְאֵי) or perhaps the announcements of 28:11-13 or 29:1-4.¹⁴⁷ Yahweh's wondrous dealings with his people refer to the disasters that befell Judah as being Yahweh's work.¹⁴⁸ A major point of the literary reworking of the Isaiah tradition was to demonstrate that the unimaginable – *Yahweh himself* was to destroy Judah and Jerusalem – had been announced by the prophet Isaiah (e.g. 6:9-11, 29:1-4, 29:13-14). All this shows that 29:13-14 was composed for the literary context of Isa 28-32.

A final passage to be mentioned here is 30:12-14.15-17. The accusation in 30:12, 'because you reject this word', indicates the redactional character of the passage, as 'this word' (דְּבַר הַיְהוָה) is a literary reference, probably to 30:15.¹⁴⁹ The image of the broken jar in 30:14 illustrates the inevitability of the judgement.¹⁵⁰ Like the preceding passage (30:9-11), 30:12-14 focuses on the people's rejection of the prophetic message. The point is similar to that of Isa 6-8: the disasters that befell the people are to be understood as Yahweh's punishment of the people's disobedience: they kept rejecting Yahweh's blessings.

These passages, 28:11-13, 29:9-10.13-14 and 30:12-14.15-17 were composed as part of a literary reworking of the Isaiah tradition, and form the basic literary complex of Isa 28-32. This outline suggests that a principal distinction has to be made between the earlier material incorporated within Isa 28-32 on the one hand, and the basic literary complex of Isa 28-32

¹⁴⁵ The verb שָׁעַע occurs only in Isa 6:10; 29:9 (and 32:3): Yahweh himself blinds the people to prevent them escaping his judgement.

¹⁴⁶ See Num 32:7, 9 (cf. 15); Jer 5:21, 23; 7:24; 9:13; 13:10; 16:12; Ezek 33:31 (cf. 1 Kgs 18:37). The accusation of the pretension of piety, is paralleled in Jer 3:10: 'Yet for all this her false sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but only in pretence, says Yahweh'.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Barthel 1997: 387.

¹⁴⁸ The parallel expression in Joel 2:26 also refers to the disasters that had befallen Judah (cf. 2:25).

¹⁴⁹ Barthel 1997: 419-420.

¹⁵⁰ Barthel (1997: 421) points to several parallels, among them Jer 19:10-11.

on the other. The suggestion that either Isaiah or one of his disciples composed the basic literary complex of Isa 28-32 becomes quite unlikely when the character of this literary complex is taken into account.¹⁵¹ The complex refers to the fall of Jerusalem and the disasters that befell Judah in the sixth century (i.e. 29:1-4, 32:14), and reflects on this by explaining the disasters as Yahweh's punishment of the disobedience of the people.

This overview concludes with a characterisation of the presumed earlier material incorporated within Isa 28-32. Barthel has demonstrated that the prophetic words to a considerable degree have been integrated into a compositional context.¹⁵² The earlier sayings to some extent cannot be simply 'lifted up' from their context, but rather have to be 'peeled out'. In the following analysis, I will discuss 28:1-4*, 7b-10, 12*, 14-18*, 29:15, 30:1-5*, 6b-8, 15* and 31:1-3* as representing the prophetic material. These sayings derive from prophetic activity in the later part of the eighth century. Besides an announcement of Samaria's downfall in 28:1-4, we find sayings characterised by an encouraging and positive tendency (28:12*, 30:15*) and sayings criticizing a particular group of people, i.e. the leading figures of Jerusalem (28:7b-10, 14-18*; 29:15; 30:1-5*, 6b-8; 31:1-3*).

Within Isa 28-32, 30:27-33 and 31:4-5.8-9 stand out as texts that deal with Yahweh's destruction of Assyria, reflecting on the downfall of the Assyrian empire. These passages are to be considered as part of a revision of the earlier prophetic material to be situated in the second half of the seventh century.¹⁵³ Furthermore, I will argue that 31:4-5.8-9* is to be connected with the beginning of Isa 32. The theme of Assyria's downfall is to be related to the motif of the reign of a righteous Judean king. I regard it as likely that these texts are part of a revision of the earlier prophetic material that was provoked by a new situation, the decline of the Assyrian empire in the later part of the seventh century.

2.2.2 *The Woe-Words in Isaiah 28-31*

Although the *woe*-words form part of the basic literary structure of Isa 28-32, they need not all go back to sayings from Isaiah. It will be argued that 28:1-4, 29:15, 30:1-5 and 31:1-3 in their core go back to earlier prophetic material, whereas 29:1-6 does not. Before discussing the sayings some remarks with regard to *woe*-sayings in general are necessary.

Woe-Sayings in the Prophetic Books

The *woe*-sayings as found in the biblical prophetic books probably derive from funerary lament.¹⁵⁴ Whereas the funerary lament expresses grief and mourning, in the prophetic *woe*-saying this is turned into accusation and threat.¹⁵⁵ The *woe*-saying consists of the exclamation ״ו״ה, 'woe!', which is followed either by a general or proper noun (if the addressees form a well-defined entity), or by a participle (if the addressees are characterized by a certain behaviour that is condemned).¹⁵⁶ Whereas funerary *woe*-cries

¹⁵¹ Contra Barthel 1997: 245-454.

¹⁵² Barthel 1997: 245-454.

¹⁵³ Since Barth (1977), Isa 29:5-7; 30:27-33 and 31:5.8-9 are often considered as part of a so-called Assyria redaction. This section demonstrates that this applies to 30:27-33 and 31:4-5.8-9 plus 32:1-2, but not to 29:5-7.

¹⁵⁴ Werlitz 1992: 293; Janzen 1972; Wanke 1966b: 217-218.

¹⁵⁵ See Janzen 1972: 39-40.

¹⁵⁶ Janzen 1972: 81.

express lament over the dead, the *woe*-sayings in the prophetic literature utter severe threat to the addressees: from the perspective of the speaker the addressees are as good as dead.¹⁵⁷ Some characteristics of the *woe*-sayings found in the prophetic books may be mentioned:¹⁵⁸

1) The saying begins with the particle הוֹי, which denotes threat to the subject involved; הוֹי introduces a new saying, independently of what precedes it.¹⁵⁹ 2) The addressees are represented by an active participle, or by a general or proper noun. 3) The *woe*-sayings usually are not divine speech, as they frequently refer to Yahweh in the third person.¹⁶⁰ 4) The *woe*-sayings condemn the subject involved for a particular offence. The exclamation הוֹי implies a threat of disaster for the subject: the subject is doomed because of this wicked behaviour.¹⁶¹ 5) In the sayings, the exclamation הוֹי is usually followed by several (parallel) clauses. 6) The addressee is normally referred to in the third person. In many sayings, suffixes point to a third person reference to the addressee.¹⁶² 7) Various indications suggest that *woe*-sayings are independent sayings, i.e. sayings standing on their own. In some cases the immediate context makes clear that the preceding *woe*-word stands on its own as an independent saying,¹⁶³ either because it is followed by a formula that introduces another, divine word, or because what follows is not directly connected with the saying.¹⁶⁴

In their basic form, the *woe*-sayings contain both an accusing aspect (the behaviour of the addressees is condemned) and an aspect of judgement (the exclamatory *hōy*). Although third-person forms predominate within the *woe*-sayings, they were apparently taken as a direct address, since the immediate context easily switches to a second-person form of address.¹⁶⁵ Within the prophetic books, the character of the *woe*-sayings may differ. On the one hand, in some cases an original *woe*-saying can be literary-critically distinguished from

¹⁵⁷ Werlitz 1992: 296.

¹⁵⁸ The *woe*-sayings may be divided into three groups. 1) Sayings that conform to a range of shared characteristics: Isa 5:8-23*; 10:1-2; 29:15; 30:1-2*; 31:1*; 45:9, 10; Amos 6:1; Mic 2:1-2; Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19a. 2) Sayings that show minor variations to this: Isa 1:4; 17:12-14; 18:1-2a; 28:1-4*; Jer 22:13-14; 23:1; Ezek 13:3; Amos 5:18; Nah 3:1; Zeph 3:1. 3) Words that begin with *hōy* but are not *woe*-sayings in a strict sense: Isa 10:5-15; 29:1-4; 33:1; Jer 47:6; 48:1; 50:27; Ezek 13:18; 34:2; Zeph 2:5; Zech 11:17.

¹⁵⁹ In Isa 5:8; 10:5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1; 31:1; 33:1; Jer 23:1; Amos 6:1; Mic 2:1; Hab 2:6b; Zeph 3:1, הוֹי introduces a new speech. In cases where the *woe*-saying is incorporated into a divine speech it is the beginning of an oracle (Jer 48:1; Ezek 13:3, 18; 34:2).

¹⁶⁰ Isa 1:4; 5:19; 28:2; 29:15; 31:1*; Amos 5:18; Zeph 2:5; 3:2. Exceptions may be Isa 10:1-2 and Jer 23:1 (Isa 10:5-15 and 29:1-4 are not *woe*-sayings in a strict sense).

¹⁶¹ Werlitz 1992: 298; Janzen 1972: 90.

¹⁶² Isa 5:11, 21; 10:2; 17:13; 28:1; 29:15; 45:9; Jer 22:13; 50:27; Ezek 13:3; 34:2; Amos 6:1; Mic 2:1; Hab 2:6, 9; Zech 11:17. In some further cases the direct context refers to a third person subject (Zeph 3:1-5). In various ambivalent cases third person references are predominant. In Isa 5:8 the second person address לְבָרְכֶם הוֹי probably is a secondary expansion; Hab 2:15 הוֹי הוֹי may be a corruption (due to the second-person address of 2:16).

¹⁶³ Isa 5:9-10; 45:11-13; Jer 22:15-19; Jer 23:2; Mic 2:3-5; Nah 3:5-7. The more extensive *woe*-words of Isa 17:12-14 and 28:1-4 are separate units as well.

¹⁶⁴ Hab 2:6a introduces a *woe*-saying consisting only of 2:6b, since 2:7a parallels 6a (הוֹי לְוֵי). Hab 2:19b and 20 cannot be easily connected with the saying of 19a. Zech 11:17 is the conclusion of a section (17b may be a secondary explanation to the saying of 17a).

¹⁶⁵ In a range of cases, a *woe*-saying is followed by a rhetorical question addressed to a second person. Isa 1:5; 10:3; 18:2aβ; 29:16; 30:3; Jer 22:15; 23:2; 50:28; Ezek 13:5, 18b-19; 34:3-4; Amos 5:18b; 6:2; Mic 2:3-4; Nah 3:5-6; Hab 2:10, 16-17; Zeph 2:5b.

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its immediate context. On the other hand, there are cases where an exclamatory *hōy* begins a larger literary unit which is to be qualified as a literary derivation of the original *woe*-saying. The earliest versions of 29:15, 30:1-5* and 31:1-3*, in my view, consist of original, prophetic *woe*-sayings.

Isa 29:15

29:15 represents an early, originally independent, prophetic saying.¹⁶⁶

Woe them that deeply hide¹⁶⁷ their plan from Yahweh, whose deeds are in the dark,
and who say, 'Who sees us? Who knows us?'

In 29:16 follows a comment on the *woe*-saying. Whereas 29:15 accuses certain people of making plans without taking Yahweh into account, 29:16 focuses on the principal difference between 'maker' and 'thing made' and ridicules the alleged attempt to reverse the two.¹⁶⁸ The theme of the reversal of maker and thing made is connected with the motif of wisdom: 'shall the thing formed say of the one who formed it, "He has no understanding"?' (29:16bβ).¹⁶⁹ The verb בִּין occurs in 29:14 too. Whereas in 29:14 it is human wisdom that will perish, because the people have not truly honoured Yahweh (29:13), in 29:16 it is Yahweh's wisdom that is raised beyond doubt (cf. 31:2, below). 29:15, in my view, is best understood as an earlier saying that has been embedded in a later literary context of 29:13-16.

29:15, read as a saying in itself, closely parallels the *woe*-saying of 5:18-19; terms occurring in both are מַעֲשֵׂה, עֲצָה, רָאָה and יָדַע. The attitude of the subjects accused is similar too: they do not take Yahweh into account. The two questions in 29:15b resemble the questions of the evildoers in the Psalms (Ps 64:6; 94:7). By using this language, the prophet depicts his adversaries as notorious evildoers and accuses them of ignoring Yahweh and thus being godless.

Isa 30:1-5

30:1-5 is, as I will argue, a literary reworking of earlier prophetic words.

¹ Woe, rebellious children, oracle of Yahweh,
to carry out a plan, but not mine; to make an alliance, but against my will,

¹⁶⁶ Vermeylen 1977-78: 406-407.

¹⁶⁷ The verb עָמַק hi. has an adverbial function.

¹⁶⁸ 29:16, הַפְּכָכְכֶם, seems to be a noun, הִפְכָךְ, 'perversity' (cf. Ezek 16:34) with a second plural suffix: 'your perversity', which may be translated as 'You turn things upside down!' (Wildberger 1972-82: 1125: 'oh, eure Verkehrtheit!'). I agree with Wildberger (1972-82: 1126) that none of the emendations proposed is entirely convincing (1QIsa^a has a slightly different text: הִפְכָךְ מִכֶּם 'perversity on your account'). The switch to a second-person form argues against the original connection of 29:15 and 16. Furthermore, the rhetorical question in 16 does not fit the form of the *woe*-saying. A comparison with 10:5-15 does not help, since the latter is not a characteristic *woe*-saying (contra Williamson 1994: 62).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Isa 45:9 and Jer 18:6; the combination of עָשָׂה and יָצַר frequently occurs in Second Isaiah.

in order to add sin to sin;¹⁷⁰

² who set out to go down to Egypt without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.

³ But the protection of Pharaoh shall become your shame,
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your humiliation.

⁴ For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes,¹⁷¹

⁵ everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them,
that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.

Within 30:1-2, two separate words seem to have been combined, a *woe*-saying and a *nē'um*-oracle.¹⁷² There are no other examples of a saying beginning with the exclamation הוי followed by the subject addressed which is subsequently identified as a נאם יהוה.¹⁷³ Moreover, 30:1-2 appears to contain the ingredients of both a *woe*-saying and a *nē'um*-oracle.¹⁷⁴ The *woe*-saying probably consisted of the exclamation הוי directly followed by the participle ההלכים (30:2). Yahweh's first person speech originates from the *nē'um*-oracle. The phrase על התאח על התאח למען ספוח התאח, 'adding sin to sin', may have been added by the compositor of 30:1-5 who combined the two earlier sayings, in order to create an analogy with the *woe*-word of 29:1-6 (29:1b, 'add year to year').¹⁷⁵ This leads to the following *woe*-saying:

Woe them who set out to go down to Egypt,
but do not ask for <Yahweh's> oracle,¹⁷⁶
in order to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.¹⁷⁷

Apart from this *woe*-saying, 30:1-2 contains a *nē'um*-oracle. 30:3-5 probably was partly composed by the redactor/composer responsible for 30:1-5. 30:3 is a literary expansion, as

¹⁷⁰ ספוח is an infinitive of ספח, 'to add', cf. Num 32:14.

¹⁷¹ Zoan (Tanis) and Hanes (probably Heracleopolis parva) are cities in the Egyptian delta. Both are mentioned in a list of Egyptian delta rulers installed as Assyrian vassals (BIWA: 20-21, Prism A i 95-96), see Wildberger 1972-82: 1154; Barthel 1997: 402.

¹⁷² The formula נאם יהוה 'oracle of Yahweh' mainly occurs in the prophetic books. The formula occurs twelve times in First Isaiah: either at the end of a saying, in 3:15; 17:3, 6; 19:4; 31:9, or within a saying, in 1:24; 14:22, 23; 22:25; 30:1 (37:34 is ambiguous, since the speech of 37:22-35 is a composite text).

¹⁷³ The only exception is Jer 23:1 (MT), but the element יהוה נאם is missing in the LXX, and was probably added, as elsewhere in Jeremiah, at a late stage of the book's development.

¹⁷⁴ Barthel (1997: 400) recognises the doublet within 30:1-2 ('Der eigentliche Weheruf in V.1f. zeigt in sich eine auffällige Doppelung'), but refuses to distinguish between the two sayings (cf. his note 64). Deck (1991: 120-122) observes that הוי (30:1) probably was originally continued by 30:2.

¹⁷⁵ Barthel (1997: 402) argues that the parallel between 30:1b and 29:1b indicates that 30:1-5 received its present shape as part of the literary composition. This explains the second person address in 30:3.

¹⁷⁶ Originally, the phrase may have been ופני יהוה לא שאלו, whereas the present formulation 'without asking for my oracle' probably goes back to the composer of 30:1-5. The phrase 'to counsel Yahweh' (שאל פי יהוה) means 'to obtain an oracle'; cf. Josh 9:14; Judg 1:1.

¹⁷⁷ According to the official ideology of monarchic Jerusalem, Yahweh is the 'refuge', 'shelter', 'protection' and 'shadow' of the people.

may appear from the second person address (cf. 29:16) and the use of *וְהָיָה*.¹⁷⁸ The masculine singular suffixes in 30:4, furthermore, refer to Pharaoh and thus imply 30:3.¹⁷⁹ 30:5a apparently is corrupted;¹⁸⁰ the duplication of *בְּשָׁח/בוֹשׁ* and *לֹא יַעַל* in 30:5a and 5b in my view indicates the secondary character of 30:5a. The phrase *עַל עַם לֹא יוֹעִילוּ* was presumably adopted from the end of 30:6, as part of the reworking that connected the various earlier prophetic sayings within a new literary context.¹⁸¹ Whereas 30:3-5a is likely to consist of expansions to the earlier sayings, added as part of a literary reworking, 30:5b presumably contains the original ending of the oracle:

Rebellious sons¹⁸² – oracle of Yahweh – to carry out a plan,¹⁸³ without involving me,¹⁸⁴ to make an alliance,¹⁸⁵ but against my will,¹⁸⁶ not to aid and not to profit, but to bring shame and disgrace.

The two words, the *woe*-saying and the *nē'um*-oracle, criticise the politics of relying on Egyptian aid against Assyria, claiming that this is an alliance against Yahweh's will that will lead to nothing. 30:1-5 thus incorporates two early words which refer to a particular situation and criticise a particular group of people. The words address a political elite that advocated rebellion against Assyria in reliance on Egypt. This theme recurs in 31:1-3*, and further in 28:14-18*, 29:15, and 30:6-7*. The two words have been reworked into the passage 30:1-5, which apart from making a connection with 30:6-8 in 30:5a and with 29:1-6 in 30:1b, added a more general meaning to the earlier sayings. The generalising tone is perceivable particularly in the phrase 'in order to pile up sin to sin' (30:1b) and in the element *כָּל* ('everyone comes to shame') in 30:5a.¹⁸⁷

Isa 31:1-3

The common view that the earliest version of 31:1-3 is Isaianic has been challenged by Becker, who argued that 31:1-3* is dependent on 2 Kgs 18-20 (Isa 36-39).¹⁸⁸ In his view, 31:1-3 was composed, together with some other passages, to pave the way for the

¹⁷⁸ Barthel 1997: 400-401.

¹⁷⁹ Barthel 1997: 402.

¹⁸⁰ *כָּל הַבָּא הַבֵּישׁ* is hi. of *בוֹשׁ*, but the *ketib* *הַבָּאִישׁ* may bear witness to an earlier reading, *כָּל הַבָּא הַבֵּישׁ* or something similar; see Barthel 1997: 394-395. JM § 103f: *לָמֹ* as a poetic form of *לָהֶם* 'to them'.

¹⁸¹ Barthel 1997: 402.

¹⁸² *בְּנֵי סוֹרְרִים* in the context of concluding a wrong treaty has a political-ideological connotation (cf. Ps 68:7, 19).

¹⁸³ Cf. 2 Sam 17:23, for the expression *עָצָה* *עָשָׂה*, 'to carry out a plan'.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Hos 8:4, *וְלֹא תָנִי*, 'without involving me'.

¹⁸⁵ The expression *נָסַךְ מִסִּכָּה*, 'to pour out a libation', refers to the act of making a political agreement; see Wildberger 1972-82: 1148. A libation was part of the ritual meal that confirmed the agreement. Normally, the Hebrew expression would be the verb *נָסַךְ* in combination with *נִסְךְ/נִסְךָ* 'drink offering', 'libation'. The word *מִסִּכָּה* may be regarded as a subform of *נִסְךְ/נִסְךָ*.

¹⁸⁶ The sequence of an opening clause, followed by *יְהוָה יִהְיֶה*, and continued by an infinitive construct, is further attested in Jer 1:19; 13:11; 30:11.

¹⁸⁷ Becker's suggestion (1997: 248-250) that the earliest version of 30:1-5 is a *relecture* of 31:1-3, is unconvincing.

¹⁸⁸ Becker 1997: 245-263.

incorporation of the Hezekiah stories (Isa 36-39) within the developing book of Isaiah.¹⁸⁹ Williamson has objected to this that the prophetic criticism in 31:1-3 against a pro-Egyptian policy is at odds with the encouraging role Isaiah plays in the stories of Isa 36-39.¹⁹⁰ An analysis of 31:1-3 may show that the phrase containing Becker's main evidence does not belong to the earliest saying.¹⁹¹

- ¹ Woe them that go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses,
 who trusted in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong,
 but did not look to the Holy One of Israel nor consulted Yahweh!
- ² Yet he too was wise and brings disaster; he did not call back his words, but he will rise against
 the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.
- ³ The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
 When Yahweh stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble,
 and the one helped will fall, and they will all perish together.

31:1a and 3a are connected through the terms מְצָרִים and סוֹסִים. Besides, the negative element of 31:1c, וְלֹא, 'they did not account for Yahweh', has its pendant in 31:3a, וְלֹא, 'Egypt is not God' and therefore untrustworthy.¹⁹² The structure of 31:1a.c, הוּי plus participle plus imperfect, followed by negation plus perfect, is attested elsewhere.¹⁹³ The perfect forms (31:1c) indicate that the action described in 31:1a was based on a previous error: they had not consulted Yahweh. 30:1b, by contrast, is not tightly connected with the rest of the saying. First, the clause begins with a *wayyiqtol*-form, which is exceptional within a *woe*-saying. Secondly, whereas 31:3a takes up the element 'horses' from 1a, the chariots and horsemen of 31:1b are not referred to. 31:1b gives the impression of being an expansion of 1a: שָׁעַן is taken further by synonymous בָּטַח and the סוֹסִים are extended with 'chariots and horsemen'.¹⁹⁴ 31:1b can be explained as a secondary extension to 31:1a, in the following way. 31:1b is strikingly similar to a phrase from the Hezekiah legends, where Rabshakeh scorns Judah's reliance on Egypt:

2 Kgs 18:24b (Isa 36:9b)	וַתִּבְטַח לָךְ עַל-מְצָרִים לְרֶכֶב וּלְפָרָשִׁים
Isa 31:1b	וַיִּבְטְחוּ עַל רֶכֶב כִּי רַב וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים כִּי עֲצָמוּ מְאֹד

The expression על בָּטַח, much less frequently attested than its pendant בְּ בָטַח, is at home in the Hezekiah legends,¹⁹⁵ referring to Judah's reliance on Egypt. Moreover, בָּטַח with רֶכֶב and פָּרָשִׁים only occurs in 2 Kgs 18:24 (Isa 36:9) and in Isa 31:1, both times with the less frequent preposition על. Furthermore, both passages point out that trusting in Egypt is

¹⁸⁹ According to Becker (1997: 218-222), the passages 10:5-11* + 14:24-25a and 29:1-4a + 31:1-3*.8a were composed as a preparation for the insertion of the Hezekiah legends.

¹⁹⁰ Williamson 2004: 198.

¹⁹¹ Williamson 2004: 198-199, referring to the analysis of Höffken 2000.

¹⁹² Höffken 2000: 232.

¹⁹³ Isa 30:1-2*: הוּי plus participle, followed by negation and perfect; Zeph 3:1-2: הוּי plus participle, followed by negation and perfect.

¹⁹⁴ Höffken 2000: 232-233; Deck 1991: 214-215; Kaiser 1989: 58-62.

¹⁹⁵ 2 Kgs 18:20, 21, 24 (Isa 36:5, 6, 9).

senseless. Rather than being coincidental, 31:1b can be understood as a redactional extension to 31:1a. Its purpose was to explicitly establish a connection with the Hezekiah legends. This explanation is supported by the development of Isa 31. 31:4-5.8-9, reflecting on Jerusalem's rescue and Assyria's downfall, was added to 31:1-3* at a later stage. This passage is part of a revision of the Isaiah tradition to be situated in the second half of the seventh century (see 2.2.4 below). A later redactor explicitly connected the *woe*-saying of 31:1-3 with the Hezekiah legends in order to emphasise that it was not Egypt with its great military power that saved Jerusalem, but Yahweh.¹⁹⁶

31:3b contains an announcement of judgement by Yahweh.¹⁹⁷ 31:1a.c.3a emphasises that relying on Egypt instead of Yahweh is a fatal mistake, since Egypt cannot save Judah but only Yahweh can. In 31:3b, by contrast, Yahweh himself intervenes to destroy the coalition of helper (Egypt) and helped (Judah). The verbs indicating the destruction, כָּשַׁל 'stumble', נָפַל 'fall', and כָּלָה 'perish', occur elsewhere as part of the motif of the disobedient people, particularly referring to the disasters that befell Judah in the early sixth century.¹⁹⁸ 31:2, which is often regarded as a later extension to the *woe*-saying, is on the same level as 31:3b. It introduces a new concept: Yahweh's wisdom. Since this is not mentioned in 31:1, the clause 'yet he too is wise' probably alludes to another passage. This is likely to be 29:13-16, where the fading wisdom of humans (29:14) is contrasted with Yahweh's superior wisdom (as implied by 29:16). Thus, the literary reworking of 31:1*.3a, consisting of 31:2.3b is comparable to the reflective passages within Isa 28-32, such as 29:13-16. According to 31:2, Yahweh brings disaster (רָע) to his people; the expression 'house of evildoers' (בֵּית הַרְעִים) closely parallels the 'offspring of evildoers' (זֶרַע הַרְעִים) in 1:4, where it also refers to the people as a whole.¹⁹⁹ The reworking of 31:2.3b focuses on the entire people: Yahweh will bring destruction for both Egypt and Judah. This contrasts with the earlier *woe*-saying, which condemns a particular group of people, the political elite relying on Egypt's military force in their anti-Assyrian politics. The earliest saying probably consisted of 31:1a.c., with 3a as an early comment:

Woe them that go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses,
but did not look to the Holy One of Israel nor consulted Yahweh!
The Egyptians are human, not divine; their horses are flesh, not spirit!

The sayings discussed so far, 29:15, 30:1-2.5b* and 31:1ac.3a, can be regarded as words from the prophet Isaiah directed against the political elite of Jerusalem who advocated an

¹⁹⁶ 31:1b as a redactional bridge between Isa 31* and the Hezekiah stories within Isa 36-39 does not stand in isolation. 31:5b probably is a quite similar addition, which echoes the stories of 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37) as well, in order to emphasise that it is Yahweh who saves (see the analysis of 31:4-5.8-9 in 2.2.4).

¹⁹⁷ Barthel (1997: 434) regards the *woe*-saying as the motivation for a subsequent announcement of judgement in 31:3b, with 31:2 as a necessary turning-point. This construction however is not an original prophetic saying, but the result of a literary reworking of the *woe*-saying.

¹⁹⁸ For the combination כָּשַׁל and נָפַל, cf. Isa 3:8; 8:15; Jer 6:15; 8:12; for כָּלָה, cf. Jer 9:15; 14:12; 16:4.

¹⁹⁹ Isa 1:4-8 is discussed in 2.3.7 below.

anti-Assyrian policy in the period 705-701 BCE.²⁰⁰ The sayings strongly deprecate them, describing their reliance on Egypt as being against Yahweh's will.

Isa 28:1-4

28:1-4 contains an announcement of judgement against Samaria, depicted as the crown of Ephraim:

¹ Woe, proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim – a fading flower is his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley!²⁰¹

² See, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong; like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters.

He hurls down to the earth with his hand,

³ and tramples with feet²⁰² the proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim,

⁴ And it will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer; whoever sees it, eats it up as soon as it comes to hand.²⁰³

Since the suffix of תפארתו refers to Ephraim, the following clause – and 28:1-4 as a whole – is to be understood as referring to Samaria.²⁰⁴ Yahweh (28:2) is presented as the actor in history and Assyria, referred to in a metaphorical way, as his agent. 28:1-4 presumably is an early prophetic saying. The announcement of the destruction of Samaria makes best sense in a late eighth-century setting. In contrast to the other prophetic words within Isa 28-32, which are to be read against the background of 705-701 BCE, 28:1-4 is to be dated to around 720 BCE. Although the content does not give any decisive clues, the siege of Samaria by the Assyrians in 720 is a suitable historical background. The word presents a contrast between the joyful celebrations of the city's inhabitants and the threat posed by the enemies. Although the disaster is near (28:4), the city is careless. In various respects, 28:1-4 resembles the earlier prophecies incorporated within Isa 7 and 8. First, the name 'Ephraim' is used as a designation for the Northern Kingdom (7:9a; 28:1, 3), and secondly, the announced destruction is presented as being imminent (7:16; 8:4; 28:4).

²⁰⁰ Wildberger 1972-82: 1127.

²⁰¹ According to Barthel (1997: 281), the final phrase of 28:4, 'those overcome with wine', is an extension that took up the phrase שפרי אפרים to make the connection with 28:7-10 explicit.

²⁰² The absence of a direct object for הניח suggests that 28:2b and 3 form a syntactical unity. Despite grammatical difficulties, the chiasm 'to hurl down with the hand' (הניח ביד), 'to trample with feet' (הגל רמס) is clear. Evidently, the עטרת is hurled down and trampled. 28:3b concludes the sentence with an inclusion to 28:1a. Originally, the word concluded with a comparison: ויהיתה plus 4b; see Barthel 1997: 281-282.

²⁰³ According to Barthel (1997: 282), 28:4a probably is an expansion of 28:3 based on 28:1. The addition disrupts the original connection between ויהיתה and the comparison (28:4b) and led to the form ציצת (feminine construct); the combination of עטרת נאות and ציצת נבל in its turn elicited the feminine plural תרמסנה.

²⁰⁴ Barthel 1997: 280, 283.

CHAPTER 2

Isa 29:1-6

This unit, often reduced to 29:1-4, is a word of judgement against ‘Ariel’, i.e. Jerusalem.²⁰⁵

¹ Woe, Ariel, Ariel, city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the festivals run their round.

² I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel.

³ And like a (siege) wall (כְּדִוָּר)²⁰⁶ I will encamp against you; I will enclose you with earthworks and raise siege works against you.

⁴ Then deep from the earth you shall speak, from low in the dust your words shall come; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

⁵ The multitude of your insolent ones (זְרִיזִים) shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like flying chaff. And in an instant, suddenly,

⁶ you will be visited by Yahweh of Hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.

In this passage, Yahweh announces that he will fiercely oppress Jerusalem. The first part of this discussion deals with 29:1-4. This passage forms a literary unity: 29:1 begins with a mourning cry over Ariel (הוֹי אֶרְיָאֵל אֶרְיָאֵל), which forms an inclusion to 29:4b, where Ariel is compared to a spirit of the dead.²⁰⁷ This suggests that 29:1-4 deals with the downfall of Jerusalem. 29:1-4 is often interpreted as a word of threat against Jerusalem, to be connected with the circumstances of 701, and attributed to Isaiah.²⁰⁸ The following analysis however aims to demonstrate that 29:1-4 reflects the fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century.

Various scholars have argued that Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE consisted of a blockade and not of an assault on the city with the intent of a swift capture.²⁰⁹ An important indication for this suggestion is the Assyrian description of the siege: ‘Ihn (Hiskia) schloß (*esēru*) ich wie einen Käfigvogel in Jerusalem, seiner königlichen Residenz, ein, legte Befestigungsanlagen (*bīrāte rakāsu*) gegen ihn an und machte es zu einem Ding der Unmöglichkeit für ihn, aus seinem Stadtor hinauszugehen.’²¹⁰ By common practice,

²⁰⁵ Werlitz (1992: 309-310) and Wagner (2006: 150) argue that ‘Ariel’ is best explained as ‘altar hearth’ (cf. Ezek 43:15-16), used as a metaphor for Jerusalem. It fits the announcement of 2bβ and contrasts with the cultic celebrations referred to in 1b.

²⁰⁶ LXX ὡς Δαυιδ ‘like David’ (כְּדִוָּר) is *lectio facilior* (cf. 29:1). MT כְּדִוָּר means ‘like a wall’; for דִּוָּר cf. Akk. *dūru* ‘wall’, as in Isa 45:2; Hoffmann 1972, 191: ‘Ich lagere mich gegen/um dich wie die/eine Ringmauer’.

²⁰⁷ Note furthermore the play with דָּוָר, ‘to dwell’ in 29:1, and ‘to besiege’ (with עָל) in 29:3.

²⁰⁸ E.g. Barthel 1997: 355, 363, 371.

²⁰⁹ See in particular Van der Kooij 1986: 97-98.

²¹⁰ Frahm 1997: 54, line 52 (Frahm’s translation). Van der Kooij (1986: 97-98), following a suggestion of Deller, proposes to read ^uḫal-šu-meš as *bīrāte*, ‘forts’. Cf. BIWA: 28, A ii 52 (siege of Tyre) and Mayer 1995: 361. Mayer (1995: 310, 360) points out that the siege of a city is normally referred to with the verb *lamû*, whereas *esēru*, ‘einschließen’, in this context means to deprive someone of initiative and of his space to move.

cities that could not be easily captured by a frontal assault were cut off from supplies by a blockade, which would eventually force them to surrender.²¹¹

The terminology of 29:1-4, by contrast, points to a frontal assault on Jerusalem. The expression 'to set blockades' does not occur in 29:1-4. Instead, צוּק (hi.) with לָ (29:2), 'to oppress', occurs elsewhere within a description of coming disaster, in particular for Jerusalem;²¹² 29:3, חָנָה, 'to encamp', is used with respect to Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 25:1 (with לָ), where Nebuchadnezzar attacks the city. In 2 Chron 32:1 חָנָה with עַל describes Sennacherib's assault on Judah's fortified cities (not Jerusalem), such as Lachish, which were taken by frontal military assault. Furthermore, צוּר with עַל (29:3) 'to besiege' elsewhere describes a frontal assault on a city (e.g. 2 Sam 20:15). The expression is used for the capture of Samaria in 2 Kgs 17:5 and 18:9 and for the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 2 Kgs 24:11.²¹³ One of the means of frontal assault was the construction of a siege wall around the city from where it could be attacked. This is referred to on the stele of Zakkur, where his enemies are said to have 'raised a wall higher than the wall of Hazr[ak]', (*whrmw . šr . mn [.] šr . hzr[k .]*).²¹⁴ The phrase 'I will besiege you like a wall' (וְהִנֵּיתִי כְדוּרָה) in 29:3 presents a similar image. Finally, 29:3 points to the means with which Ariel is besieged. The word מִצֵּב is an object of instrument by וְצָרְחִי עֲלֶיךָ. The only other case where צוּר plus עַל plus suffix is followed by an instrumental object, it means 'to enclose x with y'.²¹⁵ The meaning 'to enclose her with (...)' fits 29:3, but מִצֵּב remains uncertain.²¹⁶ The phrase 'I will raise siege works against you' (וְהִקִּימֹתִי עֲלֶיךָ מִצְרָה)²¹⁷ resembles Ezek 4:2 'put siege works against it' (וְנָתַתָּה עֲלֶיהָ מִצְרָה) and Mic 4:14 'siege is laid against us' (מִצְרָה עָלֵינוּ). Besides, קָוָה with עַל occurs in Ezek 26:8 'he shall set up a siege wall against you, cast up a ramp against you, and raise a roof of shields against you' (וְהִקִּים עֲלֶיךָ צֹנֵה). 29:1-4 thus pictures a frontal military assault on Jerusalem, leading to the downfall of the city. The passage does not reflect Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701, but resembles the descriptions of the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem in the sixth century.

Various characteristics of 29:1-4 confirm this interpretation. The exclamation הִיִּי does not introduce here a prophetic *woe*-saying condemning a particular form of wicked behaviour (such as 29:15, 30:1-2*, 31:1.3*). Instead, it is a divine word that announces disaster against Ariel/Jerusalem. 29:1-4 contains characteristic features of city laments:²¹⁸ 1) The repetition of Ariel (הוּי אֶרְיָאֵל אֶרְיָאֵל) suggests a vocative address; it is a mourning

²¹¹ According to Mayer (1995: 310, 361), *bīrāte* refers to 'Grenzbefestigungen' positioned at the entrances to the highland of Judah, as a blockade rather than a real siege.

²¹² See particularly Jer 19:9 and cf. Deut 28:53, 55, 57.

²¹³ See also Jer 21:4, 9; 32:2; 37:5; 39:1.

²¹⁴ Zakkur Stele, line 10; edition by Seow, in: Nissinen 2003a: 204, 206. Cf. Mic 4:14: 'Now you (i.e. daughter Zion) are walled around with a wall; siege is laid against us'.

²¹⁵ Song 8:9, 'we will enclose her with boards of cedar'.

²¹⁶ מִצֵּב, vocalised as a ho. ptc. of נָצַב 'to be placed', is *hapax legomenon*. The vocalisation מִצֵּב 'garrison' (e.g. 1 Sam 13:23; 14:1) might be possible.

²¹⁷ 1QIsa^a has מִצְרֹת 'strongholds' (plural) and 4QIsa^f מִצְרָה 'siege works' (singular). MT מִצְרָה can be read as a by-form of מִצְרָה (voc. מִצְרָה) conform 4QIsa^f מִצְרָה, rather than as a defectively spelled plural form מִצְרֹת. In this case, the masoretic vocalisation and 1QIsa^a represent secondary readings.

²¹⁸ The characteristics of city lament and their appearance in the Hebrew Bible have been explored by Dobbs-Allsopp 1993. In addition to Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp discusses passages from the prophetic books, which display characteristic features of city lament.

cry over the city.²¹⁹ 2) The identification of Ariel as the ‘city of David’ and reference to the annual festivals (29:1), prepare for a contrast with the following verses, which describe Ariel’s humiliation and downfall (cf. 22:1-14, in 2.3.6 below).²²⁰ 3) Yahweh’s violent conduct causes devastation,²²¹ through military assault.²²² The image of Yahweh’s violent attack is paralleled in Lamentations, in particularly Lam 2. Lam 2:5, for instance, contains a similar image: ‘Yahweh has become like an enemy; he has destroyed Israel; He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds, and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation.’ The expression ‘mourning and lamentation’ (תַּאֲנִיָּה וְאֵנִיָּה) occurs only in 29:2 and in Lam 2:5, both in a context of Yahweh’s assault on Jerusalem. 4) Characteristic of city laments is the personification of the city as a lady.²²³ Whereas ‘Ariel’ is not a feminine name,²²⁴ in 29:3-4 Ariel is addressed as a lady (cf. also 29:5-6). This can be explained from the characteristics of city laments. The personification of a city as a lady in the Hebrew city lament may be reminiscent of the motif of the weeping goddess of the Mesopotamian city lament.²²⁵ 5) Ariel is described as mourning and weeping, her voice resembling that of a ghost (29:4). This resembles the image of the weeping goddess from the Mesopotamian city lament. Ariel’s voice sounds like that of a spirit from the netherworld, since she lies flat on the ground in the dust, corresponding to the image of lament in Lam 2:10: ‘The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.’²²⁶ 29:1-4 exposes the disastrous fate of Jerusalem brought about by Yahweh. It is formulated as a divine word bearing characteristics of city laments, particularly close to Lam 2.

29:5-6, in my view, continues the *woe*-word against Ariel, rather than adding a new perspective.²²⁷ In 29:5, I prefer to read וְזֵרֶיךָ ‘your insolent ones’ (with 1QIsa^a).²²⁸ This reading is in agreement with 29:5bβ.6, which describes a sudden attack of Yahweh against

²¹⁹ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 90-92; Janzen 1972: 11. This resembles Marduk’s cry over Babylon in the Poem of Erra (‘Alas, Babylon!’, tablet 4:40-45).

²²⁰ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 38-40.

²²¹ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 55-65.

²²² Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 57.

²²³ In Lamentations, Jerusalem is personified as a mother, a widow and especially as ‘daughter Zion’.

²²⁴ In Ezra 8:16 אַרְיֵאל is a masculine name; both אֵל and אַרְיֵ are masculine words.

²²⁵ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 75-90.

²²⁶ Cf. also Lam 3:6, ‘he has made me sit in darkness like the dead of long ago’, and the expression ‘to put one’s mouth to the dust’ in Lam 2:1b, 2b and 3:16.

²²⁷ Those who interpret 29:5-6 as a *relecture* of 29:1-4, follow MT’s reading וְזֵרֶיךָ, ‘your strangers’, in 29:5. ‘Your strangers’ must refer to the enemies that oppress Jerusalem, and by consequence 29:5-6 announces the destruction of Jerusalem’s oppressors through Yahweh’s intervention. If, by contrast, 1QIsa^a וְזֵרֶיךָ, ‘your insolent ones’, is followed, Jerusalem itself suffers from Yahweh’s violent intervention. In that case, 29:5-6 continues 29:1-4.

²²⁸ Neither זֵר, ‘stranger’ nor זֵר, ‘insolent one’, occurs elsewhere with a suffix. Furthermore, the parallel עֲרִיין, ‘the ruthless’, is not decisive, as it occurs elsewhere in juxtaposition both with זֵר (Ps 54:3; Isa 25:5; Ezek 28:7) and with זֵר (Ps 86:14; Isa 13:11). However, the suffix, referring to Ariel, makes better sense within זֵרֶיךָ, ‘your insolent ones’ (1QIsa^a). The variant ‘your strangers’ (MT) in the sense of ‘your enemies’, makes best sense as a re-reading from the perspective of 29:7.

Ariel.²²⁹ A characteristic feature of city laments is that the violent divine intervention is described in terms of the destructive powers of nature (29:6; cf. Lam 2:3; 4:11).²³⁰ 29:5-6 is likely to be read as a continuation of 29:1-4,²³¹ with *וְרֵיךְ*, ‘your insolent ones’, as the original reading.²³² Whereas 29:1-4.5-6 deals with Yahweh’s assault on Ariel, 29:7 evidently changed the focus to the foreign nations as the attackers of Ariel, and claims that their fighting against Ariel will come to nothing.²³³ 29:7 is a *relecture* of the preceding passage, which takes up elements from 29:5,²³⁴ but turns the perspective by identifying the foreign nations as Ariel’s attackers.²³⁵ MT *וְרֵיךְ*, ‘your strangers’, is probably inspired by the *relecture* of 29:7. According to the later perspective, the foreign nations that attack Ariel will be destroyed.²³⁶

Both 29:1-4 and its continuation 29:5-6 deal with the downfall of Jerusalem due to Yahweh’s violent attack. This does not fit the situation of 701, but reflects the capture of Jerusalem in the sixth century.²³⁷ In the process of the literary development of Isa 28-32, 29:1-6 as a word of judgement against Jerusalem, was placed in juxtaposition to 28:1-4: Jerusalem is punished for its sins, just as Samaria was punished.²³⁸

2.2.3 Further Prophetic Material in Isaiah 28-31

Isa 28:7b-10.12

The passage of 28:7-13 contains early prophetic material in a reworked, elaborated form. First, *וְגַם אֵלֶּה*, ‘these too’, in 28:7a (cf. 31:2) connects the saying that follows, 28:7b-10, with the ‘the drunkards of Ephraim’ of 28:1-4.²³⁹ Furthermore, 28:13b clearly echoes 8:15.²⁴⁰ Moreover, the repetition of the cryptic saying (28:10 and 13a) is an indication of

²²⁹ The terminology of 29:5bβ.6 (Ariel visited by Yahweh with thunder) strongly suggests that the passage deals with the destruction of Ariel, not with her being rescued by Yahweh; see Wong 1995: 371. Contra Becker 1997: 236; Barthel 1997: 358.

²³⁰ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 56-57 and 62.

²³¹ The motif of becoming like dust and chaff occasionally occurs within announcements of destruction (e.g. Isa 5:24; cf. also Job 21:18, Ps 1:4 and Hos 13:3). The terms *וְרֵיךְ* and *עָרִיץ* occur in Isa 13:11 as well, together with *פִּקְדֵי שָׁפַל* and *פִּקְדֵי הַיָּמִינִים* hi., in a context of total destruction: ‘I will punish the world for its evil; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the insolence of tyrants’.

²³² See notes 227 and 228 above.

²³³ According to 29:7, the foreign enemies shall be ‘like a dream, a vision of the night’. The expression *כְּחֵלֶם*, ‘like a dream’, emphasises the vanishing of the enemies. Cf. Job 20:8; Ps 73:19-20: ‘How they (i.e. the wicked) are destroyed in a moment ... ! They are like a dream when one awakes’.

²³⁴ See particularly Werlitz 1992: 307.

²³⁵ Contra Wong 1995: 374.

²³⁶ Barthel (1997: 358) attributes 29:5-8 to the Assyria redaction, pointing to 17:12-14 and 30:27-33 as closely related passages. However, as argued here, in 29:5-6 Yahweh’s intervention is directed *against* Ariel.

²³⁷ This interpretation of 29:1-4.5-6 generally concurs with that of Werlitz (1992: 316-320), who dates the earliest version of 29:1-7 in the exilic period. Passages from First Isaiah closely related to 29:1-6, are 22:1-14 and 32:9-14, which similarly reflect the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE; see Barthel 1997: 267-268.

²³⁸ Cf. Barthel 1997: 288.

²³⁹ Barthel 1997: 293.

²⁴⁰ Wildberger 1972-82: 1061.

literary development. Whereas 28:7b-10 goes back to an early prophetic saying,²⁴¹ 28:11-13 presents a *relecture* of this saying, marked by a different perspective.

⁷ Priest and prophet reel with strong drink, are confused with wine,
stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, stumble in giving verdict.

⁸ All tables are covered with filth, vomit is everywhere.²⁴²

⁹ Whom will he (i.e. the priest) teach knowledge,
and to whom will he (i.e. the prophet) explain the message?

To those who are weaned from milk, taken away from the breast?

¹⁰ For it is *šaw lāšāw šaw lāšāw qaw lāqāw qaw lāqāw* – a bit here, a bit there.

The saying refers to prophets and priests, probably in Jerusalem.²⁴³ Since no change of voice is indicated, I take the whole saying as reflecting one point of view.²⁴⁴ The point of the saying is the denouncement of the advice and messages from ‘priest and prophet’. The ‘priest and prophet’ of 28:7b are subject of 28:9a, and the saying in 28:10 mocks what they say. The activities referred to in 28:9a, ‘to teach knowledge’ (יִרְהַרְהַר) and ‘to explain the message’ (יְבִין שְׂמוּעָה) are to be associated with priests and prophets respectively.²⁴⁵ The former refers to priestly instruction, the latter may belong to the technical vocabulary of prophetic divination.²⁴⁶ 28:9b specifies the object mentioned in 9a, אֵת־מִי ‘whom’.

According to the saying, ‘priest and prophet’ eat and drink excessively. In their drunkenness they deliver unreliable messages and give unintelligible advice. Their drunken speech may be good for talking with small children, but certainly not as sound advice. Their speech is mocked in 28:10. The saying denounces ‘priest and prophet’, in particular the divine messages and advice they give. Whereas prophets and priests are supposed to expose and interpret the divine will, the saying claims they have gone astray, being only interested in food and drink. They are talking ridiculously, as if speaking to small children. The mocking phrase of 28:10 imitates unintelligible, drunken talk. It is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning of the wording of 28:10 apart from its general sense as mocking the messages and advice of ‘priest and prophet’.²⁴⁷ 28:7b-10 suggests that Isaiah’s opponents,

²⁴¹ Becker (1997: 229) qualifies 28:7b-10 as ‘eine ältere Spruchheit’.

²⁴² I take נִצָּה with the second colon; see Wildberger 1972-82: 1052-1053.

²⁴³ Contra Becker (1997: 229), who suggests that 28:7b-10 originally addressed cultic functionaries from Samaria. This is unlikely, since Isaiah’s prophecies against Ephraim and Samaria (in Isa 7*, 8*, 17*, 28:1-4) do not single out any particular group of people.

²⁴⁴ According to a common interpretation, 28:7-8 is a word by Isaiah denouncing his adversaries, 28:9-10 the mocking reply of his adversaries, and 28:11-13 Isaiah’s harsh reaction to the scorn of his adversaries (Wildberger 1972-82: 1053-1054). However, the assumption of a change of voice between 28:8 and 9 is implausible. Furthermore, this interpretation depends on the presupposition that 28:7b-13 (or 28:7b-12) forms an Isaianic unit. Instead, 28:7b-10 is to be read as a word of criticism from one perspective, with 28:11-13 as a later *relecture*.

²⁴⁵ Becker 1997: 229; Barthel 1997: 291.

²⁴⁶ Van der Toorn 1988: 205. In his view שְׂמוּעָה is equivalent to Akk. *egirru*, ‘portentous utterance, oracle’ (1988: 214).

²⁴⁷ Many suggestions have been made, but see the caution expressed by Wildberger 1972-82: 1053-1054. Emerton (2001) discusses a variety of interpretations of the phrase. Emerton (2001: 56) regards it as possible that the phrase consists of an unintelligible jumble of words. Yet, it may be significant

the leading politicians of Jerusalem, appealed to revelatory visions and inspired advice for their political position.

In its literary reworking, the earlier saying of 28:7b-10 was elaborated by 28:11-13, which added a new interpretation. 28:11 is a *relecture* of 28:10, interpreting the mocking phrase of 28:10 as a saying in a foreign language, words uttered by foreigners that the Judaeans do not understand. This turns the focus to the arrival of a foreign, enemy power.²⁴⁸ According to 28:11, Yahweh no longer communicates with his people through prophets or priests, but through an invasion of foreigners; he speaks the ‘language of destruction’. The motif of a devastating invasion functioning as Yahweh’s message to the disobedient people, also occurs in Jer 5:15.

In the literary context of 28:7-13, verse 12 functions as a motivation for the announced judgement. It includes however an earlier saying: ‘This is the resting place – give rest to the weary; this is the place of repose.’ The phrase ‘this is the resting place’ (זאת המנוחה) also occurs in Ps 132:14, where Yahweh refers to Zion as: ‘this is my resting place (זאת מנוחתה) for ever’, continued with ‘I will satisfy its poor with bread’, and in Mic 2:10, ‘Arise and go; for this is no place of rest (לא זאת המנוחה), because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.’ This is part of a passage that accuses the powerful in Jerusalem of social injustice, and the ‘place of rest’ points to Zion. The likeliest interpretation of 28:12 is to take זאת המנוחה and its parallel זאת המנוחה as referring to Zion (or Jerusalem) as a divinely protected place,²⁴⁹ where social justice is acted out. The command ‘give rest to the weary’ belongs to the sphere of social justice.²⁵⁰ Whereas it is normally Yahweh who is said to give rest,²⁵¹ here, the earthly leaders are urged to do so, as a mark of good leadership.²⁵²

Although the saying may be a paraphrase rather than a verbal quotation of a prophetic oracle,²⁵³ it represents a prophecy from the early period, i.e. the eighth century. According to the larger context, Zion used to be a resting place for the people, the place *par excellence* for social justice. However, this has been overruled since the people refused to listen (ולא

that the words צו and קו somewhat resemble נצה ‘filth’ and קיא ‘vomit’ in 28:8. A relationship between 28:8 and 10 (which has support in some of the early versions; Emerton 2001: 40-42, 51-55), supports my suggestion that the phrase in 28:10 mocks the ‘priest and prophet’ for delivering senseless messages and stupid advice. A different suggestion, made by Van der Toorn (1988: 209-211), is that the sounds represent bird-like twittering and groans, which were believed to be uttered by the dead; 28:7b-10 then refers to the practice of necromancy.

²⁴⁸ Unintelligible language is regularly used as a characteristic of a hostile, foreign nation; Deut 28:49; Isa 33:19; Jer 5:15; Ezek 3:5-6; see Barthel 1997: 300.

²⁴⁹ זאת המנוחה is *hapax legomenon*, but רגע hi. ‘to find repose’, ‘to give rest’ is attested (Deut 28:65; Isa 34:14; Jer 31:2; 50:34).

²⁵⁰ Cf. Job 22:7, which is part of a catalogue of social injustice: ‘You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry’.

²⁵¹ MT הניחו is imperative plural from נח hi. A. ‘to secure repose, rest’. With ה it means ‘to give rest to x’. Normally, the subject is Yahweh, who gives rest to the people, i.e. protection against the enemies and living without fear of foreigners. In Isa 28:12 the imperative plural addresses a human subject.

²⁵² Bartel (1997: 302-304) rejects the suggestion of Kaiser and Vermeylen that 28:12 bears a Deuteronomistic mark. According to Barthel, the ‘rest for the tired ones’ refers to a guarantee required by Yahweh for the socially weak who are suppressed by the Jerusalem elite.

²⁵³ Barthel 1997: 301.

שְׂמוּעָה).²⁵⁴ According to 28:12, an earlier stage of prophecy, characterised by an encouraging message, has been followed by a later stage of prophecy of judgement. At some stage in the development of the Isaiah tradition, prophecy of salvation was regarded a thing of the past, whereas the present was considered as being marked by the prophecy of judgement (see also 30:15).

Isa 28:14-18

The earliest version of 28:15-18 probably represents prophetic material. 28:19-22 consists of later extensions to the oracle.²⁵⁵ An important feature within the oracle of 28:15-18* is the parallel between accusation and announcement: the six clauses of 28:15 correspond to those of 28:17b-18. This is not to imply however that the passage in between, 28:16-17a, should be eliminated. 28:16a, ‘Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh’, cannot be missed, since the transition from accusation to announcement requires some form of messenger-formula. Furthermore, as this formula is normally followed by divine speech, at least some part of 28:16-17a belongs to the original oracle.²⁵⁶ Whereas 28:17b parallels 15bβ (c’ – c, see below), it does not take up שִׁים from 15bβ; it is, on the other hand, 17a which takes up this verb, thereby forming intrinsically part of the oracle. Since 28:17a begins with a consecutive form (וַיִּשְׁמְעֵהוּ), at least the phrase יִסַּד בְּצִיּוֹן אֲבָנֵי (28:16) must have preceded it.²⁵⁷ The construction of יִסַּד הַנְּנִי (28:16) continued by a perfect consecutive וַיִּשְׁמְעֵהוּ in 28:17a is naturally read as יִסַּד הַנְּנִי.²⁵⁸ First, הַנְּנִי is to be followed by a participle singular, as is attested in 1QIsa^b יִסַּד.²⁵⁹ 1QIsa^a has a variant reading, מִיִּסַּד (pi. ptc.). If יִסַּד pi. has the specific meaning ‘to lay foundations’, whereas יִסַּד qal has a broader meaning, applying to the whole process of (re)building,²⁶⁰ יִסַּד (qal ptc.) may represent the original reading, and the more specified מִיִּסַּד (pi. ptc.) a secondary variant. In any case, LXX and the other versions reflect a participle form with a future tense.²⁶¹ Apart from the two *lectiones*, הַנְּנִי (י)ִסַּד, naturally read as qal ptc., and הַנְּנִי מִיִּסַּד, of which the former probably is *lectio difficilior*, there is the deviant vocalisation in MT. It has been pointed out that the Masoretic vocalisation was probably influenced by Isa 14:32, יְהוָה יִסַּד צִיּוֹן, ‘Yahweh has founded Zion’.²⁶² The Masoretes chose for a different vocalisation in order to harmonise 28:16 with 14:32,²⁶³ the vocalisation יִסַּד is a late development.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁴ The motif of the people’s refusal of Yahweh’s blessings further occurs in Lev 26:21; Isa 30:9; Ezek 3:7; Ezek 20:8 (cf. Isa 42:24; Ps 81:12).

²⁵⁵ Barthel 1997: 313-314; Becker 1997: 233.

²⁵⁶ Contra Becker 1997: 231.

²⁵⁷ Barthel 1997: 315-316.

²⁵⁸ Cf. JM § 119n.

²⁵⁹ Defectively spelled participles masculine singular qal are quite common in the MT of Isaiah.

²⁶⁰ See Mosis 1981: 676-677.

²⁶¹ LXX ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐμβαλῶ (future) renders a participle; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion have a participle.

²⁶² Roberts 1987: 28; acknowledged by Dekker 2004: 92-93.

²⁶³ Dekker (2004: 91) points out that because יִסַּד הַנְּנִי is an anomalous construction, the Masoretes gave הַנְּנִי a distinctive accent rather than the common conjunctive accent.

²⁶⁴ Contra Dekker 2004: 90-104. Dekker’s arguments for following MT’s vocalisation יִסַּד are unconvincing. First, as Roberts (1987: 28) noted, the construction of MT is ‘totally unparalleled’ (Isa 29:15; 38:5, הַנְּנִי יוֹסֵף, can be debated, but either is participle יוֹסֵף or imperfect יוֹסֵף, not perfect. In Jer

The first phrase of the announcement is: ‘Behold, I am about to lay a foundation stone on Zion’.²⁶⁵ 28:16b in my view partly is the result of later elaboration. The words אָבֶן בְּחֵן specify the stone Yahweh is going to lay on Zion as a ‘massive stone’ or perhaps a ‘fortress stone’ (for בְּחֵן, cf. Isa 23:13; 32:14).²⁶⁶ This corresponds with an image of protection often found in psalms, referring to Yahweh as a protective rock and stronghold.²⁶⁷ This may be part of the original oracle. What follows, ‘a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation’, is reminiscent of 1 Kgs 5:31 and 7:10, since only there does the combination of יָקָר (precious), אָבֶן (stone) and יָסַד (to found) occur. This specification probably had the temple in mind (cf. esp. 1 Kgs 5:31) as being founded by Yahweh on Zion. This may be a later *relecture* of the oracle. The final phrase, הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יִדָּח, probably means ‘he who believes will not move’.²⁶⁸ This is commonly related to 7:9b, the only other instance in Isaiah where אָמֵן hi. is used in an absolute sense: ‘If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all’. Whereas 7:9b adds a condition of faith to the preceding oracle of salvation, 28:16bβ adds a promise for the faithful within an oracle of judgement. 28:16bβ forms a counterpart to 7:9b.²⁶⁹ It is a later addition to the oracle, which refers to a group other than the addressees of the original oracle.

The recipients of the oracle are addressed in 28:14 as scoffers (אֲנָשֵׁי לְצִוּוֹן) and leaders of the people.²⁷⁰ From the oracle it is clear that not the people as a whole, but the political leaders of Jerusalem are addressed. The element הָעַם הַזֶּה was probably added as part of the literary reworking of the earlier prophetic material within Isa 28-32. This element has the effect of placing the oracle on a par with the other negative passages within Isa 28-32. The

44:26; Ezek 25:7; 36:6, הֵנִי is followed by a perfect first person, not a third person). MT’s construction הֵנִי יָסַד is without parallel, even more so because it is continued by a perfect consecutive form (רָשַׁמְתִּי) in 28:17. In my view, וְשָׁמַח ... יָסַד הֵנִי can only be read as a participle with future tense continued by a consecutive perfect with future tense (contra Dekker 2004: 44). Dekker’s form-critical argument against יָסַד הֵנִי that it is strange for an oracle of judgement to contain an announcement of salvation (2004: 93-94) is unconvincing. It cannot be taken for granted that 28:16 implies salvation, as is demonstrated by the interpretation offered here. Against Dekker’s position, a form-critical observation is that Yahweh’s announcement of his intervention (often punishment, sometimes restoration) in the prophetic books frequently makes use of the construction הֵנִי plus participle (e.g. Isa 13:17; 37:7; 38:8; 43:19; 65:17, 18; Jer 1:15, 5:14, 15; 6:21; 8:17, many more examples could be added). What one expects, from a form-critical point of view, is thus הֵנִי plus participle.

²⁶⁵ The interpretation of בְּצִוּוֹן as *bêt-essentiae*, ‘I am about to lay a foundation stone: Zion’, is rejected by Barthel 1997: 308-309, and Roberts 1987: 29.

²⁶⁶ Roberts 1987: 33-34; Barthel 1997: 306, 309, ‘Festungsstein’.

²⁶⁷ Ps 18:3, 32, 47; 31:3-4; 62:3, 7-8; 71:3; 94:22.

²⁶⁸ See Wildberger 1972-82: 1067-1068: ‘wegeilen, weichen’; cf. the allusion to Isa 28:16 in 1QS 8, 7-8, ‘its foundations ... will not move’ (בִּל יִדָּחוּ).

²⁶⁹ Becker 1997: 232, with note 34. Barthel (1997: 325) suggests reading 28:16 as a positive variation on the conditional word of faith of 7:9b, which in my view is unconvincing. At this point, Barthel’s interpretation is inconsistent. In his analysis of Isa 6-8, he interprets 7:9b as part of the post-Isaianic elaboration of 7:4-9a, whereas in the analysis of Isa 28, he regards 28:16 as dependent on 7:9b but also as Isaianic (see also Barthel 1997: 422, note 187, and 424).

²⁷⁰ Some have derived מִשְׁלֵי from מִשַׁל I. ‘to recite’, but the constructive relation with עַם suggests that it comes from מִשַׁל II. ‘to rule’; cf. the other cases where מִשַׁל and עַם are combined, ‘ruler of the peoples’, Ps 104:20; Prov 28:15; Isa 3:12.

expression בִּירוּשָׁלַם [אַשֶׁר] הָעָם occurs elsewhere,²⁷¹ and the phrase ‘leaders of the people in Jerusalem’ may be part of the original address.

¹⁵ Because you have said,

(a) ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement;²⁷²

(b) when the overwhelming scourge²⁷³ passes through it will not come to us;

(c) for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter’;

^{16*} Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh:

Look, I am about to lay a foundation stone on Zion, a massive stone,

¹⁷ and I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet,

(c) but hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter,

(a) ¹⁸ your covenant with death will be annulled,²⁷⁴ and your agreement with

Sheol will not stand;

(b) when the overwhelming scourge passes through you will be beaten down by it.

The oracle is to be understood against the background of the actions of a pro-Egyptian (anti-Assyrian) faction in Jerusalem during 705-701.²⁷⁵ The immediate cause may have been a treaty with Egypt against Assyria, regarded by the prophet as a violation of the treaty with Yahweh.²⁷⁶ The position of the politicians that rely on Egypt in a revolt against Assyria is represented in the oracle by a fictive speech (28:15). It is not a trustworthy quotation (cf. שִׁקָּר and כָּזֵב), but a fictitious speech that functions as an accusation.²⁷⁷ These leaders consider themselves as being protected against Assyria (שׁוֹט שׁוֹטָךְ), Egypt being their refuge. The clauses designated as c and c’ allude to expressions known especially from the Psalms, where Yahweh is described as the מְחַסֶּה (‘refuge’) and סִתָּר (‘hiding place’) for his people, but turn them upside down: not Yahweh, but כָּזֵב and שִׁקָּר are relied on for

²⁷¹ Jer 29:25; 34:8; 36:9.

²⁷² The context requires for הוֹדָה in verse 15 and הוֹדָה in verse 18 the meaning ‘agreement, pact’; Wildberger 1972-82: 1065; Barthel 1997: 307.

²⁷³ The meaning of שׁוֹט (*qere* and 1QIsa^a) in 28:15, 18 (and 10:26) is disputed. It has been suggested to take שׁוֹט as ‘flood’ based on an Arabic cognate form (see Wildberger 1972-82: 1065). Barthel (1997: 308) however argues that ‘scourge’ is a metaphor for Assyria as Yahweh’s agent (elsewhere ‘stick’, ‘rod’), and thus fits to this phrase well (cf. 10:24.26; 30:27-33).

²⁷⁴ The reading וכפר probably is a corruption (a feminine form is expected, though not required, and כפר is not used in this meaning). פיר hi. or ho. is used for annulling or cancelling an agreement; the form וְהִפֵּר may be suggested; see Barthel 1997: 310.

²⁷⁵ Barthel 1997: 317.

²⁷⁶ According to Barthel (1997: 320), the accusation equals that of 31:1-3*. Van der Toorn (1988: 202-203) argues that ‘death’ and ‘netherworld’ represent underworld deities, but the reference to treaty and pact suggests that death and Sheol refer to a political entity (Egypt). For a critical review of the position of Van der Toorn, see Dekker (2004: 121-128), who explains the covenant with death as an ironic typification of the coalition politics carried out by the political leaders of Jerusalem (2004: 274).

²⁷⁷ Van der Toorn 1988: 201-202. For fictive quotations functioning as accusations in prophetic oracles, see Kaiser 1983: 200.

rescue.²⁷⁸ The oracle announces that the supposed rescue will not stand, and pictures Yahweh as the real protagonist in history.²⁷⁹

28:16-17a* has been often regarded as an announcement of salvation, and therefore creating a difficulty within the oracle of judgement.²⁸⁰ 28:16-17a* however does not so much promise salvation, but rather announces Yahweh's intervention directed against the political leaders, who are the oracle's addressees. Whereas the political leaders have gone astray, Yahweh presents himself as the true leader who establishes justice and righteousness. Yahweh announces that he will establish a standard of true leadership, characterised by justice and righteousness and providing protection (28:16-17a), whereas the bad leaders will experience Assyria's harsh repercussions. The pro-Egyptian politics of the Jerusalem leaders are rejected and associated with deception and lies. The main topic of the oracle is good versus bad leadership. Concluding a treaty with Egypt is a mark of bad leadership, whereas Yahweh's standard of justice and righteousness stands for good leadership. The bad leaders trust a deceitful refuge, but the refuge that Yahweh will establish – a strong stone in Zion, characterised by justice and righteousness – is trustworthy. The instruments of measurement 'the line and the plummet' are used as metaphors of standard (justice and righteousness as a standard set by Yahweh),²⁸¹ whereas the 'stone' stands for the protection that follows from good leadership.²⁸² The announcement of destruction (28:17b-18) is specifically directed to the political leaders: they will be beaten down.²⁸³ For the recipients, the political leaders of Jerusalem trusting in Egypt, the prophecy is unambiguously negative. Yahweh's announcement to establish a standard of true leadership, characterised by justice and righteousness and providing protection (28:16-17a), may be encouraging for the people of Judah, but for the addressees it only emphasises the terrible fate they will suffer.

The oracle of 28:15-18* is likely to go back to prophetic activity in the late eighth century.²⁸⁴ The oracle originally announced that Yahweh would provide a secure refuge in

²⁷⁸ Bartel 1997: 318-319. Van der Toorn (1988: 203) argues that כָּזָב and שֶׁקֶר are *chiffres* for other gods (cf. Jer 10:14, Amos 2:4, Ps 40:5). In that case, the politicians are accused of having made a treaty with Egypt under the auspices of gods other than Yahweh. However, the use of כָּזָב and שֶׁקֶר in the prophetic books may point to a different meaning: כָּזָב and שֶׁקֶר are used in Mic 2:11 in a context of vain prophecy inspired by drinking (cf. Isa 28:7b-10). For כָּזָב, see Ezek 13:6-9, 19, 22:28; Hos 12:2; שֶׁקֶר referring to 'false trust' especially with regard to unreliable prophets, frequently occurs in the book of Jeremiah.

²⁷⁹ Barthel 1997: 321.

²⁸⁰ Scholars have proposed different solutions to this apparent problem. Becker (1997: 231) regards 28:16-17a as out of place within the oracle and eliminates it; Dekker (2004: 90-104) argues that 29:16 refers to the past ('Heilshistorische terugblik'); others have attempted to bring the different elements together through theological interpretation (Wildberger 1972-82: 1081-1082; Barthel 1997: 326-327). I propose a different interpretation.

²⁸¹ Van Keulen 1996: 130.

²⁸² Cf. Barthel 1997: 322.

²⁸³ Barthel (1997: 327, note 113) and Wildberger (1972-82: 1072) acknowledge that the oracle originally announces the terrible fate that will befall the political leaders.

²⁸⁴ Instead, Becker (1997: 232-233) dates 28:14-18 in its core to the post-exilic period. In his view, the redactor/composer took the judgement against the Northern Kingdom (28:1-4*) as a prefiguration for Judah's judgement (28:14-18*), similar to the redactional addition of 8:5-8a* to the earlier 8:1-4*.

Zion, characterised by justice and righteousness, and contrasting with the false and deceptive shelter of the bad leaders. In later periods, the image of the foundation stone was reinterpreted. For instance, in 32:1-2, which in my view belongs to a revision of the Isaiah tradition in the seventh century (see 2.2.4), the king and his officials are compared to a protective rock. At this stage, 28:16-17a* was probably interpreted as a promise of a king who would execute the values established by Yahweh. In the context of the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition, 28:16 was probably read as announcing the reign of a new king, which according to this revision, had been fulfilled with Josiah's reign (32:1-2). Still later reinterpretations include the stone at Zion as imaging the temple (cf. the additional phrase in 28:16b, 'a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation'), and the foundation stone as an image of a messianic king to come.²⁸⁵

Isa 30:6-8

30:6-11 is characterised by a double duty of 30:8, which both concludes 30:6-8 and introduces 30:9-11.²⁸⁶ Whereas 30:8 originally concluded 30:6b-8*, a later redactional elaboration extended it with 30:9-11. Grammatically speaking, the suffix in כְּחִבְּהָ (literally 'write her down!'), refers back to 30:7, where the content of the inscription is found: the symbolic name (30:7b).²⁸⁷ The early material can be found in 30:6b-8*.²⁸⁸

^{6b} Through a land of trouble and distress, where lioness and lion roar,²⁸⁹
viper and serpent fly, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys,
and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them.

⁷ Yes, Egypt is wind, and vain their aid,²⁹⁰ therefore I have called her,
'Rahab who sits still (רַהַב הַיְשָׁבֵת)'.²⁹¹

⁸ Go now, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a document,
so that it may be for the time to come as a witness²⁹² forever.

Whereas the oracle focuses on the uselessness of Egypt's help, the criticism concerns Judah: trusting in Egypt is pointless.²⁹³ By contrast, 30:9 does not refer to the content of the

However, the earliest layer of 28:14-18 does not announce a complete destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, but is directed specifically against Jerusalem's political leaders.

²⁸⁵ The stone at Zion (28:16) and its later reinterpretations form an analogy to the figure of Immanuel (7:14) and its later reinterpretations.

²⁸⁶ For various positions with regard to this passage, see Williamson 1994: 86-87.

²⁸⁷ Barthel 1997: 404-405.

²⁸⁸ 30:6a, the heading, is likely to be secondary, based on the wild animals mentioned in the oracle; see Barthel 1997: 403.

²⁸⁹ The emendation of נִהַם into נָהַם qal ptc. (cf. Isa 5:29-30; Prov 28:15) is still the best solution; see Wildberger 1972-82: 1158.

²⁹⁰ Following Irwin 1977: 75.

²⁹¹ The symbolic name stresses the uselessness of Egypt as a helper to Judah (cf. Barthel 1997: 396). Its precise meaning remains a crux. I adopt the emendation רַהַב הַיְשָׁבֵת, 'Rahab who sits still', 'Rahab, who has lain silent' (רַהַב הַיְשָׁבֵת ho. ptc.), with Wildberger 1972-82: 1159; Williamson 1994: 253. For a slightly different view, see Barthel 1997: 396-397.

²⁹² MT לְעֵד is usually revocalised into לְעֵד; cf. Isa 8:2.

²⁹³ Barthel 1997: 415.

inscription, but adds a motivation. The extension of 30:9-11 is to be regarded as a *relecture* which incorporated the earlier saying of 30:6-8* and changed its meaning to make it fit the negative qualification of the people. The command to inscribe a saying on a tablet is now connected with the people's rejection of Yahweh's torah. In this way, 30:9-11 gives a new twist to 30:8: an occasional act of inscribing – the symbolic name – becomes exemplary of the documentation of the prophetic preaching in general.²⁹⁴ The act of inscribing was disconnected from its incidental character and became a testimony for the people's disobedience for times to come. Whereas in 30:6-8* Yahweh is speaking, the later reflection on the rejection of the prophetic message in 30:9-11 refers to Yahweh in the third person. The reflective and generalising character indicates its later redactional perspective.²⁹⁵

30:8, originally the conclusion of 30:6-8*, became a fundamental statement on the necessity of written documentation of the rejected prophetic words, as part of a literary reworking of the earlier prophetic material. The term תּוֹרַת יְהוָה in 30:9, similarly to תּוֹרַת יְהוָה in 5:24 (paralleled by אִמְרַת קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל), refers to the message of Yahweh mediated by the prophet (cf. 30:10; 8:16).²⁹⁶ The term is used in the (exilic) reworking of the Isaiah tradition in the specific sense that the people are accused of having rejected and despised Yahweh's message and having refused to listen to it (cf. 1:4, 8:6). For this, they will be severely punished by Yahweh. The concept of the people's rejection of Yahweh and his word, mediated by the prophet, and their subsequent punishment by Yahweh, is presented in 8:16 as a prophetic testimony, and again as תּוֹרַת יְהוָה in 30:9. The Isaiah tradition in its reworked form presents itself as Isaiah's prophetic testimony, focusing on the disobedience of the people and their punishment by Yahweh.

The two functions of 30:8 resemble the difference between 8:1 and 8:16. Whereas 30:6-8* and 8:1-2* deal with the inscription of a single symbolic name, in 30:8-11 and 8:16 the act of inscribing refers to the documentation of the prophetic message as such.²⁹⁷ Both 8:16 and 30:8-11 record the people's rejection of the prophetic message and present this as a motivation for the coming disaster.²⁹⁸

Isa 30:15

30:15-17 continues the theme of the people having rejected Yahweh's blessings, represented by earlier prophecies of salvation. Like 28:12, this passage presents a view on different stages of prophecy. In its literary context, 30:15 functions as a reminder of 'prophecy of old', presented as a passed stage. According to this depiction, Yahweh in the past promised to save the people, but they refused his help; they trusted military power instead of Yahweh. Therefore Yahweh turned against them (30:17). The passage, in my

²⁹⁴ Cf. Barthel 1997: 406.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Barthel 1997: 416.

²⁹⁶ Barthel (1997: 417) argues that 'torah of Yahweh' here does not mean 'the law' in a Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic sense. However, neither does it refer to a single, concrete oracle, but rather to the prophetic message in a more general sense, from the perspective of the (exilic) reworking of the Isaiah tradition. I agree with López (1995: 611-612) that 'torah' here refers to a written document, a fixed tradition.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Barthel 1997: 277.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Barthel 1997: 419.

opinion, displays a retrospective view; disaster has become reality and is explained as having been caused by the people's unwillingness to accept Yahweh's salvation promised in the earlier prophetic oracles. 30:15a is a quotation or paraphrase representing the 'prophecy of old': 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel: In staying and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.'

The word שׁוּבָה (*hapax legomenon*) is often derived from שׁוּב ('to repent'),²⁹⁹ but a derivation from יָשַׁב, 'to sit down', is preferable.³⁰⁰ Whereas נוּחַ and שׁוּב (or derivations) are never in juxtaposition within the Hebrew Bible, the combination of נוּחַ with יָשַׁב is attested,³⁰¹ e.g. in Jer 27:11, which resembles 30:15 also thematically. Another related passage is Judg 18:7, the description of the life of the people from Lais: 'The people who were there living securely (וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ לְבֵטָחָה), after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting (שָׁקֵט וּבֵטָח).' These descriptions point to a quiet, peaceful life, without military oppression. When the people are confronted with a foreign superpower, the Assyrians or Babylonians, the prophetic advice is not to rebel, but to accept the yoke and prosper. The suggestion of the word of salvation in 30:15 is: if you accept the situation and do not revolt, you will live in peace. This is fully in line with the other early prophecies within Isa 28-31.

In the present literary context, the quotation is followed by a fictitious reply from the people in which Yahweh's word is rejected, and by an announcement of judgement.³⁰² From the compositional perspective, 30:15a represents prophecy from a past stage. This presentation of the prophecy of old, its rejection by the people and their punishment by Yahweh, again indicates the retrospective character of Isa 28-32.³⁰³

2.2.4 *Texts from Isaiah 28-32 belonging to the Seventh-century Revision*

Within the complex of Isa 28-32, the designation אַשּׁוּר occurs in 30:31 and 31:8. Both 30:27-33 and 31:4-5.8-9, followed by 32:1-2, display an anti-Assyrian tendency. It is likely that these passages were part of a revision of the Isaiah tradition to be situated in the later part of the seventh century.

Isa 30:27-33

30:29 and 32 have sometimes been regarded as later additions,³⁰⁴ but Beuken has argued that the unit has a balanced structure and from a thematic point of view forms a unity:

²⁹⁹ Barthel 1997: 423.

³⁰⁰ Or from a supposed root שׁוּב as a by-form of יָשַׁב; Wildberger (1972-82: 1181) despite his preference for deriving it from שׁוּב 'to return', presents strong arguments for derivation from יָשַׁב. The variant of 1QIsa^a, שׁוּבָה, may likewise mean 'staying' (cf. 2 Sam 19:33).

³⁰¹ Deut 12:10; 2 Sam 7:1; Jer 27:11. For further evidence, see the texts mentioned in Wildberger 1972-82: 1181; and furthermore the Akkadian text KAR 58:19, 'quiet down (*nāhu*), sit down (*wašābu*) compose yourself, provide well-being for the house you have entered' (CAD s.v. *nāhu*, 145).

³⁰² Cf. Barthel 1997: 422.

³⁰³ Cf. Barthel 1997: 423. Barthel (1997: 407, note 107) concludes with regard to 30:15-17: 'Die einfache Alternative von selbständiger mündlicher Verkündigungseinheit und rein literarischer Bildung ist auch hier ungeeignet, die Eigenart der Komposition zu erfassen'.

³⁰⁴ Wildberger 1972-82: 1215.

Yahweh's destruction of Assyria and Judah's joyful celebration over this belong together (cf. 9:1-6).³⁰⁵

- ²⁷ See, there comes Yahweh from far away, his nose burning, <his liver raging>³⁰⁶,
his lips full of indignation, his tongue like a devouring fire,
²⁸ and his breath like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck,³⁰⁷
to sift the nations with a deceptive sieve,³⁰⁸
to place on the peoples' jaws a bridle that leads them astray.
²⁹ You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept;
and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute
to go to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Rock of Israel.
³⁰ Yahweh will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be
seen,³⁰⁹ in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire,
with a cloudburst and tempest and hailstones.
³¹ Assyria will be terror-stricken at Yahweh's voice, when he strikes with his rod.
³² And every stroke of the staff his punishment³¹⁰ that Yahweh lays upon him will be to the sound
of timbrels and lyres; battling with brandished arm he will fight with him.
³³ For his burning place has long been prepared;³¹¹ its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and
wood in abundance; the breath of Yahweh, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.

The meaning of 30:27-33 is obscured by the vocalisation of 30:27a: 'See, the name of Yahweh (הַיְהוָה שֵׁם יְהוָה) comes from far away'. In my view, this is implausible. First, Yahweh's name never is the subject of בּוֹא. Furthermore, Yahweh's שֵׁם within First Isaiah only occurs in texts of a late date,³¹² and never as subject.³¹³ On the contrary, several passages can be mentioned where יהוה is the subject of בּוֹא. Of the seven attestations within Isaiah,³¹⁴ 30:27 is closely resembled by 13:5 'They come (בּוֹא) from a distant land, from the

³⁰⁵ Beuken 1997: 384-386.

³⁰⁶ אָפוּ (MT) is a crux. Barth (1977: 93) suggests taking it as a further qualification of מִשְׁאָה, 'und läßt Menge von Rauch aufsteigen'. Wildberger (1972-82: 1208) proposes reading מִשְׁאָה קָבֵד, 'wichtig ist seine Erhebung'. Evidently, it is part of Yahweh's appearance: his nose, his lips, his tongue, his breath. The structure of 30:27 suggests that the parallelism of 'his lips ...' // 'his tongue ...' is preceded by a parallelism of 'his nose burning' // וְכִבְדּוֹ מִשְׁאָה. Since קָבֵד means 'liver', the expression 'his liver raging, inflamed' may be suspected behind the Hebrew phrase (cf. the Akkadian expression, 'his liver raging' as an expression of anger); Hummel (1957: 100) suggests the emendation קָבֵדוֹ מִשְׁאָה 'his liver raging' (with enclitic *mēm* after pronoun suffix).

³⁰⁷ הַחֵצָה from חָצַה 'to divide' is strange (cf. 8:8 וַיִּעַר צִנְאָר). The expression עַד צִנְאָר occurs only in Isa 8:8 and 30:28 (in Hab 3:13 in a very different context).

³⁰⁸ Barth 1977: 94: יִנְּסָה 'yoke'; but note the criticism by Beuken 1997: 388.

³⁰⁹ According to Wildberger (1972-82: 1209), נָחַח is a unique substantive of נָחַח 'to descend'.

³¹⁰ For מוֹסָרָה the emendation מוֹסָרָה 'his punishment' is generally accepted, see e.g. Barth 1977: 94; Wildberger 1972-82: 1209.

³¹¹ The phrase 'truly it is made ready for the king' probably is a later addition, aiming to explicitly single out the Assyrian king as object of the violent actions (cf. 10:12).

³¹² Isa 12:4; 18:7; 24:15; 25:1; 26:8, 13 and 29:23.

³¹³ The name of Yahweh is the subject only in a few cases; e.g. Prov 18:10, 'the name of Yahweh is a strong tower'.

³¹⁴ Isa 3:14; 13:5; 19:1; 40:10; 59:19, 20; 66:15.

end of the heavens, Yahweh and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole earth', and 19:1 'Behold, Yahweh is riding on a swift cloud and comes (בוא) to Egypt.' In 13:5, the element מִמְּרָק מִמְּרָץ 'from a distant land' parallels מִמְּרָק, 'from afar' of 30:27.³¹⁵ MT's reading שם is implausible. The suggestion to delete it, however, leads to the difficulty that it cannot be convincingly explained as a later addition.³¹⁶ The problem is solved by vocalising שָׁם. The sequence שם הנה occurs ten times in the Hebrew Bible and is (except for Isa 30:27) always vocalised שָׁם הנה.³¹⁷ In five cases, the phrase is followed by a subject and a participle:

Gen 29:2	Behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there	הנה־שָׁם שלשה עדר־צאן רבצים
1 Kgs 17:10	Behold, there was a widow gathering sticks	והנה־שָׁם אשה אלמנה מקששת עצים
Jer 36:12	Behold, all the officials were sitting there	והנה־שָׁם כל־השׂרים יושבים
Ezek 3:23	Behold, the glory of Yahweh stood there	והנה־שָׁם כבוד־יהוה עמד
Ezek 8:14	Behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz	והנה־שָׁם הנשים ישבות מבכות את־תמוז

The parallels show that 30:27a is to be read as 'Behold, there comes Yahweh from afar.'³¹⁸ 30:27-33 presents Yahweh's theophany as a warrior. It remains unspecified where Yahweh comes *from* (cf. Isa 13:5; Deut 33:2; Hab 3:3), but the location where he comes *to* is important for understanding the passage. The common answer that Yahweh comes to Zion,³¹⁹ makes sense. Beuken argues that 30:27-29 displays a movement concentrated on Zion: first, Yahweh comes to Zion (30:27), from where he leads the nations away (30:28). After that, the people of Judah come to Zion to celebrate (30:29). The movements result in a meeting of Yahweh, 'the rock of Israel', and the people.³²⁰ Yahweh's theophany, the removal of the nations, punishment of Assyria, and the cultic celebration belong together.³²¹ The cultic celebration (הָ, 30:29) contains the following elements: a festival journey to the sanctuary, joyful song and thanksgiving, offerings and a festive meal.³²² 30:27-28 presents a mythological description of Yahweh's violent destruction of the enemy nations that threaten Zion. The terms used in 30:28, the word-pair nations and peoples, refers to the

³¹⁵ Similar phrases are Deut 33:2: 'Yahweh came from Sinai (בא) and dawned from Seir upon us'; and Hab 3:3: 'God came from Teman (בוא), the Holy One from Mount Paran'.

³¹⁶ Contra Wildberger 1972-82: 1214.

³¹⁷ Gen 29:2; 2 Sam 15:36; 1 Kgs 14:2; 17:10; Jer 36:12; Ezek 3:23; 8:4, 14; 46:19.

³¹⁸ This solution has received little attention. Wildberger (1972-82: 1207), one of the few scholars mentioning it, rejects it without discussion.

³¹⁹ See Wildberger 1972-82: 1216-1217; Kaiser 1983: 244.

³²⁰ Beuken 1997: 389-392.

³²¹ Beuken 1997: 395.

³²² Beuken 1997: 394-395. With regard to the question of which feast is referred to (suggestions are Passover and Tabernacles), Beuken (1997: 394) states that too little is known to take a position. He argues that 'efforts to establish the festival do not account for the fact that the schematisation of Israel's feasts in the three well known calendar celebrations (...) is a post-exilic objective. Older texts do not always lend themselves to such schemes'.

world of the nations as a whole.³²³ Against this background, 30:30-33 describes Yahweh's destruction of Assyria, carried out at Zion.³²⁴ 30:33 takes up the fire metaphor of 30:27-28. The great enemy comes to his end at the bonfire of Tophet.³²⁵ The passage makes clear that Assyria's destruction is understood from the motif of the *Völkerkampf*: Yahweh destroys the enemy nations that threaten Zion.

30:27-33* contains various elements that allude to other early texts within First Isaiah, in particular the motif of the striking rod (cf. 10:5; 10:24; 11:4; 14:29), and the motif נָחַ 'to wane, to shake', which occurs in 10:15 and 10:32: Assyria shakes its fist at Yahweh (10:15) and at Jerusalem (10:32) and is punished for that.

Isa 31:4-5.8-9 and 32:1-2

31:4-5.8-9* can be read as a coherent unit. Of critical importance in this respect is 31:4. If it is an announcement of judgement against Jerusalem (or a deliberately ambivalent saying) it cannot be read in continuity with 31:5. In that case, 31:5 is to be seen as a *relecture* of 31:4.³²⁶ In my view, 31:4 contains an announcement of salvation, and can therefore be read in continuity with 31:5. 31:4-5 forms a double portrait, to be read in connection with 31:8-9.³²⁷

⁴ For thus Yahweh said to me:

Like a lion or a young lion growls over its prey, and, when a band of shepherds is called out against it, is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise,

so Yahweh of Hosts will descend upon Mount Zion and upon its hill to fight;

⁵ Like birds hovering overhead, so Yahweh of Hosts will protect Jerusalem;

he will protect and deliver it, he will spare³²⁸ and rescue it.³²⁹

⁸ Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of mortals;

and a sword, not of humans,³³⁰ shall devour him;

he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labour.

⁹ His rock shall pass away in terror,³³¹ and his officers despair in front of the standard.³³² Oracle of Yahweh, whose fire is in Zion, and whose³³³ furnace is in Jerusalem.

³²³ Beuken 1997: 387.

³²⁴ Beuken (1997: 392) observes that 30:30 is directly linked to 30:27 by means of an inverted perfect.

³²⁵ Beuken 1997: 396.

³²⁶ Barth (1977: 87-89) distinguishes between 31:1-3.4.8a as Isaianic and 31:5.8b-9 as belonging to the Assyria redaction; Barthel (1997: 436-443) interprets 31:4 in continuity with 1-3 as words of Isaiah, and regards 5.8-9 as belonging to the Assyria redaction.

³²⁷ By contrast, 31:6-7 is incongruous with the rest of Isa 31. See Barthel 1997: 436-437; Wildberger 1972-82: 1239.

³²⁸ The meaning of פָּסַח is disputed. Barth (1977: 78) suggests 'verschonen' (cf. Exod 12:13, 23, 27). Barth (1977: 89-90) connects this with the Pesach celebration as part of the cult-reform of Josiah (621 BCE) and uses this for dating the Assyria redaction.

³²⁹ The consecutive perfects וְהִצִּיל and וְהַמְלִיט are often revocalised as absolute infinitives (וְהִצִּיל and וְהַמְלִיט), which is possible but not necessary.

³³⁰ See JM § 160k.

³³¹ Although recent commentators regard 31:9aα as an acceptable sentence, others have considered it corrupted (Barth 1977: 78).

The interpretation of 31:4 depends on על in 4b. Connected with לַצְבָּא, it means that Yahweh will fight *against* Zion, but connected with ירד, it means that Yahweh descends on mount Zion in order to fight *for* Zion.³³⁴ In the latter case, 31:4a images Yahweh's imperturbability as Jerusalem's guard, in the former, the image mirrors the irrevocability of Jerusalem under Yahweh's judgement.³³⁵ The suggestion that על goes with צבא because it immediately follows it is not valid. Since על is preceded by both verbs, both options are grammatically possible. The combination על with צבא, 'to fight against' is attested four times,³³⁶ and once צבא plural participle is used without a preposition ('fighting men', Num 31:42). The verb ירד used in connection with Yahweh's descent is a motif that occurs elsewhere too.³³⁷ In Exod 19:11, 18, 20 it is combined with על: 'Yahweh descended upon Mount Sinai (ירד יהוה על-הר סיני)'. Moreover, when ירד (qal) is followed by על, ירד governs על, even when ירד and על are separated from each other by another word or phrase.³³⁸

The simile in 31:4a pictures a lion carefully guarding its prey. 31:4 is the only case where a lion is the subject of הגה (יהגה is usually read as 'he growls' or 'he roars'),³³⁹ and the only case where הגה governs the preposition על. The verb הגה denotes a total concentration accompanied by a muttering sound.³⁴⁰ The lion is fully concentrated on its prey; he holds it tightly, watches it carefully, and is neither distracted nor scared off by the screaming of the herdsmen around him. The tertium comparationis is the utter concentration of a lion on its prey, the object it wants to keep. Likewise, Yahweh carefully watches over Zion.³⁴¹ From this it follows that the likeliest interpretation of 31:4 is, that Yahweh fights *for* Zion – he does not want to lose it.

The close parallel between 31:4 and 31:5 supports this interpretation of verse 4. Both 4b and 5aβ describe the action of Yahweh as part of a similar 'so Yahweh of Hosts will descend/protect' (כִּן יֵרֵד/יִגֵן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) (Yahweh will

³³² Barthel (1997: 432) argues that 31:9aβ means 'erschrecken beim (feindlichen) Signal' (cf. ni. in Isa 30:31; 31:4). Similarly Barth 1977: 79: to despair because of the enemy's war-signal.

³³³ IQIsa^a (וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל) and some of the versions have a negation here, probably to solve the apparent contradiction between 31:8a (killed by the sword) and 31:8b (flight from the sword). MT is *lectio difficilior*; see Barthel 1997: 430.

³³⁴ Barthel (1997: 440, notes 63 and 64) mentions representatives of both positions.

³³⁵ Barthel (1997: 441) argues that 31:4 is an announcement of judgement and 31:5 is a reinterpretation aiming to correct 4. Barthel claims that the image of a lion provokes an association of danger. However, the lion is depicted in its quality of watchfully guarding its prey, not as a fearsome animal.

³³⁶ Num 31:7; Isa 29:7, 8; Zech 14:12.

³³⁷ Gen 11:5, 7; 18:21; Exod 3:8; 19:11, 18, 20; 34:5; Num 11:17, 25; 12:5; Isa 31:4; 64:1, 3; Mic 1:3.

³³⁸ Cf. Exod 2:5, וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל הַיָּאֵר, 'the daughter of Pharaoh descended into the river to bathe'. Here, על is not governed by רחץ but by ירד, as 'to wash in' is רחץ ב (2 Kgs 5:10).

³³⁹ The only other animals attested as the subject of הגה are pigeons, in the expression 'to moan (mournfully) like doves' (Isa 38:14; 59:11), which does not help.

³⁴⁰ Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2; 63:7; 77:12; 143:5.

³⁴¹ See Eidevall 1993: 81-82, for a similar analysis in terms of *topic* and *vehicle field*. The topic of 31:4 (and 31:5) is the descent of Yahweh upon Mount Zion and his protection of Jerusalem. The vehicle field is a lion defending its prey. The descent of Yahweh to battle against the enemies is structured as the fearless action of a lion defending its prey against a band of shepherds. Iconographically, this interpretation is supported by lion statues flanking temple entrances, serving as a protection of the temple against evildoers; see Cornelius 1989: 63-64.

descend 'upon Mount Zion'), in verse 5 follows על ירושלים (Yahweh will protect 'Jerusalem'). Both in verse 5 and in verse 4, Yahweh intervenes in favour of Zion and Jerusalem.

Further arguments support the interpretation of 31:4-5 as a depiction of Yahweh's protection of Zion and Jerusalem. First, verses 4 and 5 are likely to belong together, since a lion is frequently paired with birds in similes.³⁴² Second, 31:9b, which concludes the unit of 31:4-5.8-9, again parallels 'Jerusalem' and 'Zion'. This supports the reading of 31:4 (Zion) and 5 (Jerusalem) as a pair. Finally, the verb *חזח* occurs both in 31:4 and 9a and functions as a contrast. The lion (Yahweh) is not scared off by the shouting of the herdsmen (Assyria) that threaten Jerusalem, but Assyria is terrified by Yahweh (31:9).³⁴³

31:5 compares Yahweh's protective presence for Jerusalem with the image of birds that protectively spread their wings.³⁴⁴ A parallel is found in 2 Kgs 19:34 (Isa 37:35), 'I will defend (גן על) this city to save it (ישע hi.)', and in 2 Kgs 20:6 (Isa 38:6), 'I will deliver (נצל hi.) you and this city, and defend (גן על) this city'.³⁴⁵ The consecutive perfect of 31:8 grammatically continues 31:5. With regard to its content it continues 31:4, since 31:8 reveals the identity of the 'shepherds'. 31:8-9 mentions different aspects of military defeat, such as killing, flight and the submission to forced labour of prisoners of war.³⁴⁶ The term 'his rock' in 31:9aa means 'the rock of Assyria'. It is paralleled by 'his officers' in 9aβ. In all likelihood, 'the rock of Assyria' is a designation of the Assyrian king. 31:4-5.8-9 presents Yahweh as divine warrior that defeats Zion against its enemies.³⁴⁷

The unity of 31:4-5.8-9 is supported by the inclusion of the beginning of verse 4 and verse 9b. Verse 4 begins with the phrase 'for thus Yahweh said to me', and 9b concludes with 'oracle of Yahweh'. The text in between, 31:4-5.8-9, is not a divine word. However, the beginnings of verse 4 and 9b deliberately present 31:4-5.8-9 as a divine message to the prophet Isaiah. The unit 31:4-5.8-9 comments on 31:1.3a*. In 31:1.3a* the search for help from Egypt is criticised, with ירד 'to go down' to Egypt as indication of the sinful behaviour of the political leaders. In 31:4, Yahweh's descent (ירד) on Mount Zion images the rescue from Assyrian threat. The Egyptians cannot save, since they are human, not God (31:1.3a*). Yahweh on the other hand rescues Jerusalem and Zion, since he is God. In this way, 31:8a comments on 3a.

The earliest material of 31:1.3a* was commented upon by 31:4-5.8-9. The latter unit in all likelihood was part of a seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition. The material of Isa 31 to be dated to the Assyrian period, is to be connected with the beginning of Isa 32.³⁴⁸

³⁴² See Amos 3:4-5; Hos 11:10-11; and also 2 Sam 1:23; Isa 38:13-14; Job 38:39-41.

³⁴³ Cf. the similarly contrastive parallel between 30:31 and 31:1: whereas Assyria is terrified by Yahweh's voice (מקול יהוה יחית), the Yahweh, the lion, is not terrified by the shouting of Assyria, the herdsmen (מקולם לא יחית).

³⁴⁴ Barth 1977: 85; Barthel 1997: 438-439.

³⁴⁵ Barthel 1997: 438-439.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Wildberger 1972-82: 1239: 'Tod, Flucht, Frondienst stehen einfach neben einander'. Cf. Barthel 1997: 437-438.

³⁴⁷ So Wagner 2006: 149-151, pointing out the parallel depiction of Yahweh in Ps 76:2-8. I will argue in chapter 6.1.6 that the seventh-century Isaiah revision, of which 31:4-5.8-9 is part, has its tradition-historical roots in the official ideology of monarchic Jerusalem, of which Ps 76:2-8 is an exponent.

³⁴⁸ Barthel 1997: 266-267, 452.

Although Isa 32 for the greater part postdates the Assyrian period,³⁴⁹ the beginning of this chapter, in my view restricted to 32:1-2, is to be situated in the Assyrian period. Whereas 32:1-2 presents a portrayal of the ideal king and his officials, 32:3-5 displays a quite different interest (a reversal of the negative depiction of 6:9-10).³⁵⁰

¹ See, a king will reign in righteousness, and officers will rule with justice.³⁵¹

² Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.³⁵²

The 'rock' and the 'officers' of 31:9 correspond to the 'king' and the 'officers' of 32:1. Furthermore, 32:2 refers to both of them as to the protective shade of a mighty 'rock'. Although 31:9 and 32:1 are not grammatically connected, there is a strong conceptual connection between 31:4-5.8-9 and 32:1-2. After the collapse of Assyria, brought about by Yahweh's intervention, there is room for a new Judaeon king. A similar double portrait of Assyria's downfall and the reign of a righteous king in Jerusalem, occurs in 10:33-34 followed by 11:1-5 (see 2.3.2 below). Furthermore, 32:1-2 begins with the exclamation *hēn*, 'See!'. This evidently relates to the exclamation *hōy* in the prophetic material of 29:15, 30:1-2*, 31:1.3*. In these *woe*-sayings, the prophet Isaiah condemns the Judaeon leaders, because of their policy of rebellion against Assyria. 32:1-2 adds to this the positive perspective that once Assyria is destroyed by Yahweh (31:4-5.8-9), an ideal king and his officials will rule the people of Judah in justice and righteousness.

2.2.5 Evaluation

Isa 28-32 contains a range of material deriving from the Assyrian period. However, the basic literary complex of Isa 28-32 is to be situated at a greater distance from the prophet Isaiah than is usually believed. The literary complex of Isa 28-32 is characterised by the theme that the people have rejected Yahweh's blessings (28:12; 30:15), have not truly worshipped Yahweh (29:13), have been rebellious, and have rejected Yahweh's word (30:9, 12). Because of this Yahweh punishes them with a foreign invasion (28:11-13, 19), the fall of Jerusalem (29:1-4, 32:14), and a total destruction (30:13-14). This theme of disobedience and punishment indicates later reflection: the sixth-century disasters are interpreted as Yahweh's just punishment of the sinful people. There is a strong analogy

³⁴⁹ 32:6-8 is a later extension to 32:1-5 (Barthel 1997: 266, note 69); 32:9-14 reflects the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and is to be dated in the exilic period (Barthel 1997: 267-268, 452; Clements 1980a: 261-263; Wildberger 1972-82: 1265-1267), and 32:15-20 is a still later elaboration, depicting salvation (Barthel 1997: 268, 259-262).

³⁵⁰ Barthel (1997: 266, 267, note 71, and 452, note 122) argues that the core of 32:1-5 is limited to 32:1-2, and that 32:3-5 is to be compared to 29:17-24. For 32:3-4 echoing 6:9-10, see Williamson 1998a: 67-69.

³⁵¹ MT *lēšārīm* is to be regarded as an error for *šārīm*, with LXX and other witnesses (cf. most translations and commentaries, see e.g. Wildberger 1972-82: 1250).

³⁵² Williamson (1998a: 63-65) points out the proverbial character of 32:1. In my view, 32:1 cannot be disconnected from 32:2. The proverbial character applies to 32:1-2: a depiction of the ideal king in a proverbial garb. This corresponds to the presumed scribal milieu of the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition (see chapter 6.1.6).

between Isa 6-8 and Isa 28-32. Both complexes contain earlier prophetic material in a reworked, literary form. It is likely that the literary reworking of the earlier material that resulted in the basic complex of Isa 28-32 was carried out following the example of the composition of Isa 6-8.

2.3 *The Rest of First Isaiah*

In this section I discuss texts from the rest of First Isaiah that can be situated in the Assyrian period. The presumed early material presented in this section consists of prophetic sayings from the eighth-century, and of texts that are likely to belong to a seventh-century revision. I focus on Isa 5 and 9-11, and on the earliest layers of 13-23.

2.3.1 *The Woe-Sayings in Isaiah 5:8-23* and 10:1-2*

Within the prophetic literature *woe*-sayings regularly occur in series. In various cases it seems likely that small collections of *woe*-sayings received literary elaboration, such as Hab 2³⁵³ and Amos 3-6.³⁵⁴ Some scholars have argued that Isa 5:8-23 is a short collection of earlier sayings that was elaborated and integrated into the expanding literary complex of the Isaiah tradition.³⁵⁵ 5:8-23 contains six *woe*-sayings, 5:8, 11, 18-19, 20, 21, and 22-23. Whereas the first two have been extended with commentary (5:9-10, 5:12-13.14-17), the others, 5:18-19, 20, 21, and 22-23, are standing on their own. This suggests that the *woe*-sayings are independent sayings and that 5:8 and 11 originally stood on their own too. The comments of 5:9-10 and 5:12-13.14-17 can be explained as later extensions that were added in the process of a literary reworking of earlier material. 5:18-19, 20, 21 and 22-23 confirm that *woe*-sayings are independent sayings, in which doom is implied, and that the explicit announcements of punishment may be secondary expansions.³⁵⁶

5:9-10 forms an extension to 5:8. The phrase ‘In my hearing, Yahweh of Hosts has sworn’ (5:9a) probably alludes to 6:1-11, where Yahweh reveals to Isaiah his decision to bring destruction to his people.³⁵⁷ The announcement of 5:9b resembles 6:11.³⁵⁸ 5:9-10 is the product of a reworking of the earlier *woe*-saying. The first extension to 5:11 consisted of 5:12-13,³⁵⁹ which again contains parallels with 6:9-11. The motifs of ‘not seeing’ (5:12)

³⁵³ Hab 2 contains five *woe*-sayings, 2:6b, 9, 12, 15 and 19a. 2:6b clearly is presented as an independent saying (2:6a characterises what follows as ‘proverbial saying’, ‘mocking poem’, ‘enigmatic saying’). The *woe*-saying consists of the exclamation הוי followed by two substantivised participles that describe the wicked behaviour of the subject involved. Since 2:7 begins similar to 2:6a (אֵלֶּיךָ), it does not belong to the *woe*-saying. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the sayings and their direct context suggests that the sayings have been incorporated into the present context as part of a literary reworking.

³⁵⁴ For Amos 3-6 going back to a small collection of early *woe*-sayings, see Kratz 2003a: 74-80.

³⁵⁵ Particularly Kaiser 1981: 100-107; also Vermeylen 1977-78: 170; Werner 1988: 12-13.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Kaiser 1981: 102.

³⁵⁷ The same phrase occurs in 22:14, there followed by an oath as well. 22:14 similarly alludes to 6:1-11. For 22:1-14, see 2.3.6 below.

³⁵⁸ 5:9 and 6:11 share the terms בָּתִּים ‘houses’, בְּאֵין יוֹשֵׁב ‘without inhabitants’, שְׂמִמָּה/שְׂמָה ‘ruin’; cf. Becker 1997: 137. Isa 5:9 describes a complete destruction, comparable to 1:7, 6:11 and 22:4; cf. Jer 9:19; 19:13; 32:29; 33:4.

³⁵⁹ Kaiser (1981: 104) argues that 5:12-13 is a later extension of 5:11.

and ‘lacking insight’ (5:13) as an explanation for the coming disaster correspond to 6:9-11. The other sayings stand by themselves: 5:18-19,³⁶⁰ 5:20, 5:21, and 5:22-23.³⁶¹

5:8-23 was extended by 5:24, which was composed as a conclusion to the *woe*-sayings in a reworked form. 5:24 accuses the people of rejecting (מאס) Yahweh’s torah and of despising (נאץ) his word. This closely resembles the theme of accusation and punishment that characterises the literary reworking of Isa 6-8 and 28-32. The accusation of 5:24 is furthermore paralleled by passages reflecting the destruction caused by the Babylonians in the sixth century, e.g. Jer 6:19, ‘they have not given heed to my (i.e. Yahweh’s) words; and as for my torah, they have rejected (מאס) it’.³⁶² Originally, the *woe*-sayings condemned a specific group of people of a particular kind of improper behaviour. The reworking of the sayings into the unit 5:8-24 is characterised by a generalisation. It is now the people as a whole who are accused. Furthermore, a clear announcement of total disaster is added.

10:1-4 contains a similar *woe*-saying extended with later commentary. The *woe*-saying probably consisted of 10:1-2*, whereas 10:3 and 4 are to be understood as a literary elaboration.³⁶³ The saying of 10:1-2* can be associated with those within 5:8-23. The early *woe*-sayings are the following:

- ⁸ Woe them that join house to house, who add field to field,
until there is no room left³⁶⁴ in the midst of the land!
¹¹ Woe them that rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink,
who linger in the evening to be inflamed by wine!
^{18f} Woe them that drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood,
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,³⁶⁵
who say, ‘Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it;
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel hasten to fulfilment, that we may know it!’
²⁰ Woe them that call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
²¹ Woe them that are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

³⁶⁰ Becker 1997: 141; contra Kaiser 1981: 104, 112; Werner 1988: 20.

³⁶¹ The *woe*-sayings within 5:8-23 find parallels in *woe*-sayings in Micah and Amos. Isa 5:8 parallels Mic 2:2 (שָׂדֵה; בֵּית), and cf. Amos 5:11; Isa 5:11 parallels Amos 6:4-6a; Isa 5:20 resembles Amos 5:7 and 5:18-20; Isa 5:23 resembles Amos 5:12b. The parallels are however rather general. They can be explained from a similarity in genre and theme. Literary dependency cannot be convincingly demonstrated; contra Becker 1997: 134-145.

³⁶² The despising (נאץ) of Yahweh and his word further occurs in Isa 1:4 and Jer 23:17 (cf. Num 14:11, 23; Deut 31:20). The transgressions result in the destruction of the people. The image of destruction in Isa 5:24 resembles that of Jer 13:24-25; cf. also Num 11:1; Isa 29:6; Jer 5:14; 21:14; Lam 2:3; Ezek 15:7; Amos 2:5.

³⁶³ 10:3 addresses a second person and announces judgement, by referring to the ‘day of punishment’. This refers to the judgement Yahweh will bring over his people (Jer 8:12; 10:15; Hos 9:7; Mic 7:4; cf. Jer 46:21; 50:27; 51:18). Furthermore, the term שִׁוּיָה ‘destruction’ representing Yahweh’s action, occurs in Isa 47:11 and Zeph 1:15. The motif of threat coming from afar is paralleled in Jer 4:16; 5:15. For the image of the slain on the battlefield in 10:4, cf. Lam 2:21.

³⁶⁴ The phrase וְהוֹשַׁבְתֶּם לְבַדְכֶם is to be regarded as a later addition; Becker 1997: 137.

³⁶⁵ Kellermann (1987: 95) suggests: ‘Wehe denen, die die Schuld herbeiziehen mit Rinderstricken und wie mit einem Wagenseil die Versündigung’.

^{22f} Woe them that are heroes in drinking wine and valiant at mixing drink,
 who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of their rights!
^{10:1f} Woe them that make iniquitous decrees, who write³⁶⁶ oppressive statutes,³⁶⁷
 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people³⁶⁸ of their right,
 that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the orphans their prey!

This series of *woe*-sayings probably formed a small collection that predated the literary complex into which it has been reworked. The sayings are to be read as criticism directed at members of the upper class of Jerusalem and Judah, who took a leading role in society. In chapter 4.1.8 it will be argued that this criticism can be understood against the background of a particular controversy. The controversy between Isaiah and his opponents, leading political figures from the upper class, was the question whether or not to rebel against Assyria in the hope of military aid from Egypt. From the critical sayings of Isaiah it appears that this was not just a political question, but a deep controversy involving issues of good versus bad leadership. Isaiah denounces his opponents as bad leaders, and his criticism covers all aspects of public life: political decisions, religious attitude, and social behaviour.

2.3.2 *Isaiah 10:5-11:5*

Since Isa 10 deals with Assyria as a superpower, it is mostly agreed that the earliest version of this chapter consists of material from the Assyrian period. 10:5-34, as I will argue, contains three oracles from the eighth century: 10:5-9.13-15*, 10:24-25 and 10:27b-32*. These words were extended by a revision of the Isaiah tradition, to be situated in the seventh century. The revision consisted of a commentary to each of them: 10:5-9.13-15 was extended by 10:11 and 10:16-19;³⁶⁹ 10:24-25* with 10:26-27; and 10:27b-32* with 10:33-34. Furthermore 10:33-34 is directly continued by 11:1-5, which forms a conclusion to 10:5-11:5.

Isa 10:5-15

10:5-15 to some extent resembles the *woe*-sayings discussed above, but it is a divine word instead of a prophetic word and also much longer than the prophetic *woe*-sayings. It may be qualified as an extensive *woe*-word, to some extent comparable to 28:1-4*. At present, 10:5-15 contains two accusations against Assyria. First, Assyria is condemned for its aim to conquer the world. Whereas Yahweh ordered Assyria to punish a particular nation (10:6), Assyria planned to conquer the entire world. Assyria is condemned for its unbridled expansion. A second accusation is formulated in 10:11: Assyria aimed to conquer Jerusalem. These two different accusations represent two stages in the oracle's

³⁶⁶ כָּתַב pi., which occurs only here, perhaps denotes an iterative meaning: to do again and again.

³⁶⁷ The emendation מִכְתָּבִי, plural construct of מִכְתָּב 'writing', 'document' is commonly accepted.

³⁶⁸ The expression עַמִּי 'my people' is remarkable, since the *woe*-sayings usually are prophetic words, not divine words. Either the prophet refers to the people as to 'his people', or it is due to a later development of the text influenced by the divine speech of 10:5-15.

³⁶⁹ On 10:20-23 as a later expansion, see Wildberger 1972-82: 412-416.

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development: the earliest passage consists of 10:5-9.13-15, whereas 10:11 represents a revision of it.³⁷⁰

⁵ Woe, Assyria, rod of my anger, a staff (that is in their hands) is my fury!³⁷¹

⁶ Against a godless nation I send him, against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread it down like the mire of the streets.

⁷ But this is not what he thinks he should do, nor does this accord with his intentions, for it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off many nations.

⁸ He says: 'Are my officials not all kings?

⁹ Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad?

Is not Samaria like Damascus?

¹³ By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have taken as spoil their leaders,³⁷² Like a Mighty one I brought down rulers.³⁷³

¹⁴ My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples, as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered the whole earth; and there was no wing that fled, or opened its mouth, or chirped.'

¹⁵ Shall the axe vaunt itself over the one who wields it, or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it? As if a rod raises the one who lifts it up, as if a staff lifts the one who is not wood!

According to 10:5-6, Yahweh ordered the 'rod of his anger', Assyria, to punish the 'people of his anger'. The second part of 10:6 specifies Assyria's task as the complete looting of the godless nation so that its land is left devastated and trampled down.³⁷⁴ The nation against which Assyria is sent, designated as godless and as people of Yahweh's wrath, can be identified as Ephraim. A parallel depiction of Ephraim is found in 28:1-4, in particular רַמֵּס in 28:3 and מְרִיקָס in 10:6. Furthermore, Ephraim is included in the announcements of 8:1-4, where similar verbs are used to those in 10:6 (שָׁלַל and בָּיַז). The identification of the nation in 10:6 as Ephraim is confirmed by the enumeration of cities in 10:9, which has its climax with Samaria, the capital of the nation against which Assyria is sent.³⁷⁵

Assyria did not act according to Yahweh's commission. Although it conquered the nation specified by Yahweh, it also adopted a policy of wide-scale conquest. Assyria's

³⁷⁰ Wildberger 1972-82: 392; Dietrich 1976: 116-118; Kaiser 1981: 219-222; Mittmann 1989: 112. Whereas 10:11 represents a first revision of the prophecy, 10:12 was added at a still later stage.

³⁷¹ The easiest solution is to omit הַיָּדָא בְּיָדָם as a gloss and to revocalise מַטְּהָ as a construct: 'my rod of anger, my club of fury'. For a different solution, see Mittmann 1989: 114-115: Assyria is not only the rod in Yahweh's hand, but also carries the club in their own hand (cf. Mittmann 1989: 132, *Korrekturzusatz*).

³⁷² See Mittmann 1989: 120. The *gere* עֲהוּר 'leading male goat' (cf. Jer 50:8), applied to human leaders, fits the context (cf. Isa 14:9).

³⁷³ The phrase is difficult and perhaps corrupt. I have adopted the reading suggested by Irvine 1993: 133-144 (esp. 144). Cf. Wildberger 1972-82: 391, for various solutions. Mittmann (1989: 121-123) argues that the end of 10:13 parallels the first stiche of 10:14, and suggests the reading: 'Ich brachte hinab wie Schwingen (כַּאֲבֵר) Thronenden', which is too far-fetched in my view.

³⁷⁴ Mittmann 1989: 115-116.

³⁷⁵ Mittmann 1989: 118-119.

dissent has two aspects: instead of spoiling and trampling down (10:6), Assyria aims at annihilation (10:7), and instead of taking actions against one nation (Ephraim), Assyria aims to cut off many nations (10:7).³⁷⁶ Both aspects are worked out in the following verses. The aspect of the many nations is continued in the enumeration of 10:9, and in 10:14, 'I have gathered the whole earth'. The aspect of complete annihilation of nations and lands is continued in 10:13, 'I have removed their boundaries', and in the statement of the Assyrian king: 'Are my officials not all kings?' This refers to the eradication of national identities due to Assyria's politics of deportation and provincialisation. The removal of boundaries, i.e. the abolition of the territorial status quo by provincialisation and dispossession of land, implies a violation of the divine distribution of the lands from of old.³⁷⁷ According to 10:5-9.13-15, Yahweh ordered a specific action against Ephraim, but not against the whole world, and his order involved plunder and devastation, but not deportation and abolition of territorial boundaries.³⁷⁸ This word condemns Assyria's imperialism, which was a reality during the second half of the eighth century. The fictitious speech of the Assyrian king mirrors various political measures that were a reality in the Assyrian period, such as the exile of populations and the change of territorial borders.³⁷⁹

The point of 10:5-9.13-15 is the discrepancy between Yahweh's order and Assyria's own political agenda. This discrepancy is acute, in my view, because of Judah's involvement. Judah, although not explicitly mentioned, is implied in the phrases 'nations not few' (10:7) and 'all the earth' (10:14). It was Judah's involvement in Assyria's expansion that elicited the message of 10:5-9.13-15. Whereas the enumeration of six cities in 10:9 generally points to the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II,³⁸⁰ Sargon's campaign against the West in 720 is the most likely background of the prophecy of 10:5-9.13-15. First, Hamath, Arpad, Damascus and Samaria were all involved in the revolt against Assyria.³⁸¹ Furthermore, Assyria's military actions in Syria-Palestine were of consequence for Judah too, as it was required to submit to Assyria. Whereas 28:1-4 is likely to date from before 720, 10:5-9.13-15 seems to look back at the campaign of 720, and to criticise Assyria for its ambition for worldwide conquest. The message reflects the experience that Assyria's expansion involved Judah as well. The term אַשּׁוּר (10:5) refers to Assyria as a political-military power, which is personified in this oracle and represented by the king.³⁸²

Whereas the passages identified in this chapter as representing eighth-century prophetic material can be regarded as oracles or sayings that have an oral background, the early

³⁷⁶ Mittmann 1989: 117.

³⁷⁷ Mittmann 1989: 120; cf. Deut 32:8; Ps 74:17.

³⁷⁸ See Mittmann 1989: 131.

³⁷⁹ See Wildberger 1972-82: 399-400; cf. Machinist 1983a: 725, for the motif of the removal of boundaries.

³⁸⁰ By 738 BCE, Carchemish, Calno, Arpad, Hamath, Damascus and Samaria had either been conquered by Assyria (Arpad in 740, Calno in 738, see Millard 1994: 44, 59) or had submitted to Assyria and paid tribute (see Tadmor 1994: 54-57, 68-69). Later, during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, further actions were taken against several of these cities, which included measures criticised in Isa 10:5-9.13-15*.

³⁸¹ See Fuchs 1994: 89, 200-201.

³⁸² Mittmann 1989: 115.

version 10:5-9.13-15 looks like a literary composition. To this the following explanation may be suggested. 10:13-14 differs in style from the preceding verses (10:5-9). Furthermore, 10:13-14 repeats the accusations that contrary to Yahweh's will Assyria has turned against *many nations* (10:7; cf. 10:14, 'all the earth') and has abolished territorial boundaries and national states (10:7, 8; cf. 10:13). 10:13-14 repeats 10:7-8, but more eloquently and rhetorically. The hubris of the Assyrian king, implied by 10:7-10, is much more explicit in 10:13-14. As 10:13-14 doubles 10:7-8, 10:15b doubles 15a. I therefore suggest that 10:5-9.15a represents the original prophetic word. 10:13-14.15b can be seen as a product of elaboration, a literary embellishment of the prophecy when it was put down in writing. 10:13-14 is a typical word of hubris.³⁸³ The judgement over this hubris in 10:15b makes an explicit connection with 10:5: Assyria is only a tool in Yahweh's hand, a piece of wood.

10:5-9.15a can be regarded as the record of an oracle that was once orally delivered. It is a balanced oracle, in which the rhetorical questions of 10:8-9 are countered by a rhetorical question of Yahweh in 10:15a. The fictive quotation of the Assyrian king in 10:8-9 resembles the quotation of Rezin in 7:6 (and the quotations of the bad leaders in 5:19 and 29:15). In each case, the purpose of the quotation is to demonstrate the arrogant and self-willed behaviour of the enemy. With regard to style, 15a (עַם ... הַ) directly responds to 9 (אֱלֹהִים ... אֱלֹהִים ... אֱלֹהִים). 10:5-9.15a is a word of threat against Assyria. After the threatening exclamation *hōy*, Assyria's politics and hubris is exposed, and the final rhetorical question (10:15a) leaves little space for doubt that Assyria has gone too far and will be punished by Yahweh. With the elaboration of 10:13-14.15b the accusation and threat are made more explicit: Assyria is doomed.

Isa 10:11 and 16-19

10:5-9.13-15 received a revision by the insertion of 10:11.³⁸⁴ This can be regarded as a *relecture* that turns the focus to Jerusalem: 'Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols what I have done to Samaria and her images?' The *relecture* refers to Assyria's attempt to capture Jerusalem, reflecting the events of 701, when Sennacherib campaigned against Judah and threatened Jerusalem. In its elaborated form, 10:5-15 condemns Assyria for threatening Jerusalem, and, especially, for regarding Yahweh as 'just another god'. The reworked unit was extended by an announcement of disaster against Assyria, consisting of 10:16-19:

¹⁶ Therefore the Sovereign, Yahweh of Hosts, will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire.

¹⁷ The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day.

¹⁸ The glory of his forest and his fruitful land Yahweh will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when an invalid wastes away.³⁸⁵

¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

³⁸³ Machinist 1983a: 734.

³⁸⁴ 10:10 is probably a still later addition, based on 2 Kgs 18:33-35 // Isa 36:18-20. 10:12 forms a secondary explanation of 10:11: the work that is to be done is the abolition of idolatry in Jerusalem.

³⁸⁵ According to Barth (1977: 30) this phrase is corrupted.

This passage forms an extension to 10:5-9.13-15 and announces Assyria's destruction, as in 14:24-27, 30:27-33, and 31:8-9. In the earlier saying, 10:5-9.13-15, the punishment of Assyria was only implicit. In the seventh-century revision, this becomes explicit, as a main theme. Assyria is wood that will be burned down by Yahweh. The intensity of destruction in 10:16-19 exceeds that of the punishment implied in 10:5-15.

Isa 10:24-25

10:24-25 is often dated to the post-exilic period,³⁸⁶ but for no good reasons. 10:24-27a, which deals with the liberation of the people of Zion from Assyria, consists of a divine oracle (10:24-25*) followed by a commentary (10:26a.27a). In my view, 10:26a.27a* belongs to the Assyria redaction and dates from the second half of the seventh century, whereas 10:24-25* is of an earlier date and reflects the military power of Assyria as a reality.

My interpretation of 10:24-25 differs from the common view with regard to two issues, *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* in 10:24, and *וְנָקְלָה זַעַם* in 10:25. 10:24b describes Assyria's actions as 'he smites you with a rod, he lifts up his staff against you'. The final words *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* are commonly translated: 'as the Egyptians did'.³⁸⁷ This reading, adopted in most commentaries,³⁸⁸ is in my view incorrect. The combination *בְּ דֶרֶךְ* and *בְּ*, either means literally 'on the way, on the road', or *דֶרֶךְ* is used metaphorically as 'way of life'. Understanding *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* as 'as Egypt did' is unparalleled.³⁸⁹ The literal interpretation 'the way/road to Egypt' is much more plausible, since followed by a topographic designation, *בְּדֶרֶךְ* determines a location:

Gen 16:7	The spring on the way to Shur (<i>בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר</i>)
Gen 35:19/48:7	And she was buried on the way to Ephrath (<i>בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַתָּה</i>)
1 Sam 17:52	The Philistines fell on the way to Shaaraim (<i>בְּדֶרֶךְ שַׁעְרַיִם</i>)

Furthermore, the 'way to Egypt' is a well-known route.³⁹⁰ The idea that Assyria struck Judah on the way to Egypt resembles the image of Assyria as a 'passing flood', in 28:18: 'when the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be beaten down by it'.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ See Wildberger 1972-82: 418.

³⁸⁷ Or similarly: 'in the way of Egypt', 'after the manner of Egypt', 'as it was in Egypt'.

³⁸⁸ An exception is Irvine (1990: 268-269), who (without discussion) translates 'on the road to Egypt'.

³⁸⁹ As a metaphor *דֶרֶךְ* is used creatively: 'to instruct the right way' (Ps 25:8, 12) or 'the way of wisdom' (Prov 4:11), but exact parallels for 'as Egypt did' are not found. Gen 19:31 and Ezek 20:30 are rather close, but not as elliptic as the supposed reading of *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם*. The only parallel would be Amos 4:10, 'I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt' (*כְּדֶבַר מִצְרַיִם*). However, *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* probably is a corruption of *כְּדֶבַר מִצְרַיִם* 'like the pestilence of Egypt', referring to one of the plagues (Exod 9:3, 15; cf. Ps 78:50). Even if this emendation is rejected, *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* in Amos 4:10 and Isa 10:24 would mean different things: Amos 4:10, 'I will treat you the way Egypt was treated' (genitive objective); Isa 10:24, 'Assyria acts as Egypt acted' (genitive subjective). Zehnder (1999: 324) rejects the geographical interpretation of *בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם* in 10:24 in favour of a metaphoric understanding ('Art und Weise'), but without good arguments.

³⁹⁰ This road is referred to in Deut 17:16, 28:26, and in Jer 2:18. In Exod 13:17, it is referred to as well, but from the opposite direction as the 'route to/through the land of the Philistines' (*אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים*), the customary route from Egypt to Palestine.

In 10:25, many scholars follow the emendation of BHS app. crit. וְעָמִי, ‘my indignation’, which creates a juxtaposition of וְעָמִי and אָפִי. Furthermore, וְקָלָה is usually translated as ‘shall cease’ or ‘shall come to an end’. This results to the following interpretation: ‘for yet a very little while, and my (Yahweh’s) indignation against you (the people of Jerusalem) will be over’. In my view, the phrase has the opposite meaning. The combination of וְעָמִי and בְּלֵא occurs in Dan 11:36 as well, in a description of the outrageous behaviour of the foreign king: ‘he shall prosper till the wrath is complete (עַד קָלָה וְעָמִי), for what is determined shall be done’. This means that the king is free to act until the limit of God’s indignation is reached.³⁹² Isa 10:25 is to be understood similarly: ‘for yet a very little while and the indignation – Yahweh’s indignation provoked by Assyria’s wicked behaviour – will be complete’. As soon as the limit is reached, Yahweh’s anger will be directed at Assyria’s destruction. This leads to the following oracle:

²⁴ Therefore³⁹³ thus says the Lord Yahweh of Hosts:

O my people, who live in Zion, do not be afraid of Assyria
when it beats you with a rod and lifts up its staff against you on the way to Egypt.

²⁵ For in a very little time the limit will be reached,
and then my anger will be directed at their destruction.³⁹⁴

10:24-25 is an oracle of encouragement for the people in Jerusalem. They are threatened and oppressed by Assyria’s imperialistic aggression. The oracle condemns Assyria for beating the Judaeans with a rod and lifting up its staff against them. The terms ‘rod’ and ‘staff’ equal those in 10:5, but there is a decisive difference: Assyria’s actions against Ephraim are according to Yahweh’s orders, but the actions against Judah are an act of aggression. With regard to Judah and Jerusalem, Assyria is not Yahweh’s stick, but an evil aggressor that will be punished itself. Yahweh announces that the wrath against Assyria will soon be complete, and that they will be destroyed. A similar aspect of imminence is found in other early oracles as well, such as 7:16, 8:4 and 28:4 (cf. also 17:14 and 18:5).

Isa 10:26a.27a

The oracle of 10:24-25 received a commentary, consisting of 26a.27a, which probably belongs to the Assyria redaction of the seventh century:

^{26a} Yahweh of Hosts will wield a whip against them,
as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb.

^{27a} On that day his burden will be removed from your shoulder,
and his yoke will be destroyed from your neck.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ The comment of 10:26a supports the view that מַעֲרֹבֵיךְ בְּרִדְךָ in 10:24 is not intended to compare Assyria to Egypt: Assyria’s behaviour and fate are compared to that of Midian, not to Egypt.

³⁹² See also Dan 8:19, אַחֲרֵיתֵי הַזְּעָם, ‘the last end of the indignation’, and 8:23, בְּהִתָּם הַפְּשָׁעִים, ‘when the transgressions have reached their full measure’.

³⁹³ לָכֵן probably functions on a compositional level as a connection between the subsequent oracle and the preceding words; it is not part of the original oracle (cf. Wildberger 1972-82: 417-418).

³⁹⁴ תְּבִלְיָתָם can be interpreted as a noun deriving from בְּלֵא (not further attested), meaning ‘end, destruction’, with suffix.

The first comment (10:26a) announces the destruction of Assyria, by using terms from the earlier prophetic oracles (שׁוֹט, 28:15, 18) and a motif similar to 9:3: the destruction of Assyria is compared to the destruction of Midian.³⁹⁶ The second comment (10:27a) closely resembles 9:3 (and 14:25). 10:26a.27a comments on the oracle of 10:24-25 as 10:16-19 comments on 10:5-9.13-15. The theme of Yahweh's punishment of Assyria is worked out.

Isa 10:27b-32

10:27b-32, a third prophetic word within Isa 10, indicates the approach of an Assyrian army:

^{27b} He has marched from <Samaria>,

²⁸ come to Aiath, passed through Migron. At Michmash he stores his baggage.

²⁹ They have crossed over the pass: 'Geba will be our quarters for the night'. Ramah trembles, Gibeah of Saul has fled.

³⁰ Cry aloud, O Bat-Gallim! Listen, O Laishah! Answer him, O Anathoth!³⁹⁷

³¹ Madmenah is in flight, the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety.

³² This very day he will halt at Nob, he will shake his fist at the mount of daughter Zion,³⁹⁸ the hill of Jerusalem.

Although not all sites mentioned have been securely identified, it is commonly agreed that the list indicates an army approaching Jerusalem from the north.³⁹⁹ This supports the restoration of the probably corrupted phrase of MT 10:27b, עַל מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנֶּן, 'yoke in front of oil', into עָלָה מִפְּנֵי שְׁמֵרוֹן.⁴⁰⁰ The Assyrian army comes from the territory of Northern Israel to Jerusalem. The places mentioned indicate that the army left the main road from Beth-El to Jerusalem in order to bypass fortified Mizpah, and approached Jerusalem along the central ridge.⁴⁰¹ The Assyrians did not aim to conquer Judah's fortified cities, but quickly marched to Jerusalem. At Nob (Mount Scopus) they halted in order to intimidate the people of Jerusalem.⁴⁰² This passage does not describe a huge army preparing for a siege of Jerusalem, but refers to a specific military expedition, aiming to intimidate and quickly subjugate Jerusalem and Judah to Assyria.

Isa 10:33-34 and 11:1-5

10:33-34, directly continued by 11:1-5, presents a commentary to the preceding word of 10:27b-32*:

³³ Look, the Sovereign, Yahweh of Hosts, will lop the boughs with terrifying power;
the tallest trees will be cut down, and the lofty will be brought low,

³⁹⁵ Read יִחַבֵּל; MT וְיִחַבֵּל and the following 10:27b are corrupted; see Wildberger 1972-82: 417.

³⁹⁶ 10:26b is a later addition presumably induced by מִצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם; Wildberger 1972-82: 418, 421.

³⁹⁷ Read עֲנִיָּה in conformity with LXX.

³⁹⁸ Reading *bat* for *bêt* with 1QIsa^a; 4QIsa^c; LXX.

³⁹⁹ Sweeney 1994: 464.

⁴⁰⁰ Wildberger 1972-82: 424.

⁴⁰¹ Blenkinsopp 2000a: 261; Sweeney 1994: 464; Wildberger 1972-82: 431.

⁴⁰² Sweeney 1994: 464.

CHAPTER 2

³⁴ he will hack down the thickets of the forest with an axe,
and Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall,

¹ but from the stump of Jesse a shoot shall come out,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The spirit of Yahweh shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.

³ His delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, nor decide by what his ears hear;

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land;⁴⁰³ he shall strike the oppressor⁴⁰⁴ with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Whereas 10:33-34 describes the destruction of Assyria, 11:1-5 pictures the reign of a Judaeon king.⁴⁰⁵ From a formal point of view, 10:33-34 and 11:1-5 are related by the consecutive perfect וַיִּצַח in 11:1. Moreover, the passages are connected from a thematic point of view too: the power-vacuum resulting from Assyria's downfall is filled up by the righteous Judaeon king. A similar double picture of Assyria's destruction and the reign of a new king of Judah occurs in 31:4-5.8-9 plus 32:1-2, and both themes are juxtaposed in 9:1-6 as well. The decline of the Assyrian empire and the revival of the Davidic dynasty are presented as two sides of a coin. The king portrayed in 11:1-5 has been identified as Josiah (see 2.4 below).⁴⁰⁶

The earliest words of Isa 10, 10:5-9.13-15, 10:24-25, and 10:27b-32, are likely to relate to Sargon's campaign of 720 BCE as will be elaborated on in chapter 4.1.4. These words criticise Assyria's imperialism in three ways. First, 10:5-9.13-15 condemns Assyria for its unbridled expansion: Yahweh ordered Assyria to take actions against a particular nation, Ephraim, but Assyria planned to conquer the whole world. Although Judah is not explicitly

⁴⁰³ עַנְיֵי-אֶרֶץ means 'the meek of the land', rather than 'the meek of the earth'; cf. Amos 8:4; Job 24:4.

⁴⁰⁴ The phrase 'he will hit the earth' is less likely ('earth' is not a parallel to 'the wicked', and the earth cannot be knocked down in the sense of being killed, cf. the parallelism). I adopt the emendation עֹרֵיץ 'the oppressor', which is paralleled with רָשָׁע elsewhere too (Job 15:20; 27:13; Isa 13:11). I regard the reading אֶרֶץ as a corruption due to the preceding עַנְיֵי-אֶרֶץ . See also Williamson 1998a: 48.

⁴⁰⁵ Some scholars have argued that Isa 11 as a whole belongs to a seventh-century revision (Vermeulen 1977-78: 269-275; Sweeney 1996b; cf. Cole 1994, arguing that Isa 11 can be situated in the later part of Hezekiah's reign). In my view, only 11:1-5 can be plausibly situated in the seventh century. 11:6-9 is a *relecture* that no longer focuses on the king, but presents a vision of salvation in general terms; see Wagner 2006: 235-237. The issue of whether 11:11-16 goes back to an earlier passage is debated. Most scholars hold that 11:11-16 belongs to a late stage within the development of the book of Isaiah (Williamson 1994: 127). However, the triplet 'Egypt, Patros, Cush' (11:11) further only occurs in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon (see TUAT I, 398-399), which could be an indication of an earlier provenance of 11:11-16 (cf. Sweeney 1996b: 110). Nevertheless, this interpretation is uncertain, as the motif of 'gathering the dispersed' (11:12) has clear parallels in later (post 586) passages. I hold that only 11:1-5 can be plausibly situated in the seventh century.

⁴⁰⁶ So also Sweeney (1996b) and others.

mentioned, it is likely that Judah's involvement in Assyria's conquest induced this criticism. Second, 10:24-25 specifies Assyria's aggression against Judah: Assyria struck Judah on the way to Egypt. The 'way to Egypt' refers to the coastal highway, along which the Assyrian army marched to Philistia.⁴⁰⁷ Third, 10:27b-32 describes an Assyrian army coming from the north, which leaves the main road from Beth-El to Jerusalem in order to bypass fortified Mizpah.⁴⁰⁸ This refers to a military expedition to Jerusalem, with the likely intention of intimidating the people of Jerusalem and forcing them to submit again to Assyria and pay tribute.⁴⁰⁹

2.3.3 *Isaiah 9:1-6*

9:1-6, as I will argue, is to be understood in the context of an anti-Assyria redaction of the Isaiah tradition in the seventh century.⁴¹⁰

- ¹ The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.
- ² You have multiplied the rejoicing,⁴¹¹ you have increased the joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.
- ³ For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- ⁴ For every sandal he put on in roar⁴¹²
and the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
- ⁵ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named wonderful decider, mighty god, eternal father, prince of peace.
- ⁶ To increase the authority, to (secure) endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore: this the zeal of Yahweh of Hosts will accomplish.

9:1-6 is often interpreted as an accession oracle for the king. The royal appellations (9:5) are believed to reflect the throne names adopted by the Pharaoh at the Egyptian coronation ritual.⁴¹³ However, the parallel is less strong than sometimes suggested.⁴¹⁴ Egyptian

⁴⁰⁷ This was the quickest and most direct route to Philistia; Hayes and Kuan 1991: 178. This same road was taken by Sennacherib in 701 and probably by Tiglath-pileser in 734. Sweeney's objection (1994: 465) that this route would be too risky in a situation of Western revolt, is unconvincing since Sargon when he marched to Philistia had already defeated the coalition at Qarqar.

⁴⁰⁸ Sweeney 1994: 464; Blenkinsopp 2000a: 261; Wildberger 1972-82: 431.

⁴⁰⁹ Sweeney 1994: 464.

⁴¹⁰ 8:23aβb is not an original part of 9:1-6; see Vieweger 1992: 79; Wagner 2006: 81-83.

⁴¹¹ The well-known emendation הַגִּילָה is still the best solution (read הַגִּילָה הַרְבִּיתָ); Wildberger 1972-82: 364; Williamson 1994: 249-250. הַשְּׂמֵחָה (2a) is continued in שִׂמְחָה (2b), which suggests that יְגִילִי in 2c is the continuation of הַגִּילָה (2a).

⁴¹² The words שָׂאן סַאן do not occur further in the Hebrew Bible. Akk: *šēnu*, 'sandal, shoe'; *šēnu*, 'to put on (shoes)'.
⁴¹³ See Roberts 1997b: 115-118, discussing the classic articles by Von Rad 1958, and Alt 1950.

⁴¹⁴ For a recent discussion, see Wagner 2006: 218-222. Note however that the element of jubilation in 9:1-6 is not connected to the coronation of the king, but with Yahweh's annihilation of the enemies; contra Wagner 2006: 220, 222.

coronation titulary consisted of a series of five names adopted at the ceremony of the throne accession. The names are of a standard character and each of them is preceded by a fixed title.⁴¹⁵ The names in Isa 9:5 are not five but four,⁴¹⁶ they do not follow the categories of Egyptian coronation names, and there are no exact parallels with the Egyptian names.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, it may be questioned whether 9:1-6 refers to a royal coronation.⁴¹⁸ Some scholars have compared the names of 9:5 with Assyrian royal appellations.⁴¹⁹ Although the parallels are not close enough to exclude Egyptian influence,⁴²⁰ it makes sense to see 9:1-6 as a reaction to Assyrian royal ideology (see further 6.1.6). The enemy described in 9:3-4 is Assyria.⁴²¹ The Assyrian oppression is symbolised by the metaphor of the yoke, from which Yahweh will liberate Judah (cf. 10:27; 14:25).⁴²² The yoke motif relates to the yoke metaphors in the Assyrian royal inscriptions as a kind of counter-propaganda.⁴²³ In this light it is of significance that the names of the ideal Judaeen king in 9:5 to some extent parallel Assyrian royal appellations.⁴²⁴

9:3 parallels 10:26, as both share the motif of 'Midian's day'. In 9:3, the motif symbolises liberation, whereas in 10:26 it images the annihilation of the enemy.⁴²⁵ As in 30:27-33 and 31:4-5.8-9, it is Yahweh who will destroy the Assyrians. The final phrase in verse 6b, 'the zeal of Yahweh of Hosts will accomplish this', indicates that 9:1-6 deals with the acknowledgement of Yahweh's actions on the political scene. 9:1-6 combines the themes of the destruction of Assyria and the reign of a new Judaeen king. We have seen that the same combination is found in 10:33-34 continued by 11:1-5, and in 31:8-9 continued by 32:1-2. The passages do not present an eschatological view, but a political reality that is idealised.⁴²⁶ The king whose reign is glorified probably is Josiah.⁴²⁷

9:1-6 is traditionally connected with the *Denkschrift* (Isa 6-8), but the precise relationship with 6:1-8:18 is a debated matter.⁴²⁸ In my opinion, 9:1-6 is closely connected with the early material of Isa 7 and 8 in two main respects. First, in 9:5 the form of the oracles 7:14b.16 and 8:3-4 is adopted. The ideal king is presented as a child that has been born and named with auspicious names, corresponding to the early prophetic announcements. 9:5-6 does not, in my view, specifically refer to a particular moment, either birth or enthronement.⁴²⁹ Instead, it gives an idealising depiction of the reign of a Judaeen

⁴¹⁵ See Von Beckerath 1999: 1-26.

⁴¹⁶ Against the suggestion that 9:5 consists of two long names each containing a theophoric element, see Wagner 2006: 217-218, note 40.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. the criticism by Wegner 1992: 104-107.

⁴¹⁸ See Wildberger 1972-82: 378-387; Barth 1977: 167-168; Clements 1980b: 41.

⁴¹⁹ Carlson 1974; Wagner 2006: 222-226.

⁴²⁰ For the names of 9:5, see also chapter 6.1.6.

⁴²¹ Wagner 2006: 225-226; cf. the use of the Akkadian word *šēnu* in verse 4.

⁴²² These verses share the words עַל טַרְסָא and עַל טַרְסָא. 10:27 and 14:25 are especially close since the expression עַל טַרְסָא 'removal of the yoke', occurs only here in MT.

⁴²³ Ruwe and Weise 2002: 299.

⁴²⁴ Wagner 2006: 225-226.

⁴²⁵ Ruwe and Weise 2002: 300.

⁴²⁶ Cf. Wagner 2006: 246.

⁴²⁷ See chapter 6.1.7; cf. Barth 1977: 141-177.

⁴²⁸ See Barthel 1997: 37-65; Wagner 2006: 291-300.

⁴²⁹ Wagner 2006: 230-231.

king. Second, the Assyrians are not explicitly mentioned in 9:1-6. This resembles the character of the material in Isa 7, 8 (and 17). In the earliest prophetic material, Assyria is not yet presented as Judah's enemy. Instead, Assyria is mentioned as Yahweh's agent to destroy Judah's enemies Aram and Ephraim. The seventh-century comments on the eighth-century oracles, 8:9-10 and 17:12-14, refer to the frustration of the aggression of the enemy nations, which are unspecified. This means that it applies to Aram and Ephraim, but equally to Assyria. Similarly, 9:1-6 does not explicitly mention Assyria. 9:1-6 was probably composed as a conclusion to a revised edition of the early, prophetic material within Isa 7, 8 and 17. It formed the climax to a revised edition of earlier prophetic sayings.

2.3.4 *Isaiah 14**

Isa 14 within the Complex of Isa 13-23

The complex of *maššā'*-prophecies (Isa 13-23) is a literary construction, which is usually attributed to a redactional stage. This literary complex mainly consists of prophecies against foreign nations. Nine times a standard formula is used, with the term *נְבִיאָה* 'oracle',⁴³⁰ followed by a designation of the nation involved.⁴³¹ The *maššā'*-prophecies form a literary construction composed at some stage during the development of the Isaiah tradition. The theme of the collapse of Babylon (Isa 13 and 21) is important, suggesting that the *maššā'*-complex dates from the sixth century or later. Not every part of Isa 13-23 intrinsically belongs to the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies. Some passages are to be regarded as later extensions, such as 19:16-25.⁴³² Other passages however represent earlier material that was incorporated within the literary structure of the *maššā'*-complex. This earlier material must be sought within Isa 14, 17, 18-20 and 22. The material incorporated within the *maššā'*-complex was probably taken from various compilations of prophetic words: the material of Isa 14* (14:24-27.28-32) originally belonged to Isa 10*, the material of Isa 17* (17:1b-3.12-14) belonged to Isa 6-9*, and the material of Isa 18-20*, 22* (18:1-6, 19:1b-4, 20:1-5, 22:15-19) belonged to Isa 28-31*. The composers/editors of the *maššā'*-complex took this material from other compilations and inserted it, because this material was useful as it critically addressed various foreign nations.

14:24-27 and 14:28-32 are positioned as an appendix to Isa 13-14. Whereas 13:1-14:23 deals with Babylonia (13:1, 19; 14:4, 22), 14:24-27 announces the destruction of Assyria, and 14:28-32 contains an oracle against the Philistines. The heading 'oracle concerning Babylon' in 13:1 presents the text that follows as part of the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies. 13:2-22 and 14:22-23, directed against the Babylonians, form an inclusion to 14:4b-21, which is directed against a foreign king.⁴³³ Whereas 13:2-22 and 14:22-23 imply a setting in the late Babylonian or Persian period,⁴³⁴ it is a debated issue whether 14:4b-21 belongs

⁴³⁰ This formula further occurs only in Nah 1:1, perhaps in imitation of Isa 13-23.

⁴³¹ Babylon 13:1; Moab 15:1; Damascus 17:1; Egypt 19:1; the Wilderness of the Sea 21:1; Dumah 21:11; the Desert Plain 21:13; the Valley of Vision 22:1; Tyre 23:1.

⁴³² See Blenkinsopp 2000a: 316-320.

⁴³³ Note that 13:2-22 and 14:22-23 are formulated as divine speech and refer to the Babylonians in the plural, whereas 14:4b-21 is a poem (not divine speech) addressing an individual king. Whereas 14:1-2 can be qualified as an editorial bridge, 14:3-4a is an introduction to the poem that follows.

⁴³⁴ See Williamson 1994: 158-160.

to the same layer or whether it consists of an earlier poem that was incorporated into the complex of 13:1-14:23 at a later stage.

Isa 14:4b-20

14:4b-20 is a literary composition, to be qualified as a poem.⁴³⁵ The poem is a parody on the lament for the dead,⁴³⁶ and alludes to a variety of mythical motifs.⁴³⁷ Its theme is the terrible fate of the tyrant. The first stanza tells that the tyrant is dead and that the earth rejoices (4b-8). The second (9-11) deals with the expected arrival of the tyrant in Sheol.⁴³⁸ The Rephaim state that the tyrant shares their fate (he is dead). The third stanza expands on the motif of the king's ascension to heaven and his subsequent downfall (12-15). The fourth stanza forms the climax and specifies the terrible fate of the tyrant. The bystanders commenting on the tyrant's dead body (14:16-17) may be the kings of the nations (Rephaim) in Sheol, who pass their judgement on the tyrant.⁴³⁹ The kings of the nations cast the tyrant from Sheol. He is not allowed to stay in their company for he has destroyed his land and killed his people (14:20). The poem concludes by stating that the 'offspring of evildoers', i.e. the offspring of the tyrant, will nevermore be named. The downfall of the tyrant does not end with his death, but with his ejection from Sheol, and his name being erased forever.

The tyrant's fate is worse than that of the kings of the nations in Sheol. The Rephaim are buried in splendour but the tyrant is cast out,⁴⁴⁰ and lies with those bodies without proper burial.⁴⁴¹ The phrase in verse 19 *הַשְּׁלִכְתָּ מִקְבְּרֶךָ* 'you are cast out from your grave', means that the tyrant's body is cast out instead of being buried in his royal grave as he intended. The climax of the poem is that the tyrant is not only dead, but that he has become outcast. Instead of being buried in splendour his body is thrown away as rubbish.⁴⁴² This is of consequence for his position in Sheol: the tyrant whose dead body is cast out does not become one of the Rephaim in the netherworld.

The connection between the fate of the tyrant and the violent death of Sargon II on the battlefield in Anatolia in 705 BCE,⁴⁴³ is not convincing.⁴⁴⁴ The phrase *הַשְּׁלִכְתָּ מִקְבְּרֶךָ* is then

⁴³⁵ For the poetic structure of 14:4b-20, see Holladay 1999, 633-645, esp. 641. According to Wildberger (1972-82: 537) and Holladay (1999: 635-636) 14:21 is a later expansion.

⁴³⁶ Shipp 2002: 43. Wildberger 1972-82: 537.

⁴³⁷ Shipp 2002: 127; Schöpflin 2002b: 309. Shipp (2002: 67-127) demonstrates that there is not one particular myth behind this poem, but that the poem adopted a range of mythical themes.

⁴³⁸ Schöpflin 2002b: 305.

⁴³⁹ Holladay 1999: 642-643. According to Holladay, the phrase 'you are cast out from your grave' (14:19) on one level refers to the disinterment of the tyrant's corpse, but on a deeper level to the tyrant's ejection from Sheol.

⁴⁴⁰ Shipp 2002: 150.

⁴⁴¹ Shipp 2002: 157.

⁴⁴² Schöpflin (2002b: 310) interprets 14:19 as if the tyrant at first was properly buried but that afterwards his grave was desecrated and his body thrown away. This is however less likely; see the difference in expression between 14:19 and Jer 8:1; 2 Kgs 23:16; Ezek 37:12, 13.

⁴⁴³ See particularly Ginsberg 1968. Many scholars have adopted this view, among them Shipp 2002: 158-163. However, this identification has not met with general approval. Wildberger (1972-82: 542-543) lists the various candidates that have been put forward, and concludes that any identification is

to mean ‘you are cast out *far away from* your grave’, which is less likely.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, one difference is, that Sargon’s body was not buried because it was lost on the battlefield, whereas the dead body of the tyrant is deliberately thrown away, cast out in dismay (חטב ni.) as rubbish.⁴⁴⁶ The poem deals with a foreign king who behaved as if he was invincible and immortal. He is however killed, his dynasty comes to an end, and his dead body instead of being buried in splendour is thrown away like rubbish. A better parallel than the death of Sargon in 705 may be the announcement concerning Jehoiakim in Jer 22:19: ‘With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried; dragged off and thrown out (שֶׁלֶךְ בָּן) beyond the gates of Jerusalem’ (cf. Jer 36:30b). Both in Isa 14 and in Jer 22 the terrible fate of a king is that his body is not properly buried but cast out (שֶׁלֶךְ). In both cases the reason is the king’s terrible treatment of his subjects. According to 14:20, the king’s body is cast out, because he has destroyed his land and killed his own people. Likewise, Jehoiakim’s body will be thrown out of the city, because of his terrible treatment of his subjects (Jer 22:17-18). The poem states that the tyrant is deliberately dishonoured after he has died. His dead body is not left on the battlefield (like Sargon’s) but his dead body is deliberately cast out (like Jehoiakim’s). The people refuse to honour him with a royal burial, because he has tyrannised them.

The introduction in 14:4a, ‘You will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon’, may be adequate. There is no compelling reason for suggesting the poem was not composed from the outset as a taunting song concerning a Babylonian king. Nebuchadnezzar may be put forward as the most likely subject of the poem.⁴⁴⁷ Broadly speaking, 14:4-20 belongs to an ongoing tradition of critical address to the foreign imperial power, beginning in the Assyrian period (e.g. 10:5-9.13-15), and continuing into later periods (e.g. Isa 37:22-29). The poem offers ideological criticism, perhaps even wishful thinking, rather than an adequate description. Finally, the poem differs from the early prophetic material within First Isaiah. Whereas the prophetic material goes back to spoken words, the poem clearly is a literary composition.

Isa 14:24-27

Isa 14 ends with two fragments, 14:24-27 and 14:28-32, loosely attached to the preceding unit on Babylonia. These two fragments deal with Assyria and are to be attributed to the

uncertain. Schöpflin (2002b: 312) claims: ‘Doch müssen die Versuche, einen Bezug zu einer konkreten historischen Königsgestalt herzustellen, als gescheitert gelten’.

⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, 14:4-20 differs from the material within First Isaiah to be dated to the period 705-701 BCE. 28:15-18*, 30:1-5* and 31:1-3* represent Isaiah’s position in the political controversy of 705-701 BCE. If 14:4b-20 referred to the death of Sargon, it can hardly be read otherwise than as propagating the view of Isaiah’s opponents, as a justification for Judah’s rebellion against Assyria.

⁴⁴⁵ שֶׁלֶךְ means ‘to throw (away)’, ‘to cast out’, with בָּן ‘to throw away from’, ‘to cast out from’. The ho. can mean ‘to become cast out’, said of corpses (cf. Isa 34:3; Jer 14:16), or ‘to be thrown out’ (and left), cf. Jer 36:30; Ezek 16:5. For the expression ‘far away’ the verb רָחַק is used.

⁴⁴⁶ According to Schöpflin (2002b: 310) the phrase ‘clothed with (the slain) those pierced by the sword, like a trampled corpse’ (14:19) need not refer specifically to a battlefield, but more generally to killed bodies that are left unburied (cf. Isa 34:3; Jer 14:16; 22:19).

⁴⁴⁷ See Wildberger 1972-82: 542-543; Gosse 1988: 239; Holladay 1999: 638. כְּנִצֵּר in 14:19 could be taken as a pun on his name.

Assyrian period. 14:24-27 focuses on the certainty of Yahweh's decision.⁴⁴⁸ It proclaims that Yahweh as king of the world rules from Zion and governs the international scene.⁴⁴⁹ With regard to its theme and vocabulary, it is particularly close to Isa 10*.⁴⁵⁰ At a later stage, it was included in the complex of *mašša'*-prophecies, filling the need for a passage against Assyria.⁴⁵¹

²⁴ Yahweh of Hosts has sworn:

As I have designed, so shall it be, and as I have planned, so shall it come to pass:

²⁵ I will break the Assyrian in my land, I will trample on my mountains.

His yoke shall be removed from them, his burden from his shoulders.

²⁶ This is the plan that is planned concerning the whole earth;

This is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

²⁷ For Yahweh of Hosts has planned, and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

14:24-27 contains two parts, 14:24b-25 and 14:26-27. Whereas 14:24b-25 makes clear what Yahweh's plan is about – the destruction of Assyria – 14:26-27 puts this in a perspective of Yahweh's plans concerning the entire world. The two parts are closely related through the term *יַעֲרִיץ/עָרָה* in 14:24b and 26-27.⁴⁵² The transition from Assyria (14:24-25) to the whole earth and all the nations (14:26-27) makes sense from a traditio-historical point of view.⁴⁵³ The theme of Assyria's downfall, which characterises the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition (14:24-27, 30:27-33, 31:4-5.8-9), was based on the Jerusalem tradition of Yahweh's war against the nations that threaten Zion (the *Völkerkampf*-motif). Given this traditio-historical background, the motif of Assyria's destruction (14:24-25) and that of Yahweh's dealings with 'all the nations' (14:26-27, similarly 8:9-10 and 17:12-14) essentially belong together.

Within 14:24-27, verse 25b seems a bit odd, since the context provides no referent for the suffixes in *מִנְעֻלָּיהֶם* ('from them') and *שֶׁכְּמוֹ* ('from his shoulder'), which *ad sensum* refer to the people of Judah. The clause may be dependent on 9:3 or 10:27a, where the same

⁴⁴⁸ Barth 1977: 107.

⁴⁴⁹ Barth (1977: 109-117) suggests a connection between 14:26-27, Yahweh's outstretched hand, and the poetic refrain in 9:11, 16, 20 (and in 5:25 and 10:4) 'his hand is stretched out still', but the expressions are not on the same level. 14:26, *הַיָּד הַמִּתְנַחֵה יָד עַל*, referring to the nations, differs from the refrain in Isa 9, where it is used in an absolute sense. In 14:24-27, Yahweh's outstretched hand symbolises the worldwide extension of his power: he rules the world. In the refrain of Isa 9, the motif of Yahweh's still outstretched hand refers to the continuation of the punishment of Israel and Judah. In my view, the motif of Yahweh's outstretched hand, symbolising his worldwide authority, was at a later stage applied to Israel and Judah, as to become a symbol of Yahweh's punishment of his people.

⁴⁵⁰ 14:24-27* is often associated with Isa 10*, see Wildberger 1972-82: 568, 572.

⁴⁵¹ Wildberger 1972-82: 566.

⁴⁵² Barth 1977: 105.

⁴⁵³ Contra Clements (1989: 256-257), who attributes 14:24-25 and 14:26-27 to two different redactional levels, qualifying 14:26-27 as part of a post-exilic apocalyptic redaction.

motif occurs (cf. שָׁכַמוּ in 10:27). The intent of the addition then was to explicate the positive outcome for Judah.⁴⁵⁴

Isa 14:28-32

The introductory formula הַמִּשְׁאָה הַזֶּה in 14:28 differs from the standard formula used in the complex of *massā*-prophecies of Isa 13-23. This can be taken as an indication of a different origin.⁴⁵⁵ 14:28-32 shows some traces of elaboration: the dating formula in 14:28 was added at a later stage and 14:32 forms an extension to the preceding oracle (both elements are discussed below). Moreover, 14:30 interrupts the coherence of verses 29.31 in several respects. Whereas 14:29 and 31 address the Philistines, 14:30 has a quite different focus.⁴⁵⁶ The earliest saying consisted of 14:29.31, whereas 14:28 and 32 constitute a first revision:

²⁸ In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken,
for from the root of the snake will come forth an adder,
and its fruit will be a flying fiery serpent.

³¹ Wail, O gate; cry, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!

For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler⁴⁵⁷ in its ranks.

³² What will one answer the messengers of the nation?

‘Yahweh has founded Zion, and the needy among his people will find refuge in her.’

The oracle of 14:29.31 fits well into the later part of the eighth century. The warning ‘do not rejoice’ (אַל שִׂמְחוּ) occurs elsewhere in the context of the ill fate of enemies.⁴⁵⁸ Philistia’s enemy has fallen, but the Philistines should not rejoice, because a new and even harsher king shall rule. The exhortation to mourn directed at the gate and the city (14:31) is characteristic of city laments;⁴⁵⁹ gate and city are, as usual in city laments, personified as a weeping lady.⁴⁶⁰ Originally, the oracular saying did not refer to the death of Ahaz and his succession by Hezekiah, but to the death of an Assyrian king and the reign of his successor. The qualification of the king as a rod that strikes also refers to the Assyrian king in 10:5 and 24. Furthermore, the words, ‘for smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in its ranks’, refers to the Assyrian army, not to the Judaeans army. The original background

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Wildberger 1972-82: 566; Barth 1977: 105. However, 14:24-27 is a fragment which originally may have belonged to a context that did provide a reference for the suffixes.

⁴⁵⁵ The origin of this passage has been debated. Whereas some, following Duhm (1922: 101), suggest a Hellenistic dating of this passage, others have kept to the eighth-century dating suggested by 14:28.

⁴⁵⁶ 14:30 contrasts the fate of the ‘poor’ and ‘needy’ (Judaeans?) with the ill fate of an unspecified addressee (the Philistines?). The suffix of בְּמוֹעֲדָיו ‘in his ranks’ in 14:31 refers to the subject of 14:29b_a, which suggests that originally, 14:31 directly followed 14:29. Besides, 14:30 contains various late motifs; see Berges 1998: 146; Becker 1997: 272.

⁴⁵⁷ MT בְּנוֹדֵד, 1QIsa^a מוֹדֵד; conj. נוֹדֵד ‘deserter’ (cf. Isa 22:3; 21:15) is a possibility; see Wildberger 1972-82: 574.

⁴⁵⁸ Ps 35:19, 24; Prov 24:17; Hos 9:1; Ob 1:12; Mic 7:8.

⁴⁵⁹ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 133.

⁴⁶⁰ This may explain for שָׁעֵר (masculine) addressed with a feminine imperative.

of the saying is the death of an Assyrian king that could have provoked rejoicing among the Philistines. This is likely to refer to the death of Tiglath-pileser III (727 BCE), who had campaigned against Philistia in 734.⁴⁶¹ Against the hopeful expectation, attributed to the Philistines, that Assyria's expansion would have come to an end with Tiglath-pileser's death, the oracle announces that the Philistines will be oppressed even harder by Tiglath-pileser's successor.⁴⁶² This announcement came true, at first, in 720 with Sargon's campaign to the West.

The oracle 14:29.31 can be related to 28:1-4* and 10:5-9.13-15*, 10:24-25* and 10:27b-32*. 14:29.31 and 28:1-4* seem to contain announcements to be dated some time before Sargon's campaign of 720 and the final downfall of Samaria. The early material within Isa 10* looks back at the events and condemns Assyria for having exceeded the order given by Yahweh. Whereas in 28:1-4 and 14:29-31 the perspective is on Assyria's dealing with other nations, Ephraim and the Philistines, in the prophecies of Isa 10* Judah's involvement in Assyria's imperialism is taken into account.

14:28, the introduction to 14:29.31 indicates a revision of the oracle. The phrase 'In the year King Ahaz died this oracle came', suggests that the oracle deals with the death of Ahaz, and points to Ahaz's successor Hezekiah. This is a Judaeo-centred interpretation of the oracle, which originally referred to the death of Tiglath-pileser. It represents a revision of the original saying, which presumably imitated the introductory dating of Isa 6:1. 14:32 probably is on the same level as 14:28, adding a new dimension to the earlier oracle. 14:32b evidently reflects the Zion ideology and fits a seventh-century revision (see chapter 6.1.6). 14:28-32 forms a revision of an earlier oracle (14:29.31). Whereas the oracle announces the harsh rule of Tiglath-pileser successor, in its Judaeo-centred revision it implies Judah's dominance over Philistia. The revision makes sense, since in 705-701, Ahaz's son Hezekiah did act to some extent as overlord of Philistia (see chapter 4.1.7), as is implied by 14:28. Furthermore, the image of Zion as a place of special protection resembles the ideology of the Hezekiah stories concerning 701 (see chapter 6.1.2).

14:24-27 and 14:28-32 are likely to belong to the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition, and can be connected with Isa 10:5-11:5.

2.3.5 *Isaiah 17**

Isa 17:1-3

The heading נְעֻמַּת אֲרָם (17:1a) suggests that what follows is part of the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies. However, since 17:1b-3 deals with Aram and Ephraim, this may go back to an earlier prophetic word. This is confirmed by the identification of the oracle in 17:3 as נְעֻמַּת. 17:1-3 (as 19:1-4, below) is likely to contain an earlier *nē'um*-oracle, which has been incorporated into the *maššā'*-complex through the addition of the introductory formula נְעֻמַּת אֲרָם. The oracle begins with הִנֵּה (17:1b, cf. 19:1b), which is paralleled in *nē'um*-

⁴⁶¹ Wildberger 1972-82: 578-579.

⁴⁶² 14:29b α and 29b β in my view are parallels, which means that the terms 'adder' and 'flying fiery serpent' both refer to the successor of Tiglath-pileser (Wildberger 1972-82: 581). Alternatively, the snake, adder and flying fiery serpent refer to a sequence of three Assyrian kings.

oracles, not in *maššā'*-prophecies.⁴⁶³ Thus, it is likely that 17:1b-3* (as 19:1b-4*) predated the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies.

The text of 17:1b-3 MT is particularly obscure. In particular the expression 'the cities of Aroer are deserted' (MT 17:2a) is dubious as Aroer is a city name itself and no city Aroer is known close to Damascus.⁴⁶⁴ 17:2, although obscure, deals with the Aramaean cities: they will be deserted and become places for flocks. The final clause is probably a later addition, as it turns away from the cities, and qualifies the flocks, 'they will lie down undisturbed.' The first line of 17:3 clearly announces the end of the kingdoms of Ephraim and Aram. The second part 'the rest of Aram will be like the glory of the Israelites' is obscure. It is not a parallelism (as is the first line of 17:3) and may be a later addition.⁴⁶⁵ 17:1b-3a* announces disaster for Aram and Ephraim:

^{1b} See, Damascus is about to cease to be a city, and to become a heap of ruins.⁴⁶⁶

^{2*} Her cities will be deserted for ever, and become places for flocks.

^{3*} The fortress will disappear from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus, says Yahweh of Hosts.

The announcement resembles the oracles of 7:4-9a*, 14b.16 and 8:1-4. Therefore, 17:1b-3a* is best situated in the later part of the eighth century as well, probably during the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis.⁴⁶⁷

Isa 17:12-14

17:12-14 can be regarded as an early commentary to 17:1-3*, comparable to the way in which 8:9-10 comments on the prophetic oracles of 7:4-9a* and 14b.16.⁴⁶⁸

¹² Woe, thunder of many peoples, they thunder like the thundering of the sea, and roar of nations, they roar like the roaring of mighty waters!

¹³ The nations roar like the roaring of many waters⁴⁶⁹

But he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.

¹⁴ At evening time – lo, terror! Before morning – it is gone.

This is the fate of those who despoil us, and the lot of those who plunder us.

⁴⁶³ E.g. Jer 1:15, 1:18-19, 5:15, 8:17, 9:24.

⁴⁶⁴ I follow the emendation עַר עָרֵיהָ עָרֵיהָ עָרֵיהָ 'her cities are forever deserted'; Wildberger 1972-82: 635.

⁴⁶⁵ Becker 1997: 274.

⁴⁶⁶ MT מַעֲי (hapax legomenon) is slightly dubious. Since עֵי means 'ruin' (Ps 79:1; Jer 26:18; Mic 1:6), the reading לְעֵי 'into a ruin' may be preferable.

⁴⁶⁷ Wildberger 1972-82: 645.

⁴⁶⁸ The rest of Isa 17 consists of later extensions marked by redactional formula and later motifs. Becker (1997: 274-275) argues that 17:4-6* is late ('Jacob', 17:4, refers to Israel as a whole, 'das gesamte Gottesvolk'). Cf. the redactional formula in 17:4, 5, 7, and 9.

⁴⁶⁹ This phrase is often regarded as a later addition; Wildberger 1972-82: 664.

17:12-14 resembles 8:9-10 in various respects. Both comment on prophetic oracles against Aram and Ephraim. Furthermore, in both cases the motif of the *Völkerkampf* is used to comment on the destruction of the enemies. This motif depicts the enemies as posing a threat against Jerusalem and Judah, but, as is implied by the tradition of the *Völkerkampf*, their actions are frustrated by Yahweh, who destroys them. 8:9-10 and 17:12-14 are particularly close to passages from First Isaiah that deal with the destruction of Assyria.

2.3.6 *Isaiah 18-22**

The earliest layer of Isa 18-22 consists of material that reflects Isaiah's opposition to the alliance with Egypt against Assyria. This material in many respects resembles the early material within Isa 28-32, consisting of polemic sayings that reflect Isaiah's position.⁴⁷⁰ The early material was of interest to the editors/composers of the *maššā'*-complex, since it related to Cush (18*, 20*) and Egypt (19*, 20*). The early material included an oracle against a Judaeen official (22:15-19*) in which the same mentality was condemned that in 22:1-14, part of the *maššā'*-composition, functions as an explanation for the fall of Jerusalem.

Isa 18:1-6

The passage 18:1-6,⁴⁷¹ is likely to consist of eighth-century prophetic material in a revised form:

¹ Woe, land of whirring wings,⁴⁷² in the region of the rivers of Cush,⁴⁷³

² which sends envoys by the Nile⁴⁷⁴ in vessels of papyrus on the waters!

Go, you swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people feared near and far,
a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide.

³ All you inhabitants of the world, you who live on the earth,
when a signal is raised on the mountains, look! When a trumpet is blown, listen!

⁴ For thus Yahweh said to me: I will quietly look from my dwelling
like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew on the day of harvest.⁴⁷⁵

⁵ For before the harvest, when the blossom is over and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he
will cut off the shoots with pruning hooks, and the spreading branches he will hew away.

⁶ They shall all be left to the birds of prey of the mountains and to the animals of the earth. And
the birds of prey will summer on them, and all the animals of the earth will winter on them.

18:1-2aa can be identified as a prophetic *woe*-saying against Cush: 'Woe, land of whirring wings, in the region of the rivers of Cush, which sends envoys by the Nile in vessels of papyrus on the waters!' This probably is an eighth-century *woe*-saying, condemning Cush,

⁴⁷⁰ Jenkins 1989: 248.

⁴⁷¹ 18:7 is a later extension, which gives a twist to 18:1-6, see Wildberger 1972-82: 681, and particularly Blenkinsopp 2000a: 311.

⁴⁷² Or 'boats'; cf. Wildberger 1972-82: 679: 'geflügelte Boote'.

⁴⁷³ Wildberger 1972-82: 679: 'im Umkreis der Ströme von Kusch'.

⁴⁷⁴ נַיִם here in all likelihood refers to the Nile (cf. Isa 19:5; Nah 3:8).

⁴⁷⁵ MT יום קציר חם can be corrected into יום קציר חם; חם is a corruption due to the preceding clause (various manuscripts and some of the versions attest the reading יום, see Wildberger 1972-82: 681).

i.e. the rulers of the Cushite (25th) dynasty over Egypt, for their political plotting. What follows is an extension to the saying, since no longer are the Cushites addressed. Whereas the *woe*-saying is directed at Cushite envoys (צִירִים) travelling in vessels of papyrus, the following passage addresses 'swift messengers' (מְלָאכִים קָלִים) that come to the Cushites for negotiation, since the description in 18:2 of 'a nation tall and smooth' in all likelihood characterises the Cushites.⁴⁷⁶ Whereas the 'swift messengers' could be interpreted as being Judaeans, negotiating for military aid against Assyria, in the period 705-701 BCE, 18:3 explicitly broadens the perspective. The signal and trumpet blast in 18:3 are indications of military action, and the address to the whole world, suggests that the passage indicates a battle between mighty nations. 18:4-6 deals with the outcome of the battle. First it is stated that Yahweh, like clear heat or a cloud of dew, hangs above the international playground and watches. 18:5 explains that Yahweh not only watches the battle, but also intervenes: 'he will cut off the shoots, and hew away the spreading branches'. The result is that they, i.e. the fighting parties, together (יַחְדָּם) will be left to birds of prey and wild animals (18:6).

18:1-6 is marked by two perspectives. The first is characteristic of the eighth-century prophetic material, the second of the seventh-century revision of the earlier material. According to the eighth-century perspective the Cushites are condemned for their diplomatic plotting against Assyria. This relates to the controversy of 705-701, whether or not Judah should rebel against Assyria while trusting Egypt ruled by the Cushite dynasty. The eighth-century material has been revised into an international perspective, which addresses all the people of the world to attend to how Yahweh cuts down the military powers. The armies that are cut down are not explicitly identified, but in my view not only the Egyptians and Cushites are implied, but also the Assyrians. From a late seventh-century perspective, 18:1-6 makes clear that Yahweh eliminates the military powers of the world, including Assyria. The image used in 18:5b parallels that of 10:33-34, where it refers to the destruction of Assyria.

According to 18:5, the destruction of the aggressors will happen soon, 'before harvest'. This motif of imminence occurs in the early prophetic announcements (7:16, 8:4, 10:25 and 28:4), and is echoed in the seventh-century revision (17:14, 18:5).

Isa 19:1-4

As in 17:1-3, the heading מְצָרִים מִצְרַיִם in 19:1 was added secondarily in order to incorporate the *nē'um*-oracle into the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies (cf. 17:1-3 above). 19:1b-4 contains a *nē'um*-oracle that in all likelihood predated the *maššā'*-complex.⁴⁷⁷

^{1b} See, Yahweh is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

² I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, one against the other, neighbour against neighbour, city against city, kingdom against kingdom;

³ the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,
and I will confound their plans; they will consult the idols

⁴⁷⁶ See Wildberger 1972-82: 689; Blenkinsopp 2000a: 309-310.

⁴⁷⁷ The rest of Isa 19 probably is of a later date; 19:5-15 may have been composed as part of the *maššā'*-complex, and 19:16-25 consists of a series of very late additions.

and the spirits of the dead and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;

⁴⁷⁸ I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master,

a fierce king will rule over them, says the Sovereign, Yahweh of Hosts.

19:1b-4 pictures a chaotic situation in Egypt. The passage focuses on the Egyptians in general. The context is probably the same as for the rest of the early material within Isa 18-22*, the situation of 705-701 BCE.⁴⁷⁹ The oracle implies that the anti-Assyrian politics will lead to disaster for the Egyptians. The ‘hard master’ and ‘fierce king’, in 19:4, refers to the Assyrian king.⁴⁸⁰ Whereas the original oracle may have referred to Sennacherib as the conqueror of Egypt, only his son and grandson achieved this (see chapter 4.2.4).

Isa 20*

20:1-6 looks like a story about Isaiah, comparable to Isa 7:1-17 and Isa 36-39. This is supported by the designation ‘Isaiah the son of Amoz’ (20:2), which, apart from the headings in 1:1, 2:1 and 13:1, only occurs in stories concerning Isaiah.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, Isa 20 contains terminology that corresponds to prophetic stories from the books of Kings, such as the expression יהוה בִּירַד, ‘Yahweh spoke through x’, followed by a name and/or a title (20:2).⁴⁸² This phrase combined with the title עֶבֶד, ‘servant’ (20:3) occurs only in the books of Kings.⁴⁸³ For this reason, Blenkinsopp and Williamson have argued that Isa 20, together with Isa 7:1-17 and Isa 36-39, are to be seen as ‘Deuteronomistic narratives’ about Isaiah’s involvement in various major political affairs of his time, which were incorporated into the book of Isaiah.⁴⁸⁴ Against this assessment however is the fact that each of the ‘narratives’ concerning Isaiah contains earlier material. In the case of Isa 36-39, the so-called B1-story (36:1-37:9a.37-38) predates the present narrative complex.⁴⁸⁵ Isa 7:1-17, furthermore, is a composition that incorporates earlier prophetic material. Finally, as I will argue, Isa 20 includes an earlier report. 20:1-6 contains various indications of literary elaboration. I will discuss the three main elements of its literary reworking.

1) 20:1 begins with a dating, which resembles 6:1 and 14:28. The three datings have a similar beginning: בְּשָׁנָה followed by an infinitive construct as a dating. In 6:1, ‘in the year that King Uzziah died’ (בְּשָׁנָה מוֹת); in 14:28, ‘In the year that King Ahaz died’ (בְּשָׁנָה מוֹת); in 20:1, ‘In the year that the *tartānu* came to Ashdod’ (בְּשָׁנָה בָּא). In 6:1 and 14:28 the temporal clause, is followed by a main clause, which introduces the subsequent unit: Isaiah’s vision (6:1-8) and the prophecy against the Philistines (14:29-31). Both the *wāw*-consecutive

⁴⁷⁸ The plural אֲדָרִיִּים is usually taken *ad sensum* as having singular meaning (see JM § 148a).

⁴⁷⁹ The fact that the Cushite kings are not mentioned in 19:1b-4 does not mean that it must refer to the period before the Cushite rule over Egypt. Although the Cushite kings during the later part of the eighth and the first part of the seventh century ruled as the overlords of the Egypt, there were still many Egyptian kings ruling their city-states, as vassals of the Cushite overlords.

⁴⁸⁰ Wildberger 1972-82: 708.

⁴⁸¹ 2 Kgs 19:2, 20; 20:1 (Isa 37:2, 21; 38:1), 2 Chron 26:22, 32:20, 32.

⁴⁸² Cf. 1 Kgs 8:53, 56; 12:15; 14:18; 15:29; 16:7, 12, 34; 17:16; 2 Kgs 9:36; 10:10; 14:25; 17:23; 21:10; 24:2.

⁴⁸³ 1 Kgs 8:53, 56; 14:18; 15:29; 2 Kgs 9:36; 10:10; 14:25; 17:23; 21:10 and 24:2.

⁴⁸⁴ Williamson 2004: 185; Blenkinsopp 2000a: 321-322; Blenkinsopp 2000b.

⁴⁸⁵ Gonçalves 1986. I deal with 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37) in chapter 6.1.2.

וַיֵּרְאֵהוּ in 6:1 ('I saw the Lord') and the perfect הָיָה in 14:28 ('this oracle came'), produce a main clause in the past tense. The case of 20:1-2 is somewhat complicated. The dating of 20:1a pinpoints Yahweh's order to Isaiah (20:2) in the year of the Assyrian campaign against Ashdod. In the present text however the temporal clause of 20:1a is followed by the main clause 'he (the *tartānu*) besieged Ashdod and captured it'.⁴⁸⁶ This main clause is unexpected and has no apparent function within 20:1-6. In order to maintain the connection with the dating, 20:2 had to begin with a second temporal clause, 'at that time'. This complicated construction points to literary elaboration. 20:1-2 presents a dating formula in a reworked form. The original dating probably was: 'In the year that the *tartānu* – being sent by King Sargon of Assyria – came to Ashdod, Yahweh spoke to Isaiah' (דִּבֶּר יְהוָה). This dating closely resembles that of 6:1 and 14:28, with the only difference that an important moment in Isaiah's prophetic activity is dated to the year of an Assyrian campaign rather than to the year of the death of a Judean king. The reason for this may simply be that no Judean king died in this period. The dating of 20:1-2* originally introduced a report of a symbolic act, 20:1-5*. The elaboration of 20:1b, 'he besieged Ashdod and conquered it', added a narrative element.⁴⁸⁷ Subsequently, the temporal adverbial בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא had to be added in 20:2, because 1b disrupted the original connection between the dating and Yahweh's order.

2) A second mark of later reworking is found in the expression בְּיַד יִשְׁעֵיהוּ בֶן-אֲמוּנִן in 20:2. Yahweh's speaking through (בְּיַד) a prophet, or prophets, is a stock phrase from the books of Kings. In this case however Yahweh does not speak *through* Isaiah, but *to* him.

3) A final indication of later reworking is found in 20:5 and 6, which present a double reaction. Both describe the reaction of those who trusted Egypt and Cush. 20:6 is likely to be a later addition. The 'inhabitants of this coastland' are in all likelihood the Philistines. In this way, 20:6 forms a deliberate inclusion with 20:1 in a reworked shape: the siege of Ashdod and the reaction of the Philistines. Furthermore, thanks to the reaction of the Philistines, 20:1-6 fits the complex of *maššā'*-prophecies concerning the foreign nations.

As in the case of Isa 7:1-17, the later literary reworking added a narrative imprint to earlier material. The views of Williamson and Blenkinsopp of Isa 7, 20 and 36-39 as a series of stories on Isaiah is right to the extent that the literary reworking of Isa 7 and 20 seems to echo the narrative complex of 2 Kgs 18-20 (Isa 36-39). However, 7:1-17 and 20:1-6 in their core are not stories about Isaiah, but contain early material reflecting Isaiah's prophetic activity. The earliest version of Isa 20, probably was, more or less, the following:

^{1*} In the year that the *tartānu*, commissioned by King Sargon of Assyria, campaigned against Ashdod,

^{2*} Yahweh spoke to Isaiah:

Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take your sandals off your feet.

^{3*} And Yahweh said: Just as Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years

⁴⁸⁶ The combination of לָחַם (ni.) and לָכַד is a common way to describe a successful siege of a city ('to besiege and capture it').

⁴⁸⁷ 20:1-2 is often translated as one sentence. However, 20:1b must be read as a main clause, since there is no finite form in 20:1a of which the consecutive forms of 20:1b could be the continuation (see JM § 118/ and 166/). In 20:2 a new sentence begins.

as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush,

^{4*} so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Cushites as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot.

⁵ And they shall be dismayed and confounded because of Cush their hope⁴⁸⁸ and of Egypt their boast.

20:1-5* probably is an early report that reflects a symbolic act performed by the prophet. It is imaginable that a prophet really did this. More importantly, the symbolic act as described in 20:1-5* has some important similarities with 8:1-4* and 30:6-8*: a public act performed by Isaiah bearing a political message. As in the case of 8:1-4*, the most important part of the report is the divine announcement of destruction (8:4). Moreover, the message of 20:1-5* is wholly consistent with Isaiah's preaching as found within Isa 28-31. Especially in 30:1-5*.6-8* and 31:1.3*, the prophet makes clear that trusting on Egypt is pointless. 20:1-5* is a report of a symbolic act which belongs to the earliest stage of the Isaiah tradition. The prophet Isaiah may well have actually performed such an act around 712-711 BCE, in order to warn the Judaeans against trusting Egypt for assistance against Assyria.

As Isa 18* and 19:1b-4, 20:1-5* is particularly related to the early prophetic words within Isa 28-31. It focuses, however, on a slightly earlier period: whereas the critical prophetic sayings of Isa 28-31* (and Isa 18*, 19:1b-4, 22:15-18*) directly relate to the controversy of 705-701, 20:1-5* refers to the rebellion of Ashdod (713-711 BCE). In this way, 20:1-5* prefigures the controversy of 705-701.

Isa 22:1-14

Although the core of 22:1-14 is traditionally attributed to Isaiah and believed to be connected with the situation of 701 BCE,⁴⁸⁹ I hold that 22:1-14 even in its earliest version reflects the events of 586 BCE.⁴⁹⁰ As has been pointed out by Dobbs-Allsopp, the view that 22:1b-2 and 22:12-14 describe Jerusalem's situation after the Assyrian retreat of 701,⁴⁹¹ has to be rejected. 22:1b-2 and 22:12-14 contain a motif of reversal, which is characteristic of city laments.⁴⁹² 22:1b does not suggest that the city is currently jubilant, but poses the (rhetorical) question of why the city that used to be joyful now has gone up to the housetops. This is not an expression of joy,⁴⁹³ but as in 22:12 an act of lament and mourning in reaction to the utter destruction.⁴⁹⁴ The motif of the glorious and jubilant city

⁴⁸⁸ MT מִבְּטָח; 1QIsa^a מִבְּטָח is probably *lectio facilior*.

⁴⁸⁹ 22:8b-11 is often regarded a later elaboration implying the fall of Jerusalem in 586. For further reductions of the supposed Isaianic core, see Clements 1980a: 182; Kaiser 1983: 113-114; Vermeylen 1977-78: 339.

⁴⁹⁰ See Barthel 1997: 268.

⁴⁹¹ Clements 1980a: 183: in 22:1-3 and 22:12-14 Isaiah rebukes the people of Jerusalem who are rejoicing because of their escape from the Assyrians.

⁴⁹² Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 38-41, 168-169.

⁴⁹³ Contra Clements 1980a: 183.

⁴⁹⁴ See also Isa 15:3 and Jer 48:38. Cf. Sargon's inscription concerning his campaign against Urartu of the threat posed to the city Muṣaṣir (a city conquered and plundered by Sargon), Mayer 1983: 102-103, lines 343-344: 'Über diese Stadt ließ ich wie ^dAddu das fürchterliche Gebrüll meiner Truppen erschallen (...). Seine Leute, die alten Männer und die alten Frauen stiegen auf die Dächer ihrer Häuser und weinten laut und bitterlich' (Mayer's translation).

(22:2, 13) establishes a contrast of past joy versus present grief because of destruction.⁴⁹⁵ 22:1-2 contrasts the former happiness of Jerusalem with its present grief. The flight of the leaders (22:3) is paralleled in Lam 1:6 and 2:9.⁴⁹⁶ The expression ‘daughter of my people’ (בַּת עַמִּי) in 22:4 is further attested only in Jeremiah and Lamentations.⁴⁹⁷ The destruction (שָׂרַף) of Jerusalem is closely paralleled in Lam 2:11b, 3:48, and 4:10b (שָׂרַף). According to 22:5, Yahweh carries out destruction, with Elam and Kir as his instruments (22:6). This explains the author’s expression of amazement about the lament of the people: the destruction is the will of Yahweh (22:2b). 22:8 states that Yahweh withdrew his protection (קִסָּף) from Judah, leaving her open to enemy attack.⁴⁹⁸ A parallel may be found in Lam 2:3, ‘he has withdrawn his right hand from them in the face of the enemy’.

22:1-14, as 29:1-4, emphasises that it is Yahweh who carries out the destruction of his city Jerusalem. 22:14 presumably refers to 6:9-11. The phrase ‘Yahweh of Hosts has revealed himself in my ears’ (וַיִּגְלֶה בְּאָזְנִי) refers to the vision of Isaiah, from the perspective of the reworking of 6:9-11. The phrase ‘this iniquity will not be forgiven you until you die’ (עַד-הַמָּוֶת), resembles 6:11, ‘until (עַד) cities lie waste ...’. Jerusalem is addressed as the once glorious city, whose inhabitants led a careless life. They have come to an end by Yahweh’s attack: the fall of the city is explained as Yahweh’s work. This in all likelihood refers to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Isa 22:15-18

The unit of 22:15-25 contains many indications of intensive elaboration, even if the latest expansions to this passage, verses 24-25, are not taken into account.⁴⁹⁹ First, the oracle is doubly addressed: ‘to this official’ and ‘to Shebna, head of the palace’, (22:15), and has a double announcement: ‘death in exile’ (22:17-18) and ‘discharge’ (22:19). Furthermore, Shebna’s discharge as head of the palace and Eliakim’s succession (22:20-23) probably relates to 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37).⁵⁰⁰ In order to explain the composite text of 22:15-23, I suggest the following developments.

1) Originally, an oracle was addressed to הַסֵּכֵן הַזֶּה ‘this official’, an unnamed recipient. The man is reproached for his light-heartedness, and the oracle announces his death in exile. The essence of the oracle lies in the contrast between the threefold פֹּה ‘here’ of the accusation and the twofold שָׁמָּה ‘there’ of the announcement. 2) A first development probably was the designation עַל שֵׁבְנָא, which aimed to present the whole oracle as ‘concerning Shebna’.⁵⁰¹ This probably is an early identification, which may be adequate. 3) A subsequent development consisted of a literary reworking of the oracle. The reason for this probably was that the oracle had not come true and was reshaped in order to show that it in fact had come true. Originally, the oracle announced that the addressee, a high official

⁴⁹⁵ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 38-40. See the list by Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 180: Isa 13:19; 22:2; 23:7; Jer 48:2; 49:25; Lam 2:1b, 15c; Ezek 26:17; 27:3; Zeph 2:15; Nah 2:8a.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 74.

⁴⁹⁷ Jer 4:11, referring to Jerusalem (cf. 4:14); 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21, 22, 23; 9:6; 14:17 and Lam 2:11; 3:48; 4:3-10.

⁴⁹⁸ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 143.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Willis 1993: 394-399.

⁵⁰⁰ 2 Kgs 18:37; 19:2; Isa 36:3, 22; 37:2.

⁵⁰¹ Clements 1980a: 187-188.

of Jerusalem, would die in exile in Assyria. However, Jerusalem was not captured in 701, nor was the official in question deported. This provoked a reworking, consisting of two steps. First, a new announcement was added in 22:19: Shebna would be discharged from his position.⁵⁰² Part of this reworking was the transposition of the designation *עַל שְׁבְנָא* at the end of 22:15 and the addition of the function *עַל הַבַּיִת*.⁵⁰³ This resulted in the text of 22:15-19 as we have it, an oracle, which indirectly is ‘proven’ by the story of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37). There, Eliakim is designated ‘head of the palace’ and Shebna takes the lower position of secretary. In other words, the Hezekiah story ‘confirms’ that Shebna was discharged from his function as head of the palace, as announced by the oracle in its reworked form (22:15-19). The second step was to strengthen the connection with the Hezekiah story by the addition of 22:20-23. These verses state that Eliakim takes over Shebna’s position as head of the palace.

The identification of the addressee as Shebna probably occurred at an early stage, during the Assyrian period. The further reworking of the oracle probably dates to a later stage, since it reflects the importance of the Hezekiah narratives of 2 Kgs 18-19 (Isa 36-37) for the ongoing development of the Isaiah tradition. However, it cannot be excluded that this reworking had already taken place in the seventh century. The earliest oracle probably was the following:

^{15*} Thus says the Lord Yahweh of Hosts: Come, go to this official (and say to him):

^{16*} What do you think you are doing *here* (פֹּה),⁵⁰⁴

and whom do you think you can rely on *here* (פֹּה),

that you have cut out a tomb for yourself *here* (פֹּה)?⁵⁰⁵

¹⁷ Look, Yahweh is about to hurl you away violently, O mighty man!

He will seize firm hold on you,

¹⁸ whirl you round and round, and throw you like a ball into a wide land.⁵⁰⁶

There (שָׁמָּה) you shall die, and *there* (שָׁמָּה) your splendid chariots shall lie,

oh you disgrace to your master’s house!

The deeds described in 22:16-17 are presented not as a ground for punishment,⁵⁰⁷ but as a demonstration of the addressee’s fundamental misconception. He thinks he will die in peace in his own country, but the prophet opens his eyes: the politics he supports will lead to a

⁵⁰² The announcement of 22:19, ‘I will thrust you from your office, and from your station I will cast you down’, is formulated as a divine word in the first person, contrary to the earlier announcement in 22:17-18. See Willis 1993: 390-391.

⁵⁰³ Wildberger 1972-82: 833. *עַל שְׁבְנָא* has a strained relation with the preceding *הַיָּהוָה*. Willis (1993: 378-381) presents examples showing that *עַל* and *אֶל* are used interchangeably, but the difficulty is not so much with the two prepositions as with the two different titles.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Judg 18:3; 1 Kgs 19:9, 13 for the same question.

⁵⁰⁵ 22:16b, ‘hewing out on a high place his tomb, cutting in the rock a habitation for himself’, looks like an explanation of 22:16a, and is likely to be a later addition.

⁵⁰⁶ Literally ‘in a land wide to both hands (sides)’. Willis (1993: 386-389) offers an alternative reading of the end of verse 17-18: ‘Yea, he will roll you up tightly, he will wrap you up like a turban, he will throw you like a ball into a wide land’.

⁵⁰⁷ Contra Barton (1995: 47-48), who suggests that Shebna is condemned by the ‘patrician’ Isaiah, for acquiring a family grave in Jerusalem to which he, as a ‘social climber’ had no right.

violent reaction of Assyria and end with his deportation. He will die in exile. This appears from the exclamation הִנֵּה at the beginning of the announcement, which functions to draw attention to something not expected.⁵⁰⁸ The addressee is rebuked for his light-heartedness: the man expected to be safe and to enjoy a peaceful lifetime and die at home, as appears from the fact that he made a tomb for himself near Jerusalem. The prophet however tells him differently: he will be taken away in captivity and die far from home. The key to understanding the oracle lies in the contrast between ‘here’ (פֹּה) in 22:16-17, and ‘there’ (שָׁמָּה) in 22:18. The foreign country, described in 22:18 as a widely extended land, is Assyria. The background is the Assyrian policy to deport the political elite of a rebellious nation in order to break local resistance.⁵⁰⁹

The oracle is closely related to the early words within Isa 28-31*, which also criticise the anti-Assyrian politics advocated by Judah’s political leaders during the reign of Hezekiah (in particular 705-701 BCE). The oracle announces the disastrous outcome of this politics of rebellion: these politicians will not enjoy a peaceful lifetime and death, but will be brought to Assyria in captivity.⁵¹⁰ The identity of the recipient of this oracle (הַסֵּבִי הַזֶּה) cannot be established with certainty. The expression מִן־כְּבוֹדֶךָ כְּבוֹדֶךָ ‘your splendid chariots’ suggests that it refers to an important official. It is possible that the characterisation of the oracle as עַל־שֶׁבְנָא ‘about Shebna’, is adequate.

2.3.7 *The Later Perspective: Isaiah 1:4-8*

In the discussion of Isa 6-8 and Isa 28-32, I have argued that the earliest material was reworked into a literary complex best situated against an exilic background. This same, exilic, perspective is also present in the rest of First Isaiah. In order to accentuate the distinctive profile of the later literary reworking, I discuss 1:4-8.

1:4-8 is usually regarded as Isaianic and believed to be connected with the situation of 701 BCE.⁵¹¹ Ben Zvi has however challenged this view, by arguing for a later, exilic, dating of this passage.⁵¹² First, Ben Zvi suggests that the terminology used in 1:4-9, such as שָׁחַת (hi.) in 1:4 and בַּת צִיּוֹן in 1:8 indicates a post-Isaianic date (although he agrees that this alone is not decisive).⁵¹³ To this can be added that the main concepts in 1:4-8 are Israel’s sin (1:4) and utter destruction as their punishment (1:6). This closely resembles the literary reworking of Isa 6-8 and Isa 28-32. The main terms used for Israel’s sin – to forsake and despise Yahweh (עִזָּב; נִאֲץ; cf. 1:2, to rebel against Yahweh, פָּשַׁע), to desert (זָוַר), apostasy (סָרָה) – and for Yahweh’s punishment – to strike (נָכַח), wounds (מָכָה), occur elsewhere

⁵⁰⁸ See Wildberger 1972-82: 642, with regard to Isa 17:1b.

⁵⁰⁹ See Wildberger 1972-82: 790-791; cf. 2 Kgs 17:6; Amos 7:17 and especially Isa 28:14-18*.

⁵¹⁰ A similar announcement is directed against the Judaeen king Coniah in Jer 22:20-30 (esp. 22:26): ‘I will hurl (הִלֵּיתִי hi.) you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die (וְשָׁם תָּמוּתָה)’. This refers to Coniah’s deportation to Babylonia. The situation resembles that of Isa 22:15-18*: anti-Assyrian or anti-Babylonian rebellion leads to deportation of the ruling class (cf. also Amos 7:17).

⁵¹¹ For the adherents of this position, see Ben Zvi 1991: 95-97.

⁵¹² Ben Zvi 1991: 98-111.

⁵¹³ Ben Zvi 1991: 98-103, שָׁחַת hi. cf. Deut 4:16, 25; 31:29. Ben Zvi also points out that 1:9a is particularly close to Ps 94:17, mostly dated to the post-exilic period. However, 1:9 may be a later addition to 1:4-8.

particularly in contexts dealing with the disasters brought about by the Babylonians.⁵¹⁴ Second, Ben Zvi argues that the assumed correspondence between 1:4-8 and the events of 701 is far from clear.⁵¹⁵ His arguments can be strengthened by the following consideration. In particular 1:8 is believed to describe the situation of 701: 'Daughter Zion is left like a cottage in a vineyard, like a garden hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.'⁵¹⁶ It is held that this refers to Jerusalem, which was besieged but not taken in 701, whereas most of Judah was overrun by the Assyrians. However, Dobbs-Allsopp has argued that the point of the simile is not that Jerusalem has been spared, but that the ravaging of the enemy left the city in ruins.⁵¹⁷ Parallel expressions from city laments make clear that the image of Jerusalem as a 'cottage' and a 'garden hut' does not indicate its survival but its downfall.⁵¹⁸ In the lamentation for Ur, for instance, the destruction of the sanctuary is described as follows: 'My house established by a faithful man, like a garden hut indeed was thrust on its side. My faithful house (...) like a tent, like a pulled-up harvest shed, like a pulled-up harvest shed indeed was exposed to wind and rain.'⁵¹⁹ The 'garden hut' and 'harvest shed' are temporary structures used during harvest time. The destroyed sanctuary is thus compared to 'dilapidated structures', abandoned after the harvest.⁵²⁰ Jerusalem, once a proud and strong city, has become something 'akin to a frail garden hut, deteriorating after the harvest'.⁵²¹ After the siege, to be understood as Yahweh's punishment, the city is ruined and abandoned like a garden hut after harvest.⁵²²

This interpretation of 1:8 is supported by the use of the term 'daughter Zion', which is particularly at home in the book of Lamentations.⁵²³ A final argument for connecting 1:4-8 with the destructive events of the early sixth century has been formulated by Berges, who points out that the motif of *שָׁמָה/שָׁמָה*, 'waste', throughout the book of Isaiah refers to the

⁵¹⁴ In particular the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and in the Pentateuchal traditions concerning the disobedient people and their punishment by Yahweh. Cf. also the motif of the strangers consuming the produce of the fields, which further occurs in Deut 28:49-51 and Jer 5:17.

⁵¹⁵ Ben Zvi 1991: 103-107.

⁵¹⁶ Hebrew *נְצִירָה* stems either from *נָצַר*, 'to guard' (qal ptc. passive, 'guarded') or is by-form of *נְצִירָה*, from *צָוַר*, 'to besiege' (ni. ptc., 'besieged'). Since the preceding similes emphasise the city's desolation, the first option seems unlikely. Besides, *עִיר* regularly occurs in combination with *צָוַר* (Deut 20:19, Judg 9:31, 2 Sam 20:15, 2 Kgs 24:11, Jer 21:4, 9, Ezek 4:3), but never with *נָצַר* 'to guard, to protect'. The likeliest reading is 'like a besieged city' (with most of the versions).

⁵¹⁷ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 146.

⁵¹⁸ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 146. For parallels, see Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 69-70.

⁵¹⁹ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 69, referring to Kramer 1940, lines 122-123 and 125-129. Similar phrases are found in other Mesopotamian lamentations: 'Enlil, you have turned the faithful house into a reed hut'; Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 69-70, referring to the text CT 42 26:13; cf. 6:20 (for the texts, Cohen 1988).

⁵²⁰ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 70. On Lam 2:6a, perhaps containing a similar expression, cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 69-70.

⁵²¹ Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 146.

⁵²² See Oesch (1994: 443) for a similar interpretation of 1:4-8.

⁵²³ The term *בַּת צִיּוֹן* as part of a simile further occurs in Jer 4:31 and Lam 2:13, both relating to Jerusalem's destruction. Furthermore, devastation of the fields around the main city is regularly part of the description in city laments (e.g. Lam 2:2); see Dobbs-Allsopp 1993: 66.

destruction brought about by the Babylonians.⁵²⁴ To conclude, 1:4-8 reflects the disastrous events of the early sixth century.

The exilic reworking of the Isaiah tradition has been decisive for the character of First Isaiah and for the image of the prophet. The image of Isaiah as a prophet who preached disaster to a wicked and disobedient people resulted from theological reflection developed after the events of 586 BCE. The exilic reworking is characterised by the view that the disasters that befell Judah are to be seen as Yahweh's just punishment of the people's disobedience.⁵²⁵ An important motif of this reworking is the designation *הָעָם הַזֶּה* 'this people', discussed in 2.1.1 above.

The exilic reworking must not be labelled Deuteronomistic. It has been rightly argued that First Isaiah hardly contains any passages that are in a strict sense Deuteronomistic.⁵²⁶ However, Deuteronomistic theology was not the only form in which (post)exilic reflection on the disasters of the early sixth century was expressed. The Isaiah tradition, in my opinion, underwent a literary reworking (which was not typically Deuteronomistic) that reflected on the disasters of the early sixth century and is to be situated in the exilic period.

2.4 *The Format of the Isaiah Tradition in the Assyrian Period*

2.4.1 *Material from the Eighth and Seventh Century*

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of the texts from First Isaiah that can be situated in the Assyrian period. The earliest layer of the Isaiah tradition consists of prophetic sayings and oracles related to specific moments in Judah's political history of the later part of the eighth century. The early material can be related to three episodes:

1) The Syro-Ephraimitic crisis of 734-732 BCE, to which are related the oracles against Ephraim and Aram, included within Isa 7-8 (7:2-3*.4-9a*; 7:14b.16; 7:20; 8:1-4*) and in 17:1b-3*.

2) Sargon's campaign of 720 BCE, to which are related the oracles announcing threat against Philistia and Samaria (14:29.31 and 28:1-4*), and the oracles condemning Assyria's imperialism within Isa 10 (10:5-9.13-15*; 10:24-25; 10:27b-32*).

3) The controversy about whether or not to rebel against Assyria trusting Egypt's military aid. This played a role in c. 713-711 BCE (Isa 20*) and reached a climax in 705-701 BCE. Related to this are the words against the Judean leaders within Isa 28-31 (28:7b-10; 28:12*; 28:14-18*; 29:15; 30:1-5*; 30:6b-8; 30:15*; 31:1.3*), and furthermore the

⁵²⁴ Berges 1998: 62-63. According to Berges (1998: 63), 1:7 is connected with 6:9-11: the hardening of the people, announced in 6:9-10, will come to an end only after the destruction of land and people has been completed (6:11, 1:7).

⁵²⁵ Becker (1997: 283), distinguishes between an *unheilstheologische Redaktion* (6:9.11; 8:5-8a; 28:7a.11-18*) and an *Ungehorsams-Redaktion* (1:2-20*; 28:12.16aβb; 29:9f.13-16; 30:1-2.4-5a.8-13.15f.17aβb; 31:2). In his view, these redactions turned Isaiah into a prophet of judgement and produced a literary corpus, which eventually developed into a prophetic book. Whereas Becker (1997: 240) acknowledges the close affinity between both redactions, I would go a step further, and propose that the literary reworking of the earlier material, present within Isa 6-8, 28-32 and in passages from the rest of First Isaiah, is part of one redactional stage (though presumably carried out by different hands). The extensive reworking of the Isaiah tradition originated from one and the same milieu.

⁵²⁶ Perlitt 1989.

woe-sayings of 5:8-23* with 10:1-2, and the critical oracles of 18:1-6*, 19:1b-4 and 22:15-18*.

It is likely, in my view, that the sayings and oracles were initially preserved in the form of small collections. The interrelation between the prophetic material and the various historical episodes will be worked out in chapter 4. The material attributed to the later part of the eighth century offers a clear picture of prophetic activity. The prophet spoke words of encouragement in situations of political-military crisis, he announced the destruction of the enemies, and he adopted a clear political position and played a public role. His consistent message was: do not resist or rebel against Assyria and do not trust Egyptian and Cushite power, but leave things to Yahweh. The prophetic function of Isaiah will be worked out in chapter 5.

A second identifiable layer of the Isaiah tradition consists of passages dealing with the destruction of Assyria and the restoration of Judah. They contain colourful descriptions of Assyria's destruction, a revision of Isa 10 (10:11.16-19, 10:26a.27a, 10:33-34), 14:24-27, 30:27-33, and 31:4-5.8-9. It is emphasised that Yahweh causes Assyria's destruction by means of cosmic powers, such as fire, flood and hailstorms. As Yahweh's actions against Assyria are set in an international perspective (14:26-27, 30:27-28), 8:9-10 and 17:12-14 are to be connected with these passages. Closely related to the motif of Assyria's destruction is the motif of Judah's restoration: the reign of a new Judaeen king, who is both authoritative and righteous, in 9:1-6, 11:1-5 and 32:1-2. These two themes, Assyria's downfall and the reign of the ideal king, are like two sides of a coin, since both are the result of Yahweh's intervention. These passages in all likelihood date from the Assyrian period. Yet they clearly differ from the eighth-century prophetic material. The best position is, in my view, to regard them as the product of a revision of the Isaiah tradition in the late seventh century. This will be worked out in chapter 6.

2.4.2 *The Format of the Isaiah Tradition*

Based on the analysis of the passages from First Isaiah presented in this chapter, I would like to present the suggestion that the Isaiah tradition in its seventh-century revised shape took the form of three textual compilations. Each compilation contained a series of earlier prophetic oracles and sayings, which originally related to a specific historical situation: 734-732, 720 and 705-701 BCE. The early material was extended with seventh-century passages. A remarkable feature within the revision consisted of the descriptions of the reign of the ideal king: 9:1-6, 11:1-5 and 32:1-2. Notwithstanding the many later developments of the Isaiah tradition, it can still be discerned that these three passages form the end of a textual unit. 9:1-6 forms the conclusion to the unit 6:1-9:6*, which contains the prophetic words relating to 734-732. Furthermore, 11:1-5 closes the cycle of 10:5-11:5, containing the words relating to 720. Finally, the *hēn*-saying of 32:1-2 marks the end of a series of *woe*-sayings and critical sayings against the political leaders of Jerusalem relating to the situation of 705-701 in 28-31*. I would like to suggest that these three passages, which in different terms describe the reign of an ideal king, each concluded a compilation of earlier prophetic words in a revised form. Each of them has a particular character. Significantly, the character of each portrayal of the ideal king corresponds to the nature of the compilation it concludes.

Whereas most of the material is still in place, part of it has been removed to Isa 13-23. This is a later composition of *maššā'*-prophecies, in which earlier material was incorporated. The earlier material was taken from the existing compilations, and inserted because it contributed to the subject of the collection: the fate of foreign nations. The early material identified in Isa 13-23 can be related to the respective compilations: material from Isa 17* (17:1b-3, 12-14) belonged to compilation 1, Isa 14* (14:24-27, 28-32) to compilation 2, and Isa 18-20*, 22* (18:1-6, 19:1b-4, 20:1-5, 22:15-18) to compilation 3. To this, two minor displacements of material must be added. 28:1-4, originally part of compilation 2, was at a later stage inserted into the complex of 28-32. It was positioned at the beginning of the unit, in order to create a parallel between the fate of Samaria (28:1-4) and that of Jerusalem (29:1-4; 28:7-22). Furthermore, the *woe*-sayings of 5:8-23* and 10:1-2, which may have formed an independent collection of prophetic sayings, are best associated with the material of compilation 3. At a later point it was integrated into the developing complex of Isa 2-12.

I suggest that the compilations adhered to a similar pattern, consisting of a dating formula and prophetic commission. This is followed by the prophetic words to which some comments are added. The compilations conclude with a portrayal of the reign of the ideal king:

	compilation 1	compilation 2	compilation 3
Dating formula	6:1	14:28	20:1-2*
Prophetic commission	6:1-8	14:28-32	20:1-5*
Early prophetic words	7:2-3a*.4-9a*, 14b.16, 20; 8:1-4; 17:1-3*	28:1-4; 10:5-15*, 24-25*, 28-32*	28:7b-18*; 29:15; 30:1-8*, 15*; 31:1-3*; 18:1-2*; 19:1b-4; 22:15-18; 5:8- 23*; 10:1-2
Comments	8:9-10; 17:12-14	14:24-27; 10:11, 16- 19, 26-27*, 33-34;	18:1-6; 30:27-33; 31:4-5.8- 9
Portrayal of ideal king	9:1-6	11:1-5	32:1-2

Compilation 1. Isa 6:1-9:6* (and 17:1b-3.12-14)

The compilation began with 6:1-8, a vision report concerning the commission of the prophet Isaiah, and concluded with 9:1-6, a depiction of the ideal king. Included are various prophetic oracles that originally dealt with the crisis of 734-732, i.e. 7:2-3a.4-9a*, 7:14b.16, 7:20, 8:1-4, and 17:1b-3a* and two short commentaries to the prophetic material, 8:9-10 and 17:12-14.

9:1-6 forms the climax of the compilation. The presentation of the ideal king in 9:1-6 adopts the style of the earlier prophetic words included in the compilation. In 9:5 the king is presented as: 'For a child has been born to us, a son given to us.' This corresponds with the birth announcements in 7:14b.16 and 8:3-4, according to which the son to be born was a hopeful sign. 9:5 echoes the terminology of 7:14b and 8:3 (ילד, בן, קרא שם). Both in the prophetic oracles and in the description of the ideal king, the son's name plays a crucial

role. In the prophetic oracles the name to be given expresses salvation for Judah ('Immanuel') and the destruction of the enemies ('Maher-shalal-hash-baz'), whereas in 9:5-6 the names typify the ideal character of the new king.

A remarkable element within this compilation is the use of the first person plural ('we', 'us'). This is found in 8:10, 'for God is with us' (כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים) and in 17:14, 'this is the fate of those who despoil us, and the lot of those who plunder us'. The 'us' are the people of Yahweh (the Judaeans), who, according to the prophetic announcement will be saved from their enemies by Yahweh (7:14b). This is explicitly confirmed by the comments of 8:9-10 and 17:12-14. In 8:9-10 and 17:12-14 the use of the 'us' language contributes to the effect of a hymnal style. In 9:5 the first person plural is used once more, 'a child has been born to us, a son given to us'. This use of the first person plural, in 8:10, 17:14 and 9:5 relates to the name 'Immanuel' in the prophetic material (7:14b). The revisers related this symbolic name from the eighth-century prophecy to the promise that Yahweh will destroy Judah's enemies (8:9-10, 17:12-14), and that he will establish in glory a new king on the throne of David (9:5-6). In this way, the late seventh-century events, as reflected in the revision, are presented as the outcome of the earlier prophecies.⁵²⁷

Isa 6:1 dates the commission of Isaiah several years before the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis: 'In the year that King Uzziah died' (c. 740 BCE). This creates a view of Isaiah who had been commissioned by Yahweh to prophesy some time before the crisis of 734-732. This presentation probably belongs to the construction of the prophetic image of Isaiah, part of the seventh-century revision. The vision report itself (6:1-8) is difficult to date. On the one hand, it reflects a retrospective interest in the words of Isaiah. Nevertheless, it could very well predate the seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition and be close in origin to the eighth-century prophetic material. In any case, the arrangement of a vision report beginning with a dating (6:1-8), followed by oracles and sayings and hymnal commentary (Isa 7*, 8*, 17*) and concluding with a picture of reversal – the aggressor destroyed, a new Judaeans king rules in glory (9:1-6) – is best situated in the seventh century as part of a revision of the earlier prophetic material.

Within this first compilation, 8:9-10, 17:12-14, and 9:3-4 take the position of the anti-Assyria passages in the two other compilations (see below). 8:9-10 and 17:12-14 comment on the prophetic material dealing with Aram and Ephraim. The prophetic material included in the first compilation focuses on the aggression posed to Judah by Aram and Ephraim. Assyria is mentioned as the agent of Yahweh, which destroys the aggressors. The seventh-century revision presents the destruction of Judah's enemies in rather general terms (8:9-10; 17:12-14). The unspecified reference to the 'nations' applies both to Aram and Ephraim, but secondarily, from the perspective of the seventh-century redaction, also to Assyria. The unspecified character is continued in 9:1-6. Here, Assyria is not mentioned explicitly either, but certainly implied.

⁵²⁷ A first person plural is also found in 6:8, where Yahweh says 'whom shall I commission, who shall go for us?'. Here, 'us' represents the divine council headed by Yahweh on whose behalf Isaiah speaks.

One further detail may be mentioned here. 7:8b, ‘Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people,’ is a secondary insertion within 7:4-9a*.⁵²⁸ It interrupts the coherence of 8a and 9a and does not make sense within the scope of the oracle.⁵²⁹ The verb *הרה* ‘to shatter’ (or elsewhere ‘to dismay’)⁵³⁰ frequently occurs in the seventh-century revisional material (8:9; 9:3; 30:31; 31:4, 9; cf. 20:5). 7:8b, furthermore, makes sense in the context of a seventh-century revision of the Isaiah tradition. It ‘announces’ that Ephraim will cease to be a nation, i.e. the political state would be destroyed by the Assyrians, the people deported, and new inhabitants brought into the land. The eradication of Ephraim as a nation in this context was presumably to imply that Judah would inherit the leftovers. This would be a seventh-century understanding of the name Shear-jashub, ‘a rest will come back’ (7:3). This view on Ephraim probably corresponded with the political ambitions current during Josiah’s reign. Although it remains a puzzle what events the revisers had in mind by the period of 65 years,⁵³¹ the phrase can be understood as a *vaticinium ex eventu* from a late seventh-century perspective, supporting Judah’s claims on northern territory.

Compilation 2. Isa 10:5-11:5 (and 14:24-27.28-32, 28:1-4)

The second compilation deals with Assyria’s imperialism and expansion. 11:1-5 forms the conclusion to this compilation. The way in which the ideal king operates in 11:1-5 forms a purposeful contrast with the brutal actions of Assyria described in Isa 10*. Contrary to the pride, self-satisfaction, and godlessness of the Assyrian king stands the wisdom and piety of the ideal king. The Assyrian king boasts, ‘by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding’ (10:13a). The ideal king, by contrast, is endowed with the spirit of Yahweh, a ‘spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh’ (11:2). In contrast to the brutal power of Assyria, ‘the stick’ (*שֶׁבֶט*, 10:5, 15), the ideal king rules with authority, ‘the stick of his mouth’ (*שֶׁבֶט פִּי*, 11:4), which is a purposefully chosen image. Assyria rules with a brutal hand (*יד*, 10:5, 10, 13, 14, 32), the Judean king rules with his mouth (11:4).⁵³²

14:24-27, which in its present context seems to be out of place after the unit on Babylonia (13:1-14:23), resembles the theme of the ‘Assyria cycle’ of Isa 10. It has

⁵²⁸ Roberts’ attempt (2004) to recover the supposedly original text of verse 8b, ‘within five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people, and within six Damascus will be removed from being a city’, is unconvincing. First, it is unlikely that so much went wrong within one verse (cf. Roberts 2004: 168, for the supposed errors). Moreover, to explain the change from ‘six’ (*שֵׁשׁ*) into ‘sixty’ (*שִׁשִּׁים*), Roberts’ reconstruction needs a verbal form beginning with *נ*. The suggestion *מוֹסַר*, taken from 17:1 (*הִגִּדָה רִמְשֶׁק מוֹסַר מֵעִיר*) however ignores that in 17:1 *הִגִּדָה* is followed by a *ptc.* (*מוֹסַר*), whereas in the reconstruction of 7:8 an imperfect is needed. Thus, MT cannot be explained as a corrupted text from Roberts’ suggested original.

⁵²⁹ Werlitz 1992: 199, 214, 250.

⁵³⁰ For *הרה* cf. Renz 1995: 224, suggesting to separate between *htt* 1 (< HTT) ‘zerbröckeln, zerbrechen, zu ende gehen’, and *htt* 2 (< HTT), ‘1. die psychische Reaktion der Furcht, des Erschreckens (im Niph.), ... 3. Metonymisch wird *htt* die Ursache dieser Reaktion angesprochen, der ‘Terror’, der als Sachgrund hinter dem Erschrecken steht’.

⁵³¹ Younger (2002a: 309-310) suggests that 7:8b, which seems to refer to c. 669-667 BCE (65 years after 734-732), is to be connected with a repopulation of Samaria by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.

⁵³² So also Beuken 2003: 304.

therefore been suggested that this passage originally belonged to the material of Isa 10.⁵³³ The theme of the early prophecies included in the second compilation, 14:29.31, 28:1-4, 10:5-9.13-15*, 10:24-25*, 10:27b-32*, was that Assyria as Yahweh's instrument was ordered to take action against Philistia (14:29.31) and Ephraim (28:1-4, 10:5-6), but went astray by following its own agenda of worldwide destruction, which included Judah. To this the revision added that Assyria therefore was severely punished. I suggest that the early prophetic words included in this compilation originally referred to Sargon II, in particular to his campaign of 720 BCE.

14:28-32* is to be connected with the material of this second compilation too. I have argued that the heading in 14:28 is secondary to the oracle of 14:29.31. Whereas the original oracle refers to the death of an Assyrian king (Tiglath-pileser) and his successor, 14:28 changes this to the death of Ahaz, implying that Hezekiah acted as the overlord of Philistia. This pro-Judaean presentation typically belongs to the later, seventh-century revision. The heading of 14:28 closely resembles that of 6:1. I suggest this compilation began with 14:28-32*, followed by the Assyria-cycle of Isa 10 (including 28:1-4 and 14:24-27) and concluded by the portrayal of the ideal king in 11:1-5. If the suggestion that 14:28-32* formed the beginning of this compilation is right, it makes an inclusion with 11:1-5. 14:28-32* presents Hezekiah as a strong Judaean king who dominated the Philistines, with terms resembling that of 11:1, where the ideal king (Josiah) is depicted (בֶּן־תְּרֵשֶׁת, יִצְחָא) (פְּרָה/פְּרִי).

The revisers were not interested in an accurate historical portrayal of Assyria. Whereas the prophetic words originally referred to Sargon, in the revision they became the basis for a typological presentation of the Assyrian oppression in general. What counted for the revisers was their conviction that Isaiah had rightly foretold the collapse of Assyrian rule.⁵³⁴

Compilation 3. Isa 28-32* (and 5:8-23*.10:1-2* and 18-20.22*)

The prophetic material included in this compilation dealt with the issue of rebellion against Assyria. Isaiah emphasised that trusting in Egypt for military support against Assyria was senseless and that those leaders advocating rebellion violated Yahweh's will. Whereas the prophetic material of compilation 1 announced the destruction of Aram and Ephraim, and the material of compilation 2 critically dealt with Assyria's imperialism, the third compilation contains both polemic sayings against the Judaean leaders and material denouncing Egypt. The sayings directed against the prophet's opponents, the political (and religious) leaders of Jerusalem are found in 28:7b-10; 28:15-18*; 29:15; 30:1-5*; 31:1.3a*; 5:8-23*.10:1-2*; 22:15-18*. Furthermore, words against Egypt and Cush on which the political leaders trusted are found in 18:1b-6*, 19:1b-4*, 30:6-8*. Finally, as a positive counterweight against the doomed politics of rebellion of the ruling elite, the prophet points to Yahweh's standards, in 28:16*, 28:12*, 30:15*. Whereas the prophetic material of compilations 1 and 2 focuses on external enemies that threaten Judah's peace (Aram and Ephraim, and Assyria), the material of compilation 3 deals with the advocates of rebellion as internal enemies of the state, threatening Judah's peace.

⁵³³ E.g. Blenkinsopp 2000a: 289.

⁵³⁴ Sweeney 1996b: 116.

The seventh-century revision dealt with the destruction of Assyria: 30:27-33* and 31:4-5.8-9. It is asserted that it is Yahweh, no human hand, that saves Judah from the Assyrian oppression. The compilation concluded with 32:1-2, another portrayal of the ideal king. Again, the depiction of the ideal king is closely related to the material incorporated in the compilation. Apart from the king, the leaders or officers (סִרְיָ) are also mentioned: 'See, a king will reign in righteousness, and officers will rule with justice'. This forms a purposeful contrast to the image of the wicked leaders in the polemic words of the prophet Isaiah. In 28:15, the leaders are accused of having made lies their refuge and falsehood their shelter, which is a denouncement of Egypt, in which the leaders of Judah have put their trust in the rebellion against Assyria. Further, 28:17-18 announces that the leaders together with their deceptive refuge Egypt will fall. By contrast, in the portrayal of the ideal situation in 32:1-2, both the king and the leaders are presented as a reliable hiding-place and a covert. The rule of the king and the princes, marked by 'justice and righteousness', is presented as the fulfilment of Yahweh's announcement in 28:16-17*. In contrast to the 'Assyrian rock' (i.e. the Assyrian king) that passes away in terror (31:9), the righteous Judaeon king is like a protective rock (cf. the 'foundation stone', laid by Yahweh, 28:16). Finally, the form of 32:1-2, an exclamation beginning with הִנֵּה, 'Behold!', relates to the form of the *woe*-sayings (וִהִי), which dominate the prophetic material of this compilation.

The third compilation may have begun with a dating analogous to that of compilations 1 and 2. Isa 20 originally began with a dating closely resembling that of 6:1 and 14:28: 'In the year that the *tartānu*, commissioned by King Sargon of Assyria, campaigned against Ashdod, Yahweh spoke to Isaiah.' This refers to the period 712-711, when the city of Ashdod rebelled against Assyria. Isa 20:1-5* prefigures the issue of Judah's rebellion of 705-701, and already points to its disastrous outcome. Therefore, the rebellion of Ashdod and Isaiah's symbolic act formed a good point of departure for the theme of the third compilation.

Each of the three compilations presumably began with a historical reference, introducing the prophetic activity and commission of the prophet Isaiah (6:1, 14:28, 20:1-2*). Moreover, each of them concluded with a portrayal of the ideal king (9:1-6, 11:1-5 and 32:1-2). These portrayals of the ideal king, the climax to the compilations, probably are indicative of the purpose of the compilations. I will argue in chapter 6 that the ideal king in all likelihood refers to Josiah, during whose reign the revision of the earlier prophetic material was undertaken. The prophetic material, included in the three compilations, probably pre-existed in the form of small collections. The new material of the seventh-century revision was only loosely attached to the earlier material included.

2.4.3 Conclusion

During the late seventh century the figure of Isaiah was associated with the promise that Judah would be liberated from Assyrian domination, though not through rebellion. The situation during Josiah's reign in the second half of the seventh century was regarded as proving the prophet right. The oracles attributed to Isaiah, which had been preserved, were edited and republished in the light of the new situation. In its revised version the Isaiah tradition was marked by a perspective of state ideology: the destruction of Assyria and the political restoration of Judah under Josiah are presented as both resulting from Yahweh's

CHAPTER 2

intervention, which, as is suggested, was already announced by the prophet Isaiah. In this way, Isaiah's reputation served the glorification of the political situation under Josiah.

The disastrous events of the early sixth century – the fall of Jerusalem, the collapse of the state, the end of the dynasty, and the Babylonian exile – led to a profound reconsideration of the past. Rather than to leave the Isaiah tradition behind, it was thoroughly reworked in order to get it into lines with the new views on Israel's past and in order to use the authority of the figure of Isaiah for the new ideas. These views were, in short, that the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem was seen as the result of Yahweh's punishment because of the sinful disobedience of the people. Among the strategies deployed for connecting the new views with the earlier material, we see first the historical analogy that as Northern Israel was punished for its sins, so Judah had been punished as well. A second strategy was the generalisation of the specific criticism against Isaiah's opponents, the leading class of Jerusalem, so as to apply it to the people as a whole. It was this transformation of the Isaiah tradition, probably situated in the sixth century, that created the image of Isaiah as a prophet of judgement.