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THEME AND STRUCTURE IN ISAIAH 28–33
A UNIFIED AND COHERENT READING CENTERED ON CHAPTER 30

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
G. Vincent Medina
May 2009

Approved by

Dr. Andrew Bartelt Advisor

Dr. Paul Raabe Reader

Dr. David Schmitt Reader

To Pam

רבות בנות עשו חיל ואת עלית על-כלנה

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABBREVIATIONS	vii
ABSTRACT	xi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
The Current Status of the Question	7
The Purpose of the Study.....	24
Methodology.....	25
2. ISAIAH 28	31
Text and Translation.....	31
Structure.....	48
Thought Progression.....	60
Thematic Coherence	63
3. ISAIAH 29	66
Text and Translation.....	66
Structure.....	81
Thought Progression.....	90
Thematic Coherence	94
4. ISAIAH 30	99
Text and Translation.....	99

Structure.....	117
Thought Progression.....	130
Thematic Coherence.....	132
5. ISAIAH 31–32	135
Text and Translation.....	135
Structure.....	146
Thought Progression.....	156
Thematic Coherence.....	160
6. ISAIAH 33	164
Text and Translation.....	164
Structure.....	173
Thought Progression.....	182
Thematic Coherence.....	188
7. THEME AND STRUCTURE IN ISAIAH 28–33: THE CENTRALITY OF CHAPTER 30	10
The Structure of Isaiah 28–33.....	192
Reading Isaiah 28–33 as a Whole.....	223
8. CONCLUSION	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY	242
VITA	261

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BHRG	van der Merwe, Christo, Jackie A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze. <i>A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> . London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament. Edited by M. Noth and H. W. Wolff.
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CC	Continental Commentaries
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
C RTP	<i>Cahiers de la Revue de Theologie et de Philosophie</i>
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
Dav	A. B. Davidson. <i>Hebrew Syntax</i> . 3d ed. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901.
GKC	E. Kautzsch. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . 2d English ed., edited by A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
EAJT	<i>East Asia Journal of Theology</i>

<i>EgT</i>	<i>Eglise et théologie</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FOTL</i>	Forms of Old Testament Literature
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBHS</i>	Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>J-M</i>	Paul Joüon. <i>Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique</i> . Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1923. Translated and edited by T. Muraoka as <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , 1991.
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSem</i>	<i>Journal of Semitics</i>

<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NCB	New Century Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
<i>RivB</i>	<i>Revista biblica italiana</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Theo</i>	<i>Theologika</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>Wms</i>	R. J. Williams. Hebrew Syntax: An Outline. 2d ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

ABSTRACT

Medina, G. Vincent “Theme and Structure in Isaiah 28–33: A Unified and Coherent Reading Centered on Ch. 30.” Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2009. 260 pp.

This dissertation represents an attempt to demonstrate that Isaiah 28–33 is a compositional unity with structural and thematic coherence. Beginning with the widely recognized structuring function of the six *hōy*-oracles found in this section of Isaiah (Isa 28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1), the dissertation seeks to discover a deeper and more comprehensive structuring principle. It argues that Isaiah 30 is the center of Isaiah 28–33, and that 30:15–18 is the central passage. This thesis is supported by structural evidence showing that ch. 30 is located at the center of 28–33. It is argued that the pattern of the woe oracles in this corpus points to ch. 30 as the center, and that ch. 30 itself is arranged concentrically with vv. 15–18 at its center. The thesis that 30:15–18 is the central unit of chs. 28–33 is also supported quantitatively by syllable and line counts which show that 15d, “in returning and rest you will be saved” is located at the very epicenter of these chapters. The case for the centrality of ch. 30 is also made by showing that it is linked thematically to all the other sections of chs. 28–33. Based upon careful structural and thematic analysis the dissertation argues that the central message of Isa 28–33 is salvation by trusting/waiting. This message challenges the people of God to cease their frantic efforts to cobble together plans of their own and to look to YHWH as their true savior. Only when the people Zion trust that his plans are right and wait patiently for their realization, will they experience the blessing for which they are destined.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

This study seeks to make a contribution to the current discussions of the structural cohesion of one of the major units of the book of Isaiah, chs. 28–33. Scholars and readers of Isaiah recognized long ago the structuring function of the six *hōy*-oracles found in this section of the book (Isa. 28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). Based on these passages B. Duhm identifies these chapters as a “*Büchlein*,” and F. Delitzsch dubbed them “the book of woes.”¹ Even when differences regarding the limits of the section are taken into account,² there is broad consensus among scholars that these *hōy* utterances belong together. Blenkinsopp is representative when he writes,

¹ Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* (5th ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1968), 194; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Two Volumes in One, (vol. 7 of *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* trans. James Martin; ed. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2: 2.

² Currently there is a some disagreement scholars regarding the boundaries of the section. The literary *terminus a quo* of the unit with the first woe oracle in 28:1 seems fairly certain, but its *terminus ad quem* is a matter of scholarly debate. Many regard ch. 33 as the legitimate ending-boundary of the unit (Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, 194; Gary Stansell, “Isaiah 28–33: Blest Be the Tie That Binds (Isaiah Together),” in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney; Sheffield, Eng: Sheffield, 1996), 68–103). Others, however, would suggest a shorter version of this section ending at ch. 31 (Jörg Barthel, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte: Die Jesajaüberlieferung in Jes 6–8 und 28–31* (FAT 19; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1977), 248) or 32 (Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39* (2d ed; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 234; Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja, Band II: Kapitel 24–39* (ZB 19; Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1962), 45; J. C. Exum, “Isaiah 28–32: A Literary Approach” *SBL Seminar Papers, 1979* (2 vols.; ed. P. J. Achtemeier; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 2:145.), or a longer version which includes chs. 34 and 35 (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 380; Childs, *Isaiah*. (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 199). However, those who defend a shorter unit ending before ch. 33 must either ignore the sixth woe oracle (33:1) or explain it away in some fashion, while those who advocate a longer unit must explain why chs. 34–35, which appear to be a self-contained unit, nevertheless belong with chs. 28–33.

In spite of the absence of a title or superscription, a new section of the book certainly begins with ch. 28. The opening verse introduces the first in a series of six woe-sayings just as the opening verse of the previous major section (ch. 13–27) introduces a series of sayings presented under the title *maśśā*³ (oracle).

But, while there may be consensus regarding the structuring role of *hōy* in these six chapters, the question of whether or not the unit marked off by these *hōy*-utterances possesses a deeper structuring principle or internal coherence remains unsettled. With the exception of the very brief summaries offered in major commentaries, only one or two studies have even gestured toward a solution. Certainly no book or monograph length treatment has been undertaken with the goal of identifying the overall structure of chs. 28–33.

This may be due to the fact that many scholars consider Isaiah 28–33 a composite text with little structural definition beyond the *hōy* utterances which define its limits. For example, L. Laberge argues that the final form of Isa. 28–33 is a “composite text” brought together by “concatenation through the use of key-words and thematic similarities.”⁴ In light of this he suggests that “trying to find a literary pattern underlying all the *hōy*-oracles seems to be an impossible task. I do not think that any common elements other than the *hōy* which invariably begins these oracles are to be expected.”⁵

The author of these words represents the familiar form-critical/ redaction-critical paradigm which assumes that prophetic preaching consisted of brief self-contained utterances which were only secondarily gathered into collections by redactors. The task of form criticism is to isolate these smaller units, classify them as to genre and trace their history from their original life-setting to their present position in the text.⁶ From a form critical perspective “the redactor merely

³ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 380.

⁴ Léo Laberge, “The Woe-Oracles of Isaiah 28–33,” *Église et théologie* 13 (1982): 157–190.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 123.

collected the words of the prophet, and the book was judged to be an anthology, so that the whole did not have an integrated structure enabling the reader to read the book as a connected and coherent piece of literature.”⁷ Perhaps we should not be surprised then that Laberge demurred from attempting to find a larger structure within Isa. 28–33.

By way of contrast, the present study will bypass diachronic questions related to the prehistory of the text (questions of source, form and redaction criticism), choosing rather to focus on the text in its final form. This study seeks to make a contribution to the current discussions of the structural cohesion of the book of Isaiah, specifically the major unit found in chs. 28–33. We will argue that these chapters form a unified whole, not simply because they seem loosely arranged around a series of six woes, but also because they display a thematic and structural coherence, including a symmetry that is characteristic of well-worked pieces of poetic rhetoric. Thus our study will be thoroughly synchronic rather than diachronic in nature.

Indeed, one of the most significant discussions in current Isaiah studies concerns the value of synchronic versus diachronic analysis. By the term “diachronic” we mean those methods whose primary goal is to get behind the text in order to uncover the historical process and dynamics which brought it into being over time. The objective of such approaches is to examine both “the history *in* the text,” and “the history *of* the text.”⁸ Those who employ these methodologies see the text primarily as a “window” which permits the reader to reconstruct the world behind the text as a prerequisite to determining its true meaning. Concomitant with this is an acceptance of the critical principle which sees the determination of the genuineness of the

⁷ E. W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 12–13.

⁸ John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 53.

text, its historical reliability, and the process of its transmission as essential tasks of interpretation.

Such an approach often renders it difficult, if not impossible to read the text as it stands. Even when the final form of the text is taken as the starting point, as with many recent redaction critics, it becomes a launching point from which to identify previous redactional layers, assign them a date and then determine what their message was to previous readers of the book. Such an approach does not privilege the final or canonical text at all, but rather, treats it as simply the last in a series of relectures in the book's history. Indeed, often earlier redactional layers elicit attention equal to or greater than the final form of the text. Diachronic methodologies include methods such as historical, source, form, redaction, and tradition criticism.

On the other hand, "synchronic" methodologies focus attention primarily on the text in its current form. Their objective is not to uncover the history behind the text, but to interact with the text itself. In fact synchronic approaches are often wary of overstated claims regarding the ability of interpreters to truly know what lies behind a text. They are interested in the text as a text, and they examine it in light of literary and linguistic theory. That is not to say that practitioners of synchronic methodologies are not interested in historical issues. Indeed, in most cases their work presupposes historical investigation.⁹ There is, however, an insistence that the primary focus of scholarly attention should be the text itself.

Christian and Jewish biblical exegesis prior to the enlightenment had much in common with synchronic exegesis.¹⁰ While pre-critical interpreters were not unaware of the historical dimensions of the text, they tended to take the canon of scripture and the canonical books which

⁹ See J. Cheryl Exum, "Isaiah 28–32," 124.

¹⁰ It should be pointed out however, that modern advocates of synchronic readings of the text of Scripture are not necessarily advocating a return to the type of allegorization and proof-texting which characterized pre-critical biblical interpretation.

comprised it as a unified literary work, and their appropriation of the text was much more immediate and personal. They did not experience the phenomenon known as “distanciation” in the same degree as their modern counterparts.¹¹ This is because they did not view the text primarily as an object of analysis, but as the matrix of divine revelation. They approached the text in a personal way because they expected to encounter a personal God through it.¹²

However, with the advent of historical criticism this canonical and synchronic approach to Scripture gave way to diachronic analysis. In Isaiah studies this led to a reevaluation of the authenticity of the text. Whereas historically Isaiah had been regarded as a unitary literary composition originating with the eighth century prophet, Isaiah of Jerusalem, it more and more came to be regarded as a composite work, very little of which originated with Isaiah himself. This brought about the classical critical partitioning of Isaiah into two (1–39, 40–66) or three (1–39, 40–55, 56–66) major divisions, known as First, Second and/or Third Isaiah. This tripartite structure was believed to have developed in three stages. The first major section of Isaiah (Proto-Isaiah) included chapters 1–39 and originated in the pre-exilic era. This section contained the genuine oracles of Isaiah, which were mainly located in chapters 1–12 or 28–33. The second major expansion of Isaiah took place just prior to the fall of Babylon to the Persians around 540 BC. At this time chapters 40–55 were added as a message of encouragement to the Jews in captivity. The third and final expansion of the book occurred in post-exilic Judah around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and addresses the religious concerns of nascent fifth century Judaism. This third section includes chs. 56–66. Under this theory the three major sections of Isaiah were largely regarded as three separate works which were only secondarily related to one another.

¹¹ Donald A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 23–24.

¹² See David Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” *Theology Today* 37 (1980): 27–38.

With the development of form and redaction criticism, the text of Isaiah (and the other prophets) suffered even further fragmentation. The form-critical/ redaction critical paradigm assumes that prophetic preaching consisted of brief self-contained utterances which were only secondarily gathered into collections by redactors. The task of form criticism is to isolate these smaller units, classify them as to genre and trace their history from their original life-setting to their present position in the text.¹³ From a form critical perspective “the redactor merely collected the words of the prophet, and the book was judged to be an anthology, so that the whole did not have an integrated structure enabling the reader to read the book as a connected and coherent piece of literature.”¹⁴

Happily, recent developments in the field of Isaiah research have led to a renewed interest in the final form of the text.¹⁵ During the last few decades of the twentieth century a shift occurred in Isaiah scholarship. A new generation of Isaiah scholars began to emphasize the redactional unity of the final form of the book of Isaiah.¹⁶ Under the new paradigm scholars spoke less in terms of sources and more in terms of a series of redactions or re-readings of Isaiah in which the entire document was supplemented and worked over in the interest of appropriating the prophet’s message for a new set of historical circumstances.¹⁷ Key in this regard was the

¹³ Berlin, *Poetics*, 123.

¹⁴ E. W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 12–13.

¹⁵ See Ronald Clements, “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” *Int* 36 (1982): 117–29; Roy F. Melugin and Marvin Sweeney, eds., *New Visions of Isaiah*. (JSOT 214; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

¹⁶ For a review of the literature see Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research,” *CurBS* 1 (1993): 141–162.

¹⁷ Christopher Seitz illustrates the new paradigm by referencing an old farmhouse in which he once lived. From the outside it had a standard rectangular form, but upon investigation it appeared that more than one house had been combined to form this single farmhouse. Upon further investigation he learned that the house had not been formed from three separate houses, each with its own kitchen, bathroom, etc., rather an original house had gone through several enlargements, each with a view toward its final shape. Each addition forced modifications throughout the house in order to maintain a single unified profile. Likewise, the book of Isaiah was not enlarged by mechanically joining three separate works to each other, rather, with each enlargement of the book the whole was reworked and

theory of a seventh century Josianic redaction advanced by H. Barth¹⁸ and widely adopted, notably by Clements.¹⁹ In addition to Barth's seventh century redaction, scholars postulated sixth and fifth century redactions of the book of Isaiah.²⁰ According to some, Isaiah did not acquire its final form until the time of the Hasmonians in the 2nd century BC.²¹

Tate describes the evolution of Isaiah scholarship as one of moving from a "one prophet" approach to a "three book" and then a "one book" approach.²² Current scholarship does not concern itself so much with distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic oracles, as with the process of the book's formation. The center of interest is the book itself. The title of Williamson's monograph, *The Book Called Isaiah*, amply illustrates this trend. No longer do the majority of Isaiah scholars concern themselves with the words of the prophet himself.²³ Their interests lie in the "Isaianic tradition" and in how that tradition was adapted to meet the needs of the faith community long after Isaiah of Jerusalem had quit the stage of history.

modified in order to form a unified whole. Christopher Seitz, "Isaiah 1–66: Making Sense of the Whole," in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 105–126.

¹⁸ Hermann Barth, *Die Jesaja Worte in der Josiazeit: Israel und und Assur als Thema einer produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajaüberlieferung*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977).

¹⁹ Clements, R. E. *Isaiah 1–39*, (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

²⁰ Sweeney sees four separate redactions of the book of Isaiah. First an 8th century collection of the prophet's writings including material scattered throughout chs. 1, 2–4, 5–10, 14–23, and 28–32; second a late 7th century redaction written in the light of the decline of Assyrian power and intended to advance the interests of the Josianic kingdom; third, a late 6th century redaction which comprises chs. 2–32, 35–55 and 60–62 and portrays "Cyrus as the royal deliverer who acts on behalf of YHWH to rebuild the temple and to redeem the exiles" (56); and finally, a fourth edition dating from the time of Ezra Nehemiah which constitutes the final form of the book; Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 51–60.

²¹ Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 13–39*; Jacques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique: Isaïe I–XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millènaire d'expérience religieuse en Israël* (EB; Paris: Gabalda, 1977).

²² Marvin E. Tate, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Study, in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

²³ H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Within the current milieu numerous studies have been forthcoming with the aim of demonstrating how one or another of the major divisions of Isaiah link up with the book as a whole. Numbered among these would be the aforementioned study by H. G. M. Williamson, the subtitle of which is “Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction.” Here Williamson undertakes a systematic survey of all the major sections of Proto-Isaiah with the aim of showing how Deutero-Isaiah supplemented and reworked the Isaianic tradition and, in this way, produced a new edition of the book with a unified perspective appropriate to his particular historical situation. Other such studies would included that of Ackroyd on chapters 1–12, Sweeney on chapters 1–4, and Seitz on chapter 36–39.²⁴

The Current Status of the Question

Unfortunately, to date, relatively little attention has been paid to Isaiah 28–33.²⁵ Of all the major divisions of Isaiah 1–39, chapters 28–33 have perhaps received the least scholarly attention. As recently as 1983, Gary Stansell writes,

Chapters 28–33 present, within the structure of the book of Isaiah, a kind of oddity. It would perhaps not be too much to claim that these chapters, in some scholarly discussions of the book, remain an exegetical step-child. In more recent studies that are interested in the unity of Isaiah, chs. 28–33 have not to my knowledge played a particularly important role.²⁶

The few studies which have been published are primarily diachronic in nature and work within the dominant form/redaction critical paradigm. They suffer from a preoccupation with the

²⁴ Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*, (BZAW 177; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988); P. R. Ackroyd, “Isaiah 1–12: Presentation of a Prophet,” *VTSup* 29 (1978), 16–48; C. R. Seitz, *Zion’s Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

²⁵ As already noted in n. 2, there is some disagreement concerning the boundaries of this unit. While recognizing that there is not complete unanimity among scholars there is general consensus that 28–33 form a unit. We will work under that assumption and hope that the work of this dissertation will serve to confirm that the unit ends at ch. 33.

²⁶ Stansell, “Isaiah 28–33,” 99.

redactional history of the text, and with the tendency toward fragmentation which, in spite of attempts to overcome it, is intrinsic to the methodology. Those synchronic studies which have been conducted are either too brief, do not adequately explicate the structure of chs. 28–33, or are narrowly focused on philological issues. At this point we will turn our attention to a brief survey of recent studies of Isa. 28–33 with a view to establishing the need for renewed attention to this portion of the book of Isaiah. We will begin with a review of diachronic approaches taken in chronological order.

Diachronic Studies

In 1982 Léo LaBerge published a study of the woe oracles in Isaiah 28–33. Here Laberge treats all six of the woe oracles in 28–33 as “a good repertory of texts from Isaiah,”²⁷ and he suggests that they “constitute the backbone of ch. 28–33.”²⁸ The fundamental assumptions which inform this study are those of form and redaction criticism. He asserts that “Isa 28–33 do not contain long units (be they in poetry or in prose)” and that “small units from Isaiah’s legacy were susceptible to transformation in the course of the transmission of the text.”²⁹ Hence in the final form of Isa. 28–33 what we have is a “composite text” brought together by “concatenation through the use of key-words and thematic similarities.”³⁰

In this article Laberge treats each of the woe-oracles in turn, examining in each case (1) the delimitation of the unit, and (2) its poetic elements. Each of the poems is set out (transliterated) in poetic lines and strophes with “the indication of suspected additions to the text.”³¹ Although he does not follow through with his suggestion, the author states that the next stage of his study

²⁷ Laberge, “The Woe-Oracles of Isaiah 28–33,” 188.

²⁸ Ibid, 158.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 159.

³¹ Ibid.

would be to “investigate... how the fact that the *hōy*-oracles are at the center of the structure of these chapters helps us to understand why these *hōy*-oracles have attracted the other segments present in these difficult chapter to themselves.”³² In other words he sees this study as a first step toward a full-fledged redactional history of the text. Hence, the assumptions which inform this article are purely diachronic. Laberge does not appear to be interested in finding either an overarching structure or unifying theme in Isa. 28–33. He does suggest that the woe-oracles themselves present a “progression which shows the structure of these chapters.”³³ Beyond this however he does not believe that any literary structure is discoverable. He writes, “Trying to find a literary pattern underlying all the *hōy*-oracles seems to be an impossible task. I do not think that any common elements other than the *hōy* which invariably begins these oracles are to be expected.”³⁴

On the basis of the preceding summary it seems safe to say that the chief value of Laberge’s study consists of providing fodder for further redactional study of the text. Laberge also makes valuable observations regarding the poetic elements of the woe-oracles themselves. On the other hand this work is of little value to anyone attempting to discover an overarching structure or arrangement in Isa. 28–33. In fact, he avers that such does not exist. His observation that the six *hōy*-oracles function as the “backbone” for the section is no more than any casual reader of the text might have noticed.

In a 1989 doctoral dissertation written at the University of Edinburg, M. O’Kane provides a redactional study of Isa. 28–33 modeled upon a similar study by M. Sweeney (1988) on chapters

³² Ibid, 189.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 190.

1–4 of Isaiah.³⁵ While claiming to begin with the “final form of the text,” O’Kane’s study is thoroughly redactional. In other words, it seeks to establish the redactional history of the parts of the text as a way of discerning the role which each of the major parts plays in the composition of the whole. Hence, his study ultimately falls into the atomistic tendencies which are characteristic of form/redaction critical treatments. O’Kane’s assumptions become clear in his explanation of this reason for rejecting canonical criticism as a basis for his study. He writes,

For the purpose of this study, the *canon criticism* approach of Childs [1979] is also of limited value. From the perspective of the book of Isaiah, it seems highly improbable that the process of canonization had anything to do with the reasons why the book acquired its present shape.³⁶

Aside from the irrelevance of this observation *vis a vis* the role of chs. 28–33 in the book of Isaiah as a whole, this statement reveals much about O’Kane’s methodology. He is not so much concerned with the present shape of the text as with how this shape was acquired through a lengthy redactional process. Despite all protestations to the contrary, this study is thoroughly diachronic.

O’Kane treats each section of Isaiah 28–33 in three parts: (1) an introduction which reviews the scholarly discussion on the passage, its provenance, date, etc., (2) vocabulary—the most significant words in each verse are examined in light of their use in Isaiah and elsewhere in the Old Testament, (3) context—he explores the role each section plays in Isaiah 28–33 in light of the use of vocabulary.³⁷ It is fair to say that the dominant feature of O’Kane’s study is the use of vocabulary. This is helpful on one level, but tends to turn the dissertation into a series of word studies.

³⁵ M. O’Kane, “Isaiah 28–33: A Literary and Contextual Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1989), ii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

Ultimately O’Kane’s dissertation makes no attempt to suggest a macrostructure for Isaiah 28–33 nor even to explain why it should be taken as a unit in itself. Indeed, in this study,

the sections broadly follow the divisions accepted by the major commentators. In some cases, the sections are more obviously unified by theme, vocabulary or *inclusio* e.g. 31:1–3. In others, the division of material is arbitrary and pragmatic in that *its purpose is to present units of material or manageable size that are less clearly unified and of a more obvious composite nature* [emphasis added] e.g. 30:19–26, 27–33.”³⁸

In the end, what O’Kane has to offer is another redaction-critical study of Isaiah 28–33, supplemented by an attempt to tie this section in with other sections of the book via verbal echoes. This is fine as far as it goes, and one could argue that it supports a certain redactional unity in the book of Isaiah in which chs. 28–33 participate. Nevertheless, it leaves many questions unanswered and fails to advance our understanding of the internal literary structure of these chapters.

In a brief 1995 article, B. Gosse argues that “in Isa. 28–32 we have a reflection on the relation between the redaction of the whole book of Isaiah and the work of the prophet Isaiah himself.”³⁹ This article is an example of the contemporary tendency in redaction criticism to attempt to relate the parts of Isaiah to the whole document. To accomplish this Gosse focuses on two passages, 29:14–24 and 28:1–4. According to Gosse the book mentioned in 29:18 refers back to the sealed writing mentioned in 8:16 which anticipates a better future after a period of darkness. He then connects the reference to the “crown” in 28:1–4 with references to Jerusalem in 4:2–6 and 62:3, both of which are said to stem from a later relecture of Isaiah. In the end Gosse’s conclusion is not entirely surprising since it falls in line with the conclusions usually drawn in studies of this type. He writes,

³⁸ Ibid, 15–16.

³⁹ B. Gosse, “Isaïe 28–32 et la redaction d’ensemble du livre d’Isaïe.” *SJOT* 9 (1995):75–82.

La conclusion de deux études présentées ci-dessus qu'en Isaïe 28–32 les éléments anciens et nouveaux de la rédaction du livre d'Isaïe sont étroitement mêlés. La réflexion sur les enseignements anciens du prophète donne lieu à une relecture, qui a bien au-delà de ces chapitres, inspire la rédaction d'ensemble du livre.⁴⁰

Jörg Barthel's 1997 book, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte: Die Jesajaüberlieferung in Jes 6–8 und 28–31* is a historical-critical treatment of Isaiah 6–8 and 28–31 originally done as a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Hans-Jürgen Hermisson.⁴¹ The methodology of the study is fundamentally redaction-critical in nature, but there is a systematic attempt to engage with more recent synchronic literary approaches to the text. Barthel describes his approach as beginning with the final form (*Endgestalt*) of the text and working out from there.⁴² However, in addition to this he simultaneously attempts to identify “*des Buches verschiedene kompositorische Entwürfe*.”⁴³ This dual approach (*doppelte Perspektive*) represents an attempt to address both the diachronic and synchronic aspects of the text. The book consists largely of close readings of the text. For each major section Barthel provides his own translation, textual notes, an analysis and interpretation. The analysis portion of each section is taken up with form and redaction-critical concerns as well as literary analysis.

While Barthel tries to do due diligence to the synchronic element of the text, it is clear that diachronic concerns predominate in this study. This is most clearly evident in the fact that Barthel does not pay any attention to those sections of the text which he regards as “secondary.” Hence, in the section of the book which covers chs. 6–8 Barthel excludes 7:18–25 and 8:19–23, and in the section on chs. 28–31 he provides no analysis of 29:17–24 or 30:18–33. It goes without saying that chs. 32–33 are left untouched since Barthel sees ch. 31 as the end of the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 82.

⁴¹ Jörg Barthel, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte: Die Jesajaüberlieferung in Jes 6–8 und 28–31* (FAT 19; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997).

⁴² Ibid, 248.

⁴³ Ibid.

section. Chapter 31 is identified as the end of the unit simply because Barthel regards this chapter as the last of the genuinely Isaian sections. The dominance of diachronic considerations is also evident in Barthel's practice of defaulting to a diachronic approach whenever he encounters discontinuity or incoherence in the text. Landy writes regarding this, "From a literary-critical perspective, a major problem with Barthel's historical-critical approach is that it displaces incoherence from the synchronic to the diachronic axis. Relatively consistent literary strata are isolated, at the cost of any sort of continuity."⁴⁴ He goes on to comment in the same vein, "Barthel, like all historical-critical scholars is relatively intolerant of ambiguity. The separation of literary strata is predicated on the desire to discover single coherent messages."⁴⁵ Hence, for all its thoroughness and attention to literary detail, Barthel's work is essentially another diachronic treatment of the text of Isaiah 28–31.

In his 1998 article entitled "Women and the Spirit, the Ox and the Ass: The First Binders of the Book of Isaiah,"⁴⁶ W. A. M. Beuken argues that Isa. 28–32 forms the concluding section of the pre-exilic edition of Isaiah. The core of this section consists of the five woe cries (28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1) combined with a summons to mourn (32:9–14). This all comes from the eighth century prophet Isaiah (or IbA as Beuken designates him) since it fits the situation of imminent danger brought on by the Assyrian invasion, and because it opens with an oracle against Samaria which fell in 722.⁴⁷ This core text was expanded first of all by the addition of a promise of just government (32:1–8) in Jerusalem. Then it is further expanded when "the summons to mourn directed to the women (32:9–14) is transformed into the counterpart of the prophecy against the

⁴⁴ Francis Landy, review of Jörg Barthel, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte: Die Jesajaüberlieferung in Jes 6–8 und 28–31*, *JBL* 118 (1999): 545.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ W. A. M. Beuken, "Women and the Spirit, the Ox and the Ass: The First Binders of the Booklet Isaiah 28–32." *ETL* 74 (1998): 5–26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

women of Jerusalem in 3:16–4:1 due to the fact that both passages are expanded by a promise of “the spirit” of YHWH which brings about salvation (32:15–19 and 4:2–6).⁴⁸ Finally, the booklet is completed with the addition of the macarism in 32:20. This completes the unit by forming something of an inclusio by way of contrast between אֲשֶׁרִי in 32:20 and הוֹי in 28:1. According to Beuken Isa. 28–32 also underwent “post-exilic re-working which considered the transmitted oracle of IbA to be available in a written form of some sort.”⁴⁹

Beuken argues further that chapter 32 forms a fitting conclusion to the booklet since the call to mourn (32:9–14) with its accompanying promise of an effusion of the spirit, and the macarism of v. 20 with its allusion to the “ox” and the “ass” combine to form a “ring composition” with chs. 3:16–4:1 and 1:3. Thus the pre-exilic edition of Isaiah is furnished with appropriate “bookends” properly delimiting the beginning and end of the book.⁵⁰ According to Beuken the woe cry in ch. 33 does not go with those in 28–32 “since it only appears after the call to mourn...and does not refer to a group within Israel but to a foreign conqueror.”⁵¹

Beuken does not think that ch. 33 belongs with chs. 28–32 rather he thinks that it forms something of a hinge between first and second Isaiah. In a 1991 article W. A. M. Beuken argues that Isa. 33 is an example of *mise-en abyme* or “composition en abyme,” is a literary technique in which the author encloses within his narrative “microcosmic emblems of the larger structure which contains them.”⁵² The term derives from an ancient heraldic device of inserting a shield

⁴⁸ Ibid, 25.

⁴⁹ Beuken, “Women and the Spirit,” 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 26.

⁵¹ Ibid, 6.

⁵² W. A. M. Beuken, “Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch.” *ETL* 67 (1991): 5–35; Editors, “*Mise-en-abyme*”. *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 22 (2006). Cited 30 October 2008. Online <http://www.litencyc.com/php/?rec=true&UID=729>.

within a larger shield containing the same device.⁵³ Such literary devices have been observed in the plays of Shakespeare (Hamlet) and the works of Poe (Fall of the House of Usher).⁵⁴ The term Beuken uses to describe this type of composition is *Spiegeltext* “mirror-text” or *Spiegelerzählung* “mirror-narrative.”⁵⁵ He writes,

Erstens finden sich textliche Analogien zwischen unserem Kapitel und dem gesamten Jesajabuch sowohl in verangehenden als auch daran anschließenden Textpassagen. Kap. 33 besitzt also sowohl eine retrospective als auch eine prospective Funktion im Gesamtaufbau des Buches. Es scheint, als ob hier das Buch in seinem gesamten Umfang wiedergespiegelt werden sollte.⁵⁶

According to Beuken Isa. 33 forms self-contained whole which traces the course of an event. He writes, “Es ist wichtig anzumerken, daß die geschichtliche Entwicklung vom Unheil zum Heil sich in diesem Kapitel vollständig vor unseren Augen abspielt.” Consequently he follows the unfolding message of Isa. 33 from the woe oracle (v. 1) which leads to the request for help through divine appearance (vv. 2–4), thence to a confession of trust (vv. 5–6) followed by a lament (vv. 7–9) and leading to a divine speech in which YHWH himself appears (vv. 10–13). This intervention then flows into an entrance liturgy (vv. 14–16) in which the righteous are separated from the wicked. From there he calls the people to behold how the salvation of Zion will be realized (vv. 17–24).⁵⁷ According to Beuken, this description of Zion’s movement from judgment to salvation is the message of Isaiah in nuce.

While Beuken’s theory is intriguing, it is not completely convincing. For one thing Williamson has noted and Beuken has acknowledged that “references to TI are too meager to be

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ W. A. M. Beuken, “Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch.” *ETL* 67 (1991): 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

taken into account.”⁵⁸ For this reason, in his subsequently published commentary, Beuken modified his theory to suggest that ch. 33 is the mirror-text for chs. 1–55 of Isaiah.⁵⁹ Also, Beuken’s observation that ch. 33 lays out the historical development from “Unheil” to “Heil,” before our eyes could easily be said about other chapters in Isaiah including chs. 29, 30 and 31–32. In fact, we would argue that this is a characteristic of chs. 28–33 generally.

Finally, while it may be possible to draw connections between ch. 33 and other sections of Isaiah, the strongest connections are between ch. 33 and chs. 28–32. For example, Beuken points out verbal echo between the words שָׁרַד and בָּגַד in 33:1 and 21:2, but he overlooks the obvious connection between the הוּי in 33:1 and the five other instances of this word in chs. 28–32. Beuken also highlights the verbal link between 33:2 and 8:17, but he neglects completely the strong and obvious link with ch. 30:18—וְלֹכֵן יַחֲבֹה יְהוָה לְחַנְנֵכֶם (33:2); יְהוָה חָנְנוּ לָךְ קַיִינוּ—(30:18). While the two verses express the concept of “waiting” by the use of synonyms the connection is unmistakable nevertheless. Verses 10–13 Beuken connects with 2:6–22 and 40:21, 28, but he overlooks the strong connection between v. 10 and 28:21 (כִּי כְהֵר־פְּרָצִים יָקוּם יְהוָה) and 30:18 (וְלֹכֵן יָרוּם לְרַחֲמֶכֶם). Beuken sees connections between the entrance liturgy in vv. 14–16 and 2:10; 1:12–17 and 26:2–11, but once again he ignores the link between the reference to YHWH’s consuming fire in v. 14 and allusions to this in 29:1 (altar hearth), 30:27–33 (breath flowing like burning sulfur) and 31:9 (נֹאֵם יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־אֵוֶר לוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן וְתַנּוּר לוֹ בִּירוּשָׁלַם). Scholars have often noted the verbal links between the various sections of Isaiah, and it is not surprising to find them in ch. 33. Nevertheless it seems to us that links to chs. 28–32 are stronger than links to

⁵⁸ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah 28–39* (vol. 2 of *Isaiah II*; trans. B. Doyle. Louven: Peeters, 2000), 245n8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

other parts of the book. Therefore we doubt whether the evidence can support Beuken's theory that ch. 33 serves as a mirror text within the book of Isaiah.

Beuken's extensive work in Isa. 28–33 and in the book of Isaiah in general shows acute literary and structural sensitivity. His work is detailed, and he gives thorough attention to every phase or the exegetical enterprise. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, Beuken's approach is not truly synchronic, but is built upon a superstructure of redactional criticism which controls his structural and literary observations. Though he is careful to pay attention to the final form of the text, his work is ultimately diachronic in nature.

Synchronic Studies.

While the six studies outlined above take a predominantly diachronic approach to Isa. 28–33, three studies which appeared in the last third of the twentieth century apply a consistently synchronic approach. These include a 1977 study by William Irwin, which applies the techniques of Northwest Semitic philology to the text of Isaiah 28–33 substantially as it stands in MT,⁶⁰ a 1979 paper by J. Cheryl Exum which employs the techniques of literary criticism,⁶¹ and a 1996 article by Gary Stansell in which he makes a conscious decision to examine the final form of the text of Isaiah without recourse to diachronic issues.⁶²

One of the most influential studies of Isaiah 28–33 is Irwin's 1977 monograph entitled *Isaiah 28–33: Translation with Philological Notes*.⁶³ This work originated as a doctoral dissertation done under the supervision of Mitchell Dahood and presented to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 1973. In this book Irwin subjects the Hebrew text of Isaiah 28–33 to a

⁶⁰ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33: Translation with Philological Notes*, (Rome: Bibl Institute Pr, 1977).

⁶¹ Exum, "Isaiah 28–32."

⁶² Stansell, "Isaiah 28–33."

⁶³ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*.

rigorous analysis based upon the principles of comparative Northwest Semitic philology—particularly Ugaritic. Irwin’s motives for the study are stated as follows.

Isa. 28–33...seemed an excellent proving-ground for the fruitfulness of Northwest Semitic philology. These chapters provide a good but manageable sampling of isaian poetry together with a fine example of the so-called ‘prophetic liturgy’ in chap. 33, and they have not received the same attention as Isa. 1–12 from scholars.⁶⁴

Irwin’s study appears to be motivated by disappointment with recent (at that time) translations of Isaiah (particularly the *New English Bible*, 1970), and by the shortcomings within the critical apparatus of *BHS*. Concerning the most recent translations Irwin writes, “They have shed disappointingly little new light on the problem passages of Isa. 28–33.”⁶⁵ Concerning *BHS* he writes, “The number of emendations proposed in the footnotes of *BHS* is far too high.”⁶⁶ According to Irwin an adequate awareness of Northwest Semitic philology would render most emendations unnecessary. The “recovery” of “long-forgotten” elements of biblical Hebrew which have “lain unnoticed but happily undisturbed because of the ancient scribal respect for the consonantal text” inspire greater confidence in the accuracy of MT.⁶⁷ These “elements” include archaic grammatical features such as enclitic *mem* and emphatic *lamedh*. Indeed Irwin’s confidence in the preservation of the MT of Isaiah is so great that he recommends emendation in only two cases (30:32; 31:1).⁶⁸ Irwin is especially wary of emendations made *metri causa*, and often supports the Hebrew text by means of syllable counting.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ibid, xiii.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, xiv.

⁶⁷ Ibid, xv.

⁶⁸ Ibid, xiii.

⁶⁹ Ibid, xiii..

Suffice it to say that the chief value of Irwin's work lies in the area of translation. His meticulous examination of the text on both the philological and stylistic levels provides much grist for interpretation. He has also made a significant contribution to the study of comparative Hebrew grammar and offers, in an appendix, a grammar of Isaiah 28–33. This is, however, as far as he goes. Irwin has little or nothing to say about the form, redaction, structure or rhetoric of Isaiah 28–33. Irwin appears to take the integrity of Isaiah 28–33 as a unit for granted since there is no attempt to justify his decision to study these chapters together. Irwin's study does much of the spadework which is preliminary to commentary, but is by no means a commentary. On the level of literary analysis, it focuses entirely on micro-structure and pays no attention to the macro-structure of Isa. 28–33. Hence, this work does not fill the need for a comprehensive literary analysis of this portion of Isaiah.

In her 1979 article on Isaiah 28–32, Cheryl Exum approaches the text using the synchronic method of literary criticism. She writes, "I am interested less in the editorial principles behind the present arrangement of the oracles, and more in the meaning the prophet's words take on in their present context."⁷⁰ In her article Exum focuses on "such literary matters as the interrelations of certain key themes and motifs, the use of tropes and how they work, the kinds of rhetorical devices employed and the result they produce; in short, on the exploration of the relation of form and meaning."⁷¹ It is clear then, that Exum's approach to the text coincides with the rising interest among biblical scholars in the last few decades of the twentieth century in synchronic approaches to the text. Coincidentally, her description of literary criticism sounds very much like descriptions of rhetorical criticism as practiced by J. Muilenberg and his followers.

⁷⁰ Exum, "Isaiah 28–32," 123.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Though Exum's article is billed as a study of chs. 28–32 of Isaiah, in fact the majority of her study is spent dealing with ch. 28. Chapters 29–32 receive only cursory treatment in this article. Indeed, only two of the article's twenty-eight pages are devoted to these chapters.⁷² Therefore her treatment of the remaining chapters of 28–32, while insightful, is not exhaustive and leaves much work to be done. She herself admits this when she writes,

“Detailed literary analysis of Is 29–32 along the lines of the present investigation of Isaiah 28 remains for future study, and one hopes that such study will contribute to our appreciation of the literary quality of prophetic collections and to our understanding of aesthetic concerns which guided the arrangement of this material.”⁷³

Unfortunately such a study has not been forthcoming. In fact, it is hoped that our present study will help fill this gap.

In her study Exum determines the boundaries of the unit based upon the recurrence of the five woe oracles in chapters 28–32. Though she acknowledges the connection between these chapters and chapter 33 with its woe oracle, she insists that the introduction and conclusion of the “collection” are marked by the contrast between the particles *הוִי* and *אֲשֶׁר־י* in 28:1 and 32:20.⁷⁴ These two particles form a kind of inclusion for the text and also correspond with “a movement from judgment of promise” which is characteristic of this section. In addition to this movement from “judgment to promise” Isa. 28–32 displays a development from “confusion to clarity.” That is, the obduracy of the people first highlighted in ch. 6 and reemphasized in chs. 28–29 is reversed in the latter half of 28–32 (and, I would argue ch. 33). Exum's identification of this movement is a valuable key to understanding the structure of 28–32 (33), and we will attempt to build upon it in our study.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid, 147.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 145. She also notes the presence of *אֲשֶׁר־י* in the center of the section at 30:18. This verse is also significant for our analysis of the structure Isaiah 28–33 as we will show presently.

To summarize, Exum's study is extremely insightful and helpful as far as it goes but leaves much work to be done. Though she does good literary analysis in ch. 28, her suggestions regarding chs. 29–32 are primarily preliminary observations. Also, we view the fact that she chooses to mark the end of the unit at ch. 32 an unfortunate misstep.

Finally, Gary Stansell's 1983 article, "Isaiah 28–33: Blest Be the Tie That Binds (Isaiah Together)" also takes a synchronic approach to the text. It appears in a volume entitled *New Visions of Isaiah*, which arose out of the Formation-of-the-Book-of-Isaiah Seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature. This volume assays to explore the relative value/relationship between "synchronic" and "diachronic" approaches to the study of Isaiah. In his study, Stansell adopts a synchronic approach which attempts to read the unit "as a whole; that is, in its final canonical shape, without regard to its history or growth."⁷⁵ Stansell does not dismiss diachronic approaches. Indeed, he expresses appreciation for the "enormous gains" they have brought "in reconstructing the message of Isaiah of Jerusalem."⁷⁶ To be sure Stansell is himself a redaction critic as his past work testifies.⁷⁷ Yet in this article he adopts a purely synchronic approach with a view to determining 1) "What structural clues suggest a meaningful arrangement of the material?" 2) "What are the structural, verbal or thematic links which relate it to other major sections of the book, especially chs. 1–12," and 3) "How is the unit itself...to be understood in its present canonical context?"⁷⁸ This thirty five page article by Stansell is something of a mini-thesis in itself. Indeed, its stated goals are almost identical to those of the present study, though the methodology is quite different.

⁷⁵ Stansell, "Isaiah 28–33," 69.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Gary Stansell, "Isaiah 32: Creative Redaction in the Isaian Tradition," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1983* (SBLSP 20; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 1–12.

⁷⁸ Stansell, "Isaiah 28–33," 69.

In the first section of his article Stansell searches for evidence of internal structure within Isa. 28–33. While acknowledging the obvious function of the six woe-oracles in delimiting the unit, Stansell asks whether there is not a more complex structuring principle at work. He identifies the alternation of judgment and salvation oracles as supplying a pattern that is “quite consistent but not entirely symmetrical.”⁷⁹ Stansell does not identify a single unifying theme for chs. 28–33 (though he cites several suggestions made by others). Instead he cites four themes as being suggestive given the limits of his essay. They are: (1) Zion/Jerusalem, (2) Yahweh’s Exaltation, (3) Hearing/Sight/Insight, (4) Foreign Alliances and the Assyrian Threat. Each of these is then given detailed analysis.

In the second section of his article Stansell traces connections between Isa. 28–33 and the other major sections of Isaiah. Not surprisingly connections with chs. 1–12 dominate this section. Stansell devotes approximately nine pages (28.5% of the article) to the process of delineating the ties between these chapters and chs. 28–33. Needless to say, no other section of Isaiah even comes close (13–23 gets two pages, 24–27 = two, 34–39 = four, 40–66 = three). Hence, while chs. 28–33 clearly have links to all the major sections of Isaiah, its links to chs. 1–12 are prodigious on every significant level. Stansell notes that “chs. 28–33 are not a supplement but rather a complement to chs. 1–12.”⁸⁰ He concludes that “in Janus-like fashion, the section [28–33] looks in both directions, forward and backward.” Yet, significantly, he also concludes that “some of the themes in chs. 28–33 point more backward than forward,” and cites Becker to the effect that “chs. 28–33 are like a functional ‘doublette’ to chs. 1–12.”⁸¹ I would concur with this emphasis on the strength of the connection between these two sections and hope in the course of

⁷⁹ Ibid, 71.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 85.

⁸¹ Ibid, 99.

this study to demonstrate that this connection is significant for our understanding of the structure of Isaiah and for our understanding of the role chs. 28–33 in the as a whole.

While Stansell's treatment is helpful, it is inadequate at several points. First, though very well done, his article is too brief and does not provide a detailed analysis of the text. In fairness it must be acknowledged that the goal of his study was to be suggestive and not to provide an exhaustive analysis of the text. Nevertheless this work remains to be done and, in fact, it is part of the task of the present dissertation to fill this gap. Second, Stansell does not offer a convincing solution to the question of literary structure. His suggestion that the structure of Isa. 28–33 consists of an alternation between oracles of judgment and salvation does not say much more than what has been said in the past about these chapters, and some of his categorization of texts as "judgment" or "salvation" passages are open to question (i.e. is 28:23–29 a salvation passage?). Third, the four themes he identifies are rather abstract and are not sufficiently integrated into an overarching theme for chs. 28–33.

As may be gathered from the preceding survey, the status of Isa. 28–33 as unified literary composition is still an open question in Isaiah scholarship. The relative neglect of this section of Isaiah, coupled with the lack of a scholarly consensus on the limits of the unit, its internal structure, and its role in the book as whole support the case for renewed study. The only book length studies devoted solely to this section of Isaiah in the past forty years are those of Irwin and O'Kane. Irwin's study approaches the text from the standpoint of Northwest Semitic philology and does not address the larger issues of the limits, theme, structure or role of the text. O'Kane's study, in keeping with most Isaiah scholarship, is thoroughly redaction-critical in nature. And, while it claims to be interested in synchronic issues, is in reality, diachronic in nature.

Of the shorter studies which have been done, those of Exum and Stansell are the most significant. Both of these are synchronic in nature and offer valuable insights into issues related to Isaiah 28–33. Exum’s study makes skillful use of the techniques of literary criticism. Yet her article gives only cursory treatment to chs. 29–32 and does not address ch. 33 at all. Stansell’s article, as mentioned above, is something of a mini-dissertation on Isaiah 28–33 and addresses several of the issues which constitute the focus of my dissertation. Yet his methodology is different. It is topical and synthetic, summarizing main themes from chs. 28–33 and drawing connections between these chapters and the rest of Isaiah. His treatment of the structure of 28–33 is helpful so far as it goes, but is, in the end, inadequate. The alternation of judgment and salvation oracles in these chapters has been noted by others before, and it is questionable whether this approach has really shown the way to a better understanding of the overarching message of the section. Hence, his article, while drawing attention to dominant themes, does not identify a unifying theme. Additionally, a detailed treatment of the texts themselves is lacking.

At present there does not appear to be any book length study of Isaiah 28–33 employing literary criticism as its primary methodology. The studies that do exist are either diachronic in nature or limited in their scope. There are some interesting, but brief studies of a redaction-critical nature. Yet such redactional studies, while they may attempt to pay attention to synchronic issues, in the end, always eventuate in attempts to get behind the text.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to demonstrate that chs. 28–33 are a planned composition with structural and thematic unity focused on chapter 30 as its center. As we noted at the outset of this chapter, most scholars observe that the six woe oracles serve at least a rudimentary structuring function in this corpus by, at the very least, defining its boundaries.

However, we will also attempt to show how, they, in conjunction with the particle *hēn* (32:1), also play a role in identifying ch. 30 as the center section. With *hēn* as a seventh marker, the fourth woe (30:1) stands in the center of the pattern of woe utterances.

However, beyond this we will demonstrate a much deeper and richer understanding of the significance of seeing ch. 30 as the center both structurally and thematically. Structurally, we will show that, in addition to the woe oracles, the centrality of ch. 30 is supported architecturally by the literary macrostructure of chs. 28–33. An analysis of the poetic qualities of the text in terms of syllable, stress and line counts will also be shown to support our structural analysis. Thematically, we will show that ch. 30 is the center in that it encapsulates within itself all the major themes of Isa. 28–33 and in this way relates to all of its major sections. We will also argue that the 30:15–18 serves as the central unit, not only of chapter 30, but of all of 28–33. As the central unit these verses serve as the focus of the section and express its central message. If our analysis is successful, it will also contribute to the resolution of critical discussions regarding the unity, coherence, and thus also the limits as a major unit within the book of Isaiah.

In particular, this study will address the following research questions:

1. Is Isaiah 28–33 a literary unity rather than a composite text as portrayed in the dominant redaction-critical paradigm? Does it possess an overall structural design?
2. Is ch. 30 the thematic and structural centerpiece of chs. 28–33 and is 30:15–18, particularly v. 15, the absolute center?
3. If ch. 30 is the structural center, is it also the thematic center? What themes tie these chapters together? Is there a central theme?
4. Are the lengths of major units as determined by syllable counts helpful in determining the structure of literary texts in the Old Testament?

5. Does the literary structure of chs. 28–33 help to settle the question of the unit’s boundaries?⁸²

Methodology

This study will not concern itself with issues related to source, form or redaction criticism or any issue related to the history of the composition of the text. This means that MT of Isaiah will be used as the baseline for the study. It does not mean that MT will be followed in a mechanistic manner; DSS, LXX and the versions have been consulted throughout. However MT is accepted as a stable and reliable text for Isaiah and emendation has been kept to a minimum. Indeed, emendation has not been utilized except to suggest an alternative pointing of the consonantal text, an alternative division of words, or to suggest the presence of enclitic *mem*.

We have approached the prophetic text of Isaiah with the assumption that it is poetic in nature. This assumption receives almost universal support from current scholarship with the exception of a few short sections which *BHS* and most modern translations have typeset as prose. However, even where the majority of scholars maintain that a passage is prose there is not unanimity. This accords with Freedman’s observation that prophetic writing often falls somewhere in between prose and poetry and constitutes a kind of *tertium quid*—a kind of poetic prose or prosaic poetry that can include prosaic elements within a larger poetic structure. With that in mind we have attempted to lineate as poetry even those sections generally taken to be prose.

Literary/Rhetorical Criticism

Generally speaking the current study falls under the broad rubric of “rhetorical criticism” as that has been defined by J. Muilenburg in his 1969 article, “Form Criticism and Beyond.”⁸³ In

⁸² See note 2 above.

this article, Muilenburg called for a method of literary criticism which goes beyond the atomistic tendency of form criticism to so focus on “the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view,”⁸⁴ In its place he described what has come to be known in Old Testament studies as “rhetorical criticism.” Rhetorical criticism as defined by Muilenburg examines larger sections of text, paying attention the literary qualities of the text such as structure and stylistics.

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.⁸⁵

This would include paying attention to factors that contribute to the delimitation of the text such as “the presence of climactic or ballast lines,” and “ring composition” or “*inclusio*.”⁸⁶

Muilenberg identified the second major concern of the rhetorical critic as

to recognize the structure of a composition and to discern the configuration of its component parts, to delineate the warp and woof out of which the literary fabric is woven, and to note the various rhetorical devices that are employed for marking, on the one hand the sequence and movement of the pericope, and on the other, the shifts or breaks in the development of the author’s thought.⁸⁷

In keeping with Muilenberg’s program, this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate the compositional unity and coherence of Isaiah 28–33 by focusing upon the literary and rhetorical aspects of the text. In this way we hope to further establish the usefulness of stylistic analysis as a means of illuminating the text on both the micro and macro levels.

⁸³ James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond” *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

This is accomplished by moving from the part to the whole. We support our theory of macrostructure by first performing a detailed analysis each of the major units within the speech.

Hence chapters 2–6 each include the following elements:

Text. We provide a lineated text of chs. 28, 29, 30, 31–32, 33, displaying the main sections of the text as well as syllable and stress counts.

Translation. We provide an annotated translation of the text of Isaiah 28–33.

Structure. We will perform a literary and structural analysis of the main sections and subsections of each major division of Isaiah 28–33. These sections will be determined on the basis of syntactical connections, discourse markers, formal features, content, etc.

Thought development. Based upon our structural analysis we will trace the flow of thought in each of the speeches/poems of chs. 28–33.

Thematic Coherence. Each major chapter will conclude with a survey of the major themes developed within the literary unit under consideration. Thematic connections to other parts of chs. 28–33 will be highlighted.

Macrostructure. Finally, we will offer a conclusion regarding the macrostructure of chs. 28–33 as a unit. We will demonstrate the centrality of ch. 30, and specifically of 30:15–18, in the macrostructure of 28–33. Ultimately our understanding of the macrostructure of each chapter will support our conclusions concerning the macrostructure of the whole.

Syllable and Stress Counting. As a feature of our structural analysis of Isaiah 28–33 we have employed syllable counting both as a tool for measuring the length of poetic lines and as a check on macrostructure. The syllable counting system employed here is that advocated by D. N.

Freedman in numerous publications⁸⁸ and utilized effectively by a number of others.⁸⁹ Though syllable counting has been the object of some skepticism among scholars,⁹⁰ it nevertheless offers a useful and objective measure for determining the length of poetic lines. While we accept MT as a highly reliable base text we also recognize that masoretic pronunciation of Hebrew may differ at points from the pronunciation of pre-Masoretic times. Hence, in our syllable counting process we attempt to restore the pre-Masoretic pronunciation of the Hebrew text by observing the following guidelines, (1) segholate nouns are treated as monosyllabic; (2) Secondary *ḥaṭēḇs* with laryngeals are not counted; (3) Furtive *paṭaḥ* is not counted; (4) The diphthong *ayi*, as in אֵי, is treated as if it were the contracted form (אֵי) and counted as one syllable; (5) In cases where prefixed prepositions activate the rule of *šwâ* we count one syllable. However, in recognition that *šûreq* most likely does not reflect biblical pronunciation of the prefixed conjunction we will provide both long and short counts where it occurs.⁹¹

In addition to syllable counting our study also utilizes stress counts as a significant complementary measure. The system of stress counting adopted here is the familiar “Ley-Sievers-Budde” system which assigns a stress to each nomen. In general one syllable

⁸⁸ D. N. Freedman, “Acrostic Poems in the Hebrew Bible: Alphabetic and Otherwise,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 408–431; “Acrostics and Metrics in Hebrew Poetry,” in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Collected Essays on Hebrew Poetry*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 51–76; “Another Look at Hebrew Poetry,” in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup 40: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987): 11–28; “Prolegomenon,” in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Collected Essays on Hebrew Poetry*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 23–50.

⁸⁹ Andrew Bartelt, *The Book around Immanuel: Style and Structure in Isaiah 2–12*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996); Chris Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47, and 48: A New Literary-Critical Reading*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994); David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Paul Raabe, *Psalm Structures: A Study of Psalms with Refrains*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); J. P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Hermeneutics and Structural Analysis*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica*, 37, 41, (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1998); Idem, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁹⁰ See W. T. W. Cloethe, *Versification and Syntax in Jeremiah 2–25*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 44; T. Longman, “A Critique of Two Recent Metrical Systems,” *Bib* 63 (1982): 230–54.

⁹¹ Bartelt, *Book Around Immanuel*, 24.

prepositions and particles have not been counted unless two such occur in the same line. Then they are assigned one stress.⁹²

Stress counting is not as precise as syllable counting, however, taken together, syllable and stress counting can be mutually reinforcing. The difficulty with stress counting is that it is not always used consistently. Indeed, perhaps it should not be. It is difficult for us to know how, and with what cadence a line of biblical poetry was read. Therefore at times it may be necessary to place literary art above methodical rigidity and count two vocables joined by *maqqup̄* as two accentual units rather than one. One thing we have assiduously avoided doing is emending the text *metri causa*. We have not assumed the text to be wrong when it did not fit into our preconceived notion of a dominant metrical scheme. Indeed, prudence would suggest that we should assume the poet capable of varying his metrical scheme significantly when his artistic purpose calls for it. This poetic freedom to change up the length of lines when necessary does not negate the existence of an underlying pattern. In fact, our data have generally supported D. N. Freedman's suggestion that the theoretical norm for line length in Hebrew poetry is eight syllables or three stresses.⁹³

Summary

Having set forth the nature of our study and the methodology to be employed, we will now turn our attention to the detailed analysis of the text. We will proceed on the assumption that the oracles of chs. 28–33 function not only as the primary structural markers which define the boundaries of this corpus, but that they also provide an initial clue as to the major divisions and subsections. Thus we will begin by looking at ch. 28 as the first unit and then take note of the

⁹² Cf. Bartelt, 25–26.

⁹³ D. N. Freedman, "Acrostic Poems," 410.

position of each of the woe oracles as we progress through the text. In the chapters 2–6 of the dissertation we will conduct a detailed examination of the literary structure, thought progression and thematic coherence of each of the major divisions of Isa. 28–33. We will conclude in ch. 7 with an attempt to bring together the findings of our literary and thematic analysis in a way that will illuminate the unity and cohesion of this corpus.

CHAPTER TWO

ISAIAH 28

Text and Translation

Section 1: 28:1–6

Vs	Text	S	A ¹	Translation
1a	הוּי עֲטֶרֶת גְּאוֹת שְׁכָרֵי אֶפְרַיִם	10	4	Alas! The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim
1b	וְצִיץ נִבֵּל צְבִי תִפְאַרְתּוֹ	9	4	And fading flower, the glory of its beauty
1c	אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ גֵּיא־שְׂמֹנִים	8	3	Which is on the head of a very fertile valley
1d	הַלּוּמֵי יַיִן:	4	2	[The proud crown of] those struck down by wine.
2a	הִנֵּה חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ לְאֹדֹנָי	10	4	Behold Adonay has a strong and mighty one,
2b	כְּזֶרֶם בְּרֶד שֶׁעַר קָטָב	6	4	Like a storm of hail, a tempus of destruction,
2c	כְּזֶרֶם מַיִם כְּבִירִים שֹׁטְפִים	9	4	Like a storm of waters, mighty, overflowing.
2d	תִּנְחַת לְאֶרֶץ בְּיָד:	6	3	He will cast (it) to the earth with a hand.
3a	בְּרַגְלָיִם תִּרְמָסֶנָּה	7	2	With feet it will be trampled,
3b	עֲטֶרֶת גְּאוֹת שְׁכָרֵי אֶפְרַיִם:	9	4	The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim.

¹ S = syllables, A = accents.

4a	וְהָיְתָה צִיצַת נָבֶל צְבִי תִפְאַרְתּוֹ	13	5	And it shall be, the fading flower, the glory of his beauty.
4b	אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ גַּיַּא שְׁמֹנִים	8	4	Which is at the head of a fruitful valley,
4c	כְּכַפּוּרָה בְּטָרֵם קִיץ	7	3	Like a first ripe fig before harvest,
4d	אֲשֶׁר יֵרְאֶה הָרֹאֶה אוֹתָהּ	9	4	When someone sees it,
4e	בְּעוֹדָהּ בְּכַפּוֹ יִבְלָעֶנָּה:	10	3	While it is still in his hand, he swallows it.
5a	בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת	11	5	In that day YHWH of Hosts will become,
5b	לְעֹטֶרֶת צְבִי וְלַצִּפִּירַת תִּפְאָרָה	11	4	A crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty,
5c	לְשָׂרְ עַמּוֹ:	4	2	To the remnant of his people.
6a	וְלְרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט לְיוֹשֵׁב עַל־הַמִּשְׁפָּט	12	4	And a spirit of justice to the one sitting on the judgment seat,
6b	וְלִגְבוּרָה מְשִׁיבֵי מִלְחָמָה שְׂעָרָה:	13	4	And strength for those who turn back the battle at the gate.
Totals:		176	72	

Section 2: 28:7–14

7a	וְגַם־אֵלֶּה בֵּין שָׁגוּ	8	4	And even these err with wine,
7b	וּבְשֵׁכָר תָּעוּ	6	2	And are addled with beer,
7c	כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא שָׁגוּ בְשֵׁכָר	10	4	Priest and prophet err from beer,
7d	נִבְלָעוּ מִן־הַיַּיִן	6	2	They are swallowed by wine,
7e	תָּעוּ מִן־הַשֵּׁכָר	6	2	They are addled by beer,

7f	שָׁגוּ בְּרֹאָה	5	2	They err in vision,
7g	פָּקוּ פְּלִילָהּ:	6	2	They totter in judgment.
8a	כִּי כָּל־שִׁלְחָנוֹת מְלֵאוּ	8	3	Indeed all tables are filled,
8b	קִיָּא צֹאָה בְּלִי מְקוֹם:	7	4	With filthy vomit, there is no [clean] place.
9a	אֶת־מִי יוֹרֵה דַעָה	6	3	Whom does he presume to teach knowledge?
9b	וְאֶת־מִי יְבִין שְׂמוּעָה	8	3	And whom does he cause to perceive a message?
9c	גְּמוּלֵי מִחֶלֶב	6	2	Those weaned from milk?
9d	עֲתִיקֵי מִשְׁדָּיִם:	6	2	Those removed from the breast?
10a	כִּי צוֹ לָצוּ צוֹ לָצוּ	7	4	For it is <i>ṣāw lāṣāw ṣāw lāṣāw</i> ,
10b	קוֹ לָקוּ קוֹ לָקוּ	6	4	<i>qāw lāqāw qāw lāqāw</i> ,
10c	זְעִיר שָׁם זְעִיר שָׁם:	6	4	A tiny bit here, a tiny bit there.
11a	כִּי בִלְעָנִי שָׁפָה	6	2	For with stammering speech,
11b	וּבִלְשׁוֹן אַחֲרָת	7	2	And with another language,
11c	יְדַבֵּר אֶל־הָעָם הַזֶּה:	8	3	He speaks to this people.
12a	אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם	7	3	Who said to them,

12b	זאת המנוחה	5	2	“This is the rest,
12c	הניחו לעיף	6	2	Give rest to the weary,
12d	וזאת הפרגעה	6	2	And this is the repose,”
12e	ולא אבוא שמוע:	6	3	But they were not willing to listen.
13a	והיה להם דברייהוה	9	3	So the word of YHWH will be to them,
13b	צו לצו צו לצו	6	4	<i>ṣāw lāṣāw ṣāw lāṣāw,</i>
13c	קו לקו קו לקו	6	4	<i>qāw lāqāw qāw lāqāw,</i>
13d	זעיר שם זעיר שם	6	4	A tiny bit here, a tiny bit there.
13e	למען ילכו וכשלו אחר	11	4	So that they will proceed on, and fall backward,
13f	ונשברו ונוקשו ונלקדו:	12	3	And be broken, and ensnared and captured.
Totals:		208	88	

Section 3: 28:14–22

14a	לכן שמעו דברייהוה	8	3	Therefore hear the word of YHWH
14b	אנשי לצון	4	2	Mockers,
14c	משלי העם הזה	7	3	Rulers of this people,
14d	אשר בירושלם:	6	2	Which is in Jerusalem.
15a	כי אמרתם	4	2	For you said,

15b	כָּרַחְנוּ בְרִית אֶת־מוֹת	7	3	We have formed a partnership with death,
15c	וְעַם־שָׂאוֹל עָשִׂינוּ חֻזָּה	9	3	And with <i>Šhēʾôl</i> we have made a consultation,
15d	שֵׁיט שׁוֹטֵף כִּי־עָבַר	6	3	The overflowing scourge, when it passes over,
15e	לֹא יִבֹּאֵנוּ	5	2	Will not come upon us.
15f	כִּי שָׁמְנוּ כְזָב מִזְחֻסְנוּ	8	3	For we have made a lie our refuge
15g	וּבִשְׂקֵר נִסְתָּרְנוּ:	7	2	And in falsehood we have hidden ourselves.
16a	לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה	10	4	Therefore, Thus says Lord YHWH,
16b	הִנְנִי יוֹסֵד בְּצִיּוֹן אֶבֶן	8	4	Behold I am about to lay in Zion a foundation-
16c	אֶבֶן בַּחֲנֹן	2	2	stone, A stone of testing,
16d	פִּנֵּת יִקְרַת מוֹסֵד מוֹסֵד	8	4	A costly corner stone of a well founded foundation
16e	הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יְחִישׁ:	6	3	He who believes will not hurry.
17a	וְשִׁמְתִי מִשְׁפָּט לְקֵן	7	3	And I will make justice a line,
17b	וְצִדְקָה לְמִשְׁקָלָהּ	7	2	And righteousness a plumb line,
17c	וְיָעֵה בָּרֶד מִזְחֻסָּהּ כְּזָב	9	4	And hail will sweep away Lie's refuge,
17d	וְסִתָּר מַיִם יִשְׁטָפוּ:	6	3	And (its) shelter, waters will overflow.

18a	וְכַפֵּר בְּרִיתְכֶם אֶת־מוֹת	9	3	Then your covenant with death will be wiped away,
18b	וְחִזּוֹתְכֶם אֶת־שְׂאוּל לֹא תִקּוּם	11	4	And your consultation with <i>Šhēʾōl</i> will not stand.
18c	שׁוֹט שׁוֹטֵף כִּי יַעֲבֹר	6	3	The overflowing scourge, when it passes over,
18d	וְהֵייתֶם לוֹ לְמַרְמָס:	8	3	Then, you will be something for it to trample.
19a	מִדֵּי עָבְרוּ יִקַּח אֶתְכֶם	8	4	As often as it passes over, it will take you,
19b	כִּי־בִבְקֹר בִּבְקֹר יַעֲבֹר	7	3	For every morning it will pass over,
19c	בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה	6	2	In the day and in the night.
19d	וְהָיָה רַק־זֹעָה	7	2	And it will be pure terror,
19e	הַבֵּין שְׂמוּעָה:	5	2	To understand the message.
20a	כִּי־קָצֵר הַמִּצָּע מִהַשְׁתָּרֵעַ	10	3	For the bed is too short for stretching out,
20b	וְהַמִּסְכָּה צָרָה כְּהַתְּכַנֵּס:	11	3	And the covering is too narrow for wrapping oneself.
21a	כִּי כְּהַר־פְּרָצִים יָקוּם יְהוָה	10	3	For as at Mt. Perazim, YHWH will arise,
21b	כַּעֲמֹק בְּגִבְעוֹן יִרְגֹז	7	3	As at the valley of Gibeon he will rage
21c	לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשָׂהוּ זָר מַעֲשָׂהוּ	9	4	To do His deed, strange is his deed,
21d	וְלַעֲבֹד עֲבָדְתוֹ נְכַרְיָה עֲבָדְתוֹ:	14	4	And to work his work, alien is his work.

22a	וְעַתָּה אַל-תְּחַלְּלוּצְאוֹ	8	2	And now, do not mock,
22b	פְּרִיחֲזָקוֹ מוֹסְרֵיכֶם	8	2	Lest your bonds be strengthened.
22c	כִּי-כָּלָה וְנִחְרָצָה שְׁמִעְתִּי	10	3	For a destructive decree I have heard,
22d	מֵאֵת אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת	10	4	From Adonay YHWH of Hosts,
22e	עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ	4	4	Concerning all the land.

Totals: 302 117

Section 3: 28:23–29

23a	הֶאֱזִינוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ קוֹלִי	8	3	Give ear and hear my voice,
23b	הִקְשִׁיבוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ אִמְרָתִי:	9	3	Pay attention and hear my word.
24a	הֲכֹל הַיּוֹם יַחְרֹשׁ הַחֲרֹשׁ לְזֹרַעַ	11	5	Does one plow all day for sowing?
24b	יִפְתַּח וַיִּשְׁדֹּד אֲדָמָתוֹ:	9	3	Does he keep on opening and harrowing his land?
25a	הֲלוֹא אִם-שָׂוָה פָּנֶיהָ	8	3	Does he not level its surface,
25b	וַהֲפִיץ קִצְחַ	4	2	And then scatter black cumin?
25c	וַכִּמֹּן יִזְרַק	5	2	And toss cumin seed?
25d	וְשֵׁם חֲטָה שׂוֹרָה?	6	3	And set wheat in a row?
25e	וְשַׁעֲרָה נִסְמָן	6	2	And barley in a marked off place?
25f	וַכִּסְמֹת וַבְּלָתוֹ:	7	2	And spelt within its border?

26a	וַיְסֵרוּ לְמוֹשֶׁט	7	2	For he guides him aright;
26b	אֱלֹהָיו יוֹרְנוֹ:	6	2	His God teaches him.
27a	כִּי לֹא בְּחֶרוֹץ יוֹדֵשׁ קִצְחַ	8	4	Truly, black cumin is not threshed with a threshing instrument,
27b	וְאוֹפֵן עֲגֻלָּה עַל־כַּמְּוֹן יוֹסֵב	11	4	Nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin.
27c	כִּי בַמִּטָּה יִחָבֵט קִצְחַ	8	3	But rather black cumin is beaten out with a stick,
27d	וְכַמְּוֹן בַּשֶּׁבֶט:	5	2	And cumin with the rod.
28a	לֶחֶם יוֹדֵק	3	2	Bread grain is crushed,
28b	כִּי לֹא לְנֶצַח	4	2	But not forever.
28c	אֲדוֹשׁ יְדוֹשְׁנוֹ	6	2	He thoroughly threshes it,
28d	וְהַמָּם גִּלְגַּל עֲגֻלָּתוֹ	8	3	And his cartwheel moves,
28e	וּפְרָשָׁיו לֹא־יִדְקְנוּ:	9	2	Yet his horses do not crush it.
29a	גַּם־זֹאת מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֵצֵאָה	12	5	This also has come out from YHWH of Hosts;
29b	הַפְּלִיאַ עֲצָה הַגְּדִיל תּוֹשִׁיָה	9	4	Who makes his counsel unfathomable, who magnifies his wisdom.
Totals:	cola = 23	169	65	
Totals Speech:	113	854	342	

Translation Notes

v. 1a. הוֹי—“Alas!” This particle may function as a summons to attention (Isa. 55:1), a cry of lamentation (1 Kings 13:30; Jer. 22:18; 34:5), or as a discourse marker introducing a prophetic

denunciation/threat. The interjection הוֹי is frequently followed by a participle (Amos 5:18), substantive (Isa. 1:4; 10:1), or adjective (Isa. 5:21, 22) identifying/describing the object of the prophetic denunciation. In later texts הוֹי may take a preposition (whether עַל or לְ) on analogy with אֹיִ (Ezek. 13:3). There are 51 instances of הוֹי in the Hebrew Bible (53 if you count the two instances of הוֹי in Amos 5:16). With the single exception of 1 Kings 13:30 הוֹי occurs exclusively in the latter prophets.²

In virtually every usage the vocative quality of הוֹי is discernable. There is, however, no consensus among scholars as to its origin or precise function. Westermann suggests that הוֹי originated in the context of the curse, but there is scant evidence to support this.³ Gerstenberger has offered Israel's wisdom tradition as a possible *Sitz im Leben* for the הוֹי speech.⁴ However, the fact that the particle never occurs in a wisdom context counts against this theory. R. Clifford offers a strong case that the הוֹי oracle has its origins in the funeral lament.⁵ In six instances הוֹי is used in the context of funeral laments (8 if the two instances of הוֹי in Amos 5:16 are counted). In light of this Clifford suggests "alas" as a suitable translation. Bartelt accepts Clifford's suggestion but insists that the funerary overtones of הוֹי do not negate its vocative function as a cry to get attention.⁶ He translates it "Hey!" in an effort to capture "both sound and substance in English."⁷

² Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, (trans. Hugh C. White; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 191.

³ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴ E Gerstenberger, "The Woe-Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 (1962): 249–263.

⁵ R. Clifford, "The Use of *HÔY* in the Prophets," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458–464; Cf. Waldemar Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1972); J. Zobel, "הוֹי," *TDOT* 3: 359–364.

⁶ Andrew H. Bartelt, *The Book around Immanuel*, 40.

⁷ *Ibid.*

v. 1b. **צְבִי תִפְאֶרְתּוֹ**—“the glory of his beauty.” This phrase is in apposition to **וְצִיץ נָבֵל** and serves to gloss its meaning.⁸

v. 1c. **גֵּיא־שְׂמָנִים**—“very fertile valley.” We translate “very fertile valley” in recognition of the probability that the plural form, **שְׂמָנִים** serves to intensify the idea of the root.⁹

v. 1d. **הֶלְוִמֵי יַיִן**—“{The proud crown of} those struck down by wine.” **הֶלְוִמֵי יַיִן** (1d) parallels **אֶפְרַיִם אֶפְרַיִם** in v. 1a. We suggest that the first part of 1a **עֲטָרַת גְּאוּת**, while elided in this line, should, nevertheless be understood as part of it. This elision is due, not to textual corruption, but rather to the deliberate terseness of poetic style. As it stands now line 1d is four syllables long. If, however, we were to add **עֲטָרַת גְּאוּת** to this line it would be eight syllables long—comparable in length to the three preceding lines (cf. Isa. 28:1d in the NET Bible).

v. 2d. **הֵנִיחַ לְאָרֶץ בְּיָדוֹ**—“He will cast (it) to the earth with (his) hand.” The subject of **הֵנִיחַ** is not YHWH, but rather, the “strong and mighty one” of 2a. The verb is in the perfect, but may be treated as an example of the “prophetic perfect” and translated as future. It is possible to translate **בְּיָדוֹ** as “with force,” but this would destroy the parallelism with **בְּרַגְלֵימָה** in 3a.¹⁰

v. 3a. **בְּרַגְלֵימָה תִרְמָסְנָהּ**—“With feet it will be trampled.” With *BHS*, this translation assumes that **נ** in **תִרְמָסְנָהּ** is energetic.¹¹ A singular verb is presupposed by the LXX translation,

⁸Hans, Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39: A Continental Commentary*, (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 2.

⁹*GKC* 124.e

¹⁰Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 3–5; William H. Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 9.

¹¹So also Driver, “The ending is perhaps incorrectly read *-nah* in consequence of having been wrongly taken as a feminine plural form and ought rather to be read *-annah* (cf. Arabic *-anna*) or *-ennah* (Procksch) as an ‘energetic’ feminine singular form.” G. R. Driver, “Another Little Drink: Isaiah 28:1–22,” In *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas*, ed. Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 50; Others speculate that “crown” in v. 2 is collective and retain the 3fs reading of MT. See John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*. (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 502. Wildberger notes however, “this would then have to be the reading of v. 1 as well.” *Isaiah 28–39*, 4.

καταπατηθήσεται, and by the Targum, יתְרַשׁ כְּתָרָא. Cf. יבְלַעְנָה (v. 4).

v. 5b. יהִי־הָיָה יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת—“YHWH of Hosts will become.” הָיָה + לֵ = “become.”

v. 6b. וּלְגִבּוֹרָה מְשִׁיבֵי מִלְחָמָה שְׁעָרָה:—“And strength for those who turn back the battle...”

The preposition לֵ should probably be understood before מְשִׁיבֵי.¹²

v. 8b. מְלֵאוּ קִיָּא זָאָה—“Are filled with filthy vomit.” Our translation renders the two nouns in this clause as a hendiadys, i.e. two nouns with a single referent,¹³ (cf. *ESV*, *JPS*, *NASB*, *NRSV*).

v. 9c. גְּמוּלֵי מִחֶלֶב—“Those weaned from milk.” Hummel suggests that מִן 9c and 9d is actually enclitic *mem*.¹⁴ *IBHS* suggests that enclitic *mem* is often associated with the genitive.¹⁵ In which case the construct may be translated as a “genitive of specification”—“weaned *with respect to* milk, removed *with respect to* the breast.” According to *GKC*, “The construct chain גְּמוּלֵי מִחֶלֶב needn’t be translated as a genitive in this case.”¹⁶ This, however, assumes that a preposition intervenes between the construct and the absolute in these clauses, and does not take into account the presence of enclitic *mem*.

v. 10a. כִּי זָו לָצוּ זָו לָצוּ זָו לָצוּ—“For it is *ṣāw lāṣāw ṣāw lāṣāw*.” It is generally recognized that the phrase זָו לָצוּ זָו לָצוּ... represents the mocking imitation of the prophet’s preaching. Exactly what these syllables mean is debated. Some suggest that the mockers are attempting to mimic the simplicity of Isaiah’s teaching by aping the recitation of the letters of the alphabet.¹⁷ Others suggest that these syllables represent baby talk—the incoherent babbling of an infant. Still others

¹² *GKC* 119.hh

¹³ *IBHS*, 4.4.1.b

¹⁴ Horace Hummel, “Enclitic Mem in Early Northwest Semitic, Especially Hebrew” *JBL* 76 (1957): 98.

¹⁵ *IBHS*, 9.8.

¹⁶ *GKC*, 130.a.

¹⁷ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 245–46.

suggest that it is simply an attempt to portray Isaiah’s teaching as repetitive gibberish.¹⁸ It appears that these syllables were taken to represent prophetic glossalalia in both Qumran and the New Testament.¹⁹

v. 10c. זַעִיר שָׁם זַעִיר שָׁם—“A tiny bit here, a tiny bit there.” According to Gesenius זַעִיר should be understood as a diminutive form.²⁰

v. 12e. וְלֹא אָבוּא שְׁמוּעָה—“But they were not willing to listen.” אָבוּא is unusual. 1QIsa^a and several other MSS have אָבוּ. Wildberger suggests that this is one of several passages in MT where variant spellings can be found.²¹ Irwin, on the other hand, holds that אָבוּ is the result of a “false division of consonants, and is not an orthographic peculiarity” (p. 25).²² He suggests that the aleph is “prothetic” and that the text should read, אָבוּא, perhaps an Aphel infinitive. (cf. v. 28, אָבוּא) According to Tov אָבוּא is a case of superfluous “yatir” aleph (cf. Josh. 10:24 אָבוּא).²³

v. 14c. מְשָׁלֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה—“Rulers of this people.” מְשָׁלֵי is generally translated “rulers.” However, some have suggested that מְשָׁלֵי II “proverb makers” is to be read here. Wildberger suggests that, in light of the overarching concern with political matters in this section, “rulers” is

¹⁸Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 207.

¹⁹Otto Betz, “Zungenreden und Süßer Wein: Zur eschatologischen Exegese von Jesaja 28 in Qumran und im Neuen Testament,” in *Bibel Und Qumran: Beträge zur Erforschung zwischen Bibel und Qumranwissenschaft*, (ed. Sigfried Wagner; Berlin: Bibelgesellschaft zu Berlin, 1968), 20–36.

²⁰GKC, 86.g, n.1.

²¹Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 17.

²²William H. Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 25.

²³Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 227, n.19.

preferable.²⁴ Irwin’s attempt to have it both ways by translating “reigning wits” seems a bit forced,²⁵ yet the possibility of double entendre should not be dismissed.

v. 15c חָזָה עָשִׂינוּ שְׂאוּל וְעַם־שְׂאוּל—“And with *Šhēʾōl* we have made a consultation.” The word חָזָה is difficult to make sense of in this context. It is most often translated “seer.” But in light of its pairing with בְּרִית most commentators agree in translating it something like “pact” or “agreement.” The LXX supports this reading as it translates it στυθήκας in parallel with בְּרִית which it translates, διαθήκη. But Young has a point when he states, “it is not really clear how the meaning ‘league’ comes to adhere to *hōzeh*.”²⁶ Several solutions have been proposed based upon comparative linguistics.²⁷ None, however, has convinced a majority of scholars. We must agree with Watts when he states, “The issue is being widely discussed...and is not yet settled.”²⁸ Until such a time as some convincing solution shall be proposed, it seems safe to assume that the word has its normal biblical Hebrew meaning. Young’s translation, “with hell we have made a vision” seems to make tolerable sense when it is coupled with a presumption that it may refer to some kind of necromancy or process of divination.²⁹ Hence we translate, “With *Šhēʾōl* we have made a consultation.” Resorting to the black arts then would be a measure of the desperation of Judah’s leaders (cf. king Saul, 1 Sam. 28; Isa. 8:19). It is understandable in light of the theme of spiritual obduracy which pervades this section of Isaiah.

²⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 29.

²⁵ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 24.

²⁶ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), 283.

²⁷ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 29.

²⁸ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, (WBC 24; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), 367.

²⁹ Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 283.

v. 15e. לֹא יָבוֹאוּנוּ—“Will not come upon us.” Concerning בּוֹא Davidson writes, “The verb בּוֹא *to come*, when = *come upon* in a hostile sense, has often acc. *suff.* of person in poetry and later style, Isa. 28:15, Job 15:21; 20:22, Ps. 35:8; 36:12.”³⁰

v. 16b. יִסַּד בְּצִיּוֹן אֶבֶן—“Behold! I am about to establish Zion as a stone.” The verb יִסַּד may be repointed as a participle יֹסֵד, and therefore translated as the imminent future.³¹ The בּ of בְּצִיּוֹן is here translated as “*beth essentiae*” following *GKC* where the translation “I make Sion a foundation” is suggested.³²

v. 16c. אֶבֶן בְּחֵן—“A stone of testing.” Traditionally the meaning of the noun בְּחֵן has been derived from the root בָּחַן “to examine, try” (*HALOT*). Elsewhere in Isaiah this root occurs only in 32:14 and 23:13.³³ O’Kane wrongly asserts that בְּחֵן is a Pual participle (it lacks the *mem* prefix) and that it occurs in Ezekiel 21:18 (where the form is Pual pf, 3ms). Wildberger is, no doubt, correct when he states that the substantive is found nowhere else in the Old Testament.³⁴

A possible meaning for בְּחֵן is suggested by the Egyptian loan-word *bḥn* which “designates schist gneiss, a black or green siliceous schist that was used in Egypt for making statues.”³⁵ With Wildberger, Roberts rejects this derivation since this stone is not found in Palestine and there is no evidence that the Israelites used it for building.³⁶

³⁰ *Dav*, 28.R3.

³¹ The MT reading יִסַּד is a piel perfect, in which case the *ESV* translation “I am the one who has laid a foundation in Zion” is correct. Wildberger points out, however, that the presence of הִנְנִי suggests a participle. A participle is also suggested by IQIsa^b which reads יֹסֵד (*qal* participle) and IQIsa^a, which reads מִיֹּסֵד (piel participle). Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 30.

³² *GKC*, 119.i.

³³ M. J. O’Kane, “Isaiah 28–33 : A Literary and Contextual Analysis.” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1989), 68.

³⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 30.

³⁵ J. J. M. Roberts, “Yahweh’s Foundation in Zion,” (Isa. 28:16). *JBL* 106 (1987): 30.

³⁶ *Ibid*; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 30.

Roberts proposes another solution (which Wildberger rejects), namely that *בִּחַן* is derived from another Egyptian root meaning “fortress, tower, watchtower.”³⁷ This understanding is supported by medieval rabbinic scholars Rashi and Ibn Ezra, and apparently, by the interpretation of the Qumran community. Roberts concludes that “Tsvat is probably correct when, following the lead of Qumran interpretation, he defines *ḥn bḥn* as ‘a stone used in building a fortress,’ ‘an ashlar.’”³⁸ Thus Roberts translates “a massive stone.”³⁹ However, in light of the fact that YHWH’s strong foundation in Zion is here contrasted with the unstable refuge of lie and falsehood (v. 15f–g) which the Jerusalemite leaders were erecting, the meaning “tested stone” commends itself. Bresinger points out with regard to the verb *בִּחַן* “the key concern involves evaluating the dependability of something.”⁴⁰ Here the contrast is between the Zion YHWH is building as a safe refuge for His people, and that which the leaders are building, which provides no safety and will not stand.

v. 17a. *וְשִׁמְתִי מִשְׁפָּט לְקוֹ*—“And I will make justice a line...” O’Kane notes that the combination of *קוֹ* with *מִשְׁקָלָת* is only found one other time in the Old Testament.⁴¹ 2 Kings 21:3 reads, *וְנָטִיתִי עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֵת קוֹ שְׁמֵרֹן וְאֵת־מִשְׁקָלָת בֵּית אֲחָאָב*. This is clearly a threat of destruction, and Isa. 28:17 should be understood in this light. When constructing a wall a brick mason must take care that it is both level and plumb. To insure that the wall is level he stretches a (horizontal) “line,” *קוֹ*, and he utilizes a plumb line *מִשְׁקָלָת* to insure that it is plumb (vertically). The fact that YHWH plans to take the measure of Judah’s “refuge of lies” both vertically and horizontally

³⁷ Roberts, “Foundation,” 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁰ Terry L. Bresinger, “בִּחַן,” *NIDOTTE* 1: 636–638.

⁴¹ O’Kane, *Isaiah 28–33*, 71.

indicates that He intends to demolish it totally.

v. 17c. *וַיָּעַה בָּרָד מִחֶסֶה כֶּזֶב*—“And hail will sweep away Lie’s refuge” Most translations render *מִחֶסֶה כֶּזֶב* as “the refuge of lies” (*NRSV*) or something similar. However, the phrase lacks the article and is not plural. Irwin solves the problem by treating *כֶּזֶב* as a proper name and translating “Lie’s refuge.” We have followed Irwin’s example here, with the additional modification of implying that *כֶּזֶב* is gapped in the following line and supplying it by means of a possessive pronoun.

v. 20b. *וְהַמְסָכָה צָרָה כְּהַתְכַנֵּס*—“And the covering is too narrow for wrapping oneself” *כְּהַתְכַנֵּס* is problematic in this verse. 1QIsa^a has *בְּהַתְכַנֵּס*. Dahood has adduced a number of examples from the Psalms of the interchangeable use of *כ* and *מִן*—including the comparative sense.⁴² This makes the DSS reading more plausible.

v. 21a. *כִּי כְהַר־פְּרִזִּים יָקוּם יְהוָה*—“For as at Mount Perizim YHWH will arise” *כְּהַר־פְּרִזִּים* “as at Mount Perazim” marks an instance of the “pregnant” use of *כ* which results from the ellipsis of the preposition *ב*.⁴³

v. 21b. *כְּעֵמֶק בְּגִבְעוֹן יִרְגֹז*—“As at the valley of Gibeon he will stir.”⁴⁴ Particularly note Psalm 92:13, *כְּעֵמֶק בְּגִבְעוֹן יִשְׁגָה*, and 84:7, *עֵבְרֵי בְּעֵמֶק*.

v. 22c. *כִּי־כָלָה וְנִחְרָצָה שְׁמֵעָתִי*—“For a destructive decree I have heard.” *כִּי־כָלָה וְנִחְרָצָה* = hendiadys, “destruction decree.” *HALOT* suggests “determined end.”

⁴² Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III, 100–150* (AB 17A: Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 397–98.

⁴³ *Wms*, §263.

⁴⁴ For examples of the construct chain with intervening preposition see Dahood, *Psalms III*, 381.

v. 24a. הַכֹּל הַיּוֹם יַחְרֹשׁ הַחֹרֶשׁ לְזֵרַע— “Does one plow all day without sowing?” Impersonal subject.⁴⁵ Irwin follows a suggestion of Pope’s in translating לְ with a privative sense.⁴⁶ This is helpful and we follow Irwin here. Unlike Irwin, however, we retain the Masoretic punctuation.

v. 25f. וְכִסְּמֹתָ גְבֻלָּתוֹ:—“and spelt within its border.” Four terms in this verse are found only in Isaiah 28 in the Old Testament, קַצְצָה (“black cumin”), כַּמְוִן (“ordinary cumin”), שׂוֹרֶה (hapax, meaning uncertain), נִסְמָן (hapax, “a marked off place”). *BHS*, with a large number of scholars, recommends following the example of the LXX and some versions in deleting שׂוֹרֶה and נִסְמָן. The text of 1QIsa^a, however, agrees with the MT, and it appears that LXX may have omitted these terms simply because it did not know how to translate them.⁴⁷

Traditionally, שׂוֹרֶה has been read as שׂוֹרֶה (“row”), cf. Jerome *ad ordinem*. נִסְמָן is customarily read as a *niphal* participle of סָמַן (“to mark”). Delitzsch understands נִסְמָן as a reference to a piece of field, “specially furnished with signs” or סִימָנִים.⁴⁸ The parallel term גְּבֻלָּתוֹ (“its border”) is clear in meaning, which seems to suggest that the other terms, שׂוֹרֶה and נִסְמָן are similar in meaning which tends to lend credibility to the traditional translations of those terms as “row” and “appointed place.”

v. 26a. וַיִּסְרוּ לְמוֹשֶׁפֶט—“For he guides him aright” Wildberger points out that מוֹשֶׁפֶט “is not limited to usages that are connected with judicial matters: among its meanings it signifies ‘that which is right, appropriate’ (Judg. 13:12; Exod. 26:30); ‘the custom’ (1 Kings 18:28); ‘the proper

⁴⁵ *GKC* §144.e; *Dav* §108R1.

⁴⁶ Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 38; Dahood, *Psalms III*, 394–395.

⁴⁷ Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, Textual Criticism and the Translator, vol. 1. Harold P. Scanlin, editor, (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 119f.

⁴⁸ F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 15.

way' (Gen. 40:13; Jer. 8:7), etc. That which is done in the proper way brings success as well as results in prosperity."⁴⁹

v. 27b. וְאִפְּן עֲגֹלָה עַל-כַּמְּוֵן יוֹסֵב.—“Nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin” The negative particle אֵל is carried over from the previous clause.⁵⁰

Structure

Syllable and Stress Counts

Syllable Counts. By our reckoning this chapter has 113 lines and 854 syllables. Mean line length is 7.6 syllables. Median line length is 7 syllables. Eighty four lines (74%) have between 6–10 syllables.⁵¹

When only bicola are taken into account the results are even closer to the theoretical norm of 8 syllables per line. According to the summary below bicola constitute 57 percent of the verses in chapter 28, and range from 7–24 syllables in length. Mean bicolon length is 16 syllables; the median length is 15 syllables as is the mode. Hence, within bicola, the average line is 8 syllables in length. With vv. 5–6 removed (which some regard as prose) the mean bicolon length is 15.8 syllables, a negligible difference.

Stress Counts. The stress count for chapter 28 is 342. Lines range from 2 to 5 stresses in length. Mean line length is 3.02 stresses which matches the theoretical norm almost perfectly. The median is also 3 stresses. There is an equal number of 2 stress (38) and 3 stress lines (38) and an almost equivalent number of lines with 4 stresses (33).

⁴⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 59.

⁵⁰ See Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 41; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 50; *GKC* §118.z.

⁵¹ . If vv. 5–6 and 11–12, which some sources identify as prose, are removed, the average line length is 7.52 (short count) or 7.53 (long count) syllables per line.

Once again, when bicola alone are taken into account averages match the theoretical norm. Bicola range from 4 to 9 stresses in length. The average bicolon has 6 stresses, or 3 stresses per line. Median bicolon length is 6 and so is the mode. Note that of the 28 bicola in this chapter 15 (53.5%) are balanced.

Prose Particle Counts

Of the 381 words in Isaiah 28, 29 are prose particles, including 17 instances of the definite article, 5 of the relative pronoun and 7 of the definite object marker. These occur throughout the chapter with the greatest concentration found in the second section (vv. 7–13). The proportion of prose-particles in the 97 words of this section is 9.2 percent. That is high for poetry but still within the acceptable range for what Freedman describes as the “*tertium quid*” of prophetic style.⁵² The percentage of prose particles for the chapter is 7.61 percent. This places it within the range of texts which are more likely to be poetry (5–10%).

Verses and Subsections

Section 1, Subsection A. (Verses 1–4) The beginning of this subsection is clearly marked by the particle הוֹי. Its boundaries are clearly marked by an inclusion (vv. 1a, 4a–b). The unit is also united by the presence of ה in the initial position in four of its five verses: הוֹי (1a), הַנְּהָה (2a), הַנְּהָה (2d) and הַיְתָה (4a).

The first verse of this unit is a quatrain united by the parallel phrases הַלּוּמִי and שְׁפָרֵי אֶפְרַיִם found at the end of lines 1a and 1d respectively.⁵³ These word pairs form a kind of inclusion binding the four lines together. Considering the strong parallelism between הַלּוּמִי and שְׁפָרֵי אֶפְרַיִם it would appear that v.1d is intended to parallel the whole of v.1a (at least implicitly).

⁵² D. N. Freedman, “Another Look at Biblical Hebrew Poetry,” 15.

⁵³ *RSP*, 1: II, §543.

Therefore we would suggest that **עֲטָרֹת גְּאוֹת** should be read (or at least understood) in v.1d as well.

The second verse is a tricolon which follows an ABB' verse pattern. This tricolon is a single compound sentence. Verse 2a is the main clause introducing the Lord's "strong and mighty" one, followed by two comparative clauses (2b; 2c) introduced by **כִּי**. Verse 2c features alliteration of **נ** (4x). Verse 2d–3b constitutes an AA'B tricolon. Lines 2d–3a are linked by chiasm. The couplet in v. 4a–b repeats the words of v. 1b–c verbatim (with the exception of **וַיְהִי־הָאֵלֹהִים**). Verse v. 4c–e constitutes a tricolon with an ABB' verse pattern. The first colon begins with the comparative particle **כִּי**, while lines 4d–e both begin temporal particles and end with 3fs suffixes.

Section 1, Subsection B: (Verses 5–6). This unit is not linked syntactically to vv. 1–4, but is linked verbally by the repetition of **עֲטָרֹת**, **צָבִי** and **תַּפְאָרָה**. It contains three verses; an introductory monocolon (v. 5a), and two bicola (v. 5b–c; 6a–b). The phrase **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** marks this unit off from the preceding subsection. It is characterized by anaphora with the repetition of **וְ** at the beginning of lines 5b, 5c, 6a, 6b. The first bicolon (v. 5b–c) is of unequal length (11+4 syllable count, 4+2 stress count). It is tempting to lineate 5b–c as a 2+2+2 tricolon and 6a as a 2+2 bicolon. This, however, is rendered impossible by 6b which is probably a single, rather long, colon (broken into two lines 6b become an improbable 1+3 bicolon). Therefore in order to preserve some parity in length v. 5a–b has been lineated as an uneven bicolon (though 5a is comparable in length to 6a–b) and v. 6a–b as a single bicolon.

Section 2, Subsection A: (Verses 7–8). This unit contains 4 verses, a tricolon (7a–c) and three bicola. *Waw* (7a) formally links this verse to v. 1, yet the phrase **וַיְהִי־אֱלֹהִים** marks this line as

the beginning a new unit by introducing a new subject.⁵⁴ The unit is characterized by the repetition of the word-pairs תַּעֲרָה/שָׁנָה and שָׁכַר/יַיִן, and by assonance with the repetition of the *û* sound in 8 of its 10 lines. All the verbs are 3cp. The topic of the subsection is the drunkenness of Israel's priests and prophets (v. 7c) which inhibits their ability to perform their customary function of rendering sound and godly counsel. The image of drunkenness here links Judah's priests and prophets to the "drunkards of Ephraim" (v. 1a). Isaiah accuses his interlocutors of drunkenness elsewhere (Isa. 5:11–12, 22), and is probably speaking of literal inebriation.

The opening tricolon of this unit is united by semantic parallelism, and by the word pairs mentioned above. The two bicola which follow (v. 7d–e, f–g) are also semantically parallel and equivalent in length (syllable counts = 6+6, 5+6; stress counts = 2+2, 2+2). The concluding bicolon is marked off by כִּי. Its two cola begin and end with similar sounding words (כִּי, קִיא, מְקוֹם, מְלֵאוֹ).

Section 2, Subsection B: (Verses 9–12). Verse 9 lacks any syntactical connection to vv. 7–8. This syntactical break is strengthened by the inverted word order in v. 9a–b, whose two lines open with the interrogative אַתְּ-מִי. The interrogatives in v. 9a–b sets the tone for the unit which apparently represents the thoughts and words of the prophets and priests described in vv. 7–8.⁵⁵ The rhetorical questions in v. 9a–b imply that Isaiah's teaching is infantile. Verse 10, which is introduced by "evidential" כִּי,⁵⁶ offers support for this evaluation by depicting Isaiah's teaching simplistic childish prattle, לָצַי צוֹ לָצַי צוֹ. The next verse (11), also introduced by

⁵⁴ The initial tricolon may also serve as an opening marker, both for the subsection and the stanza. Cf. Watson, 183.

⁵⁵ Blenkinsopp's observations are apropos, "It seems more likely that this is one of many instances...of the rhetorical device of quoting the opposition, in which the quotation is generally followed by a response of a threatening nature." *Isaiah 1–39*, 389.

⁵⁶ Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Function and Interpretation of כִּי in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 105 (1986): 203.

evidential כִּי, offers further support for the prophets' and priests' characterization of Isaiah's preaching, i.e. "with stammering speech and another language he speaks to this people."⁵⁷ In v.12 then, Isaiah's detractors report the essence of the message which they are lampooning. The verse is introduced by a relative clause. The antecedent of אֲשֶׁר (v. 12a), while not mentioned by name, is Isaiah. The antecedent of הָיָה אֵלֵיהֶם (v. 11c); the verb in v. 12a (אָמַר) is in the past tense—"Who said to them, this is the rest..."

Section 2, Subsection C: (Verses 13). A new subsection is introduced in v. 13a which is marked by the introductory formula, וְהָיָה לָהֶם דְּבַר־יְהוָה. While we have suggested that Isaiah's opponents are the speakers in vv. 11–12, it appears that Isaiah is the speaker in v. 13. This change of speaker also argues for a new subsection at this point. In this verse, Isaiah responds to his detractors by announcing the consequences of their rejection of his message. Because the priests and prophets had rejected his message of rest, "the word of YHWH to them will be" צוֹ לָצוֹ, i.e. unintelligible. Here the incoherent cant of v. 10 is repeated and cast in the teeth of Isaiah's opponents as a sort of ironic vindication of his message and a divinely imposed sanction on their rebellion. YHWH's intention in addressing the drunken priests and prophets in this way is given in v. 13e–f, לַמֶּעַן יִלְכוּ וְכָשְׁלוּ אַחֲזֵר וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ וְנוֹקְשׁוּ וְנִלְכְּדוּ.

Section 3, Subsection A: (Verses 14–15). Here the beginning of a new unit is marked by לָכֵן, the imperative verb שְׁמַעוּ, and by a change of addressee. Having denounced the rulers of Ephraim, Isaiah turns his attention to מוֹשְׁלֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם (v. 14c–d). Form-critically this subsection constitutes the indictment portion of a judgment oracle which extends to v. 22. The

⁵⁷ The verb יְדַבֵּר depicts customary rather than future action in this verse. Though most commentators assume that Isaiah is speaking in vv. 11–12, the text does not indicate a change in speaker. Indeed, there is no clear indication of a change in speaker until v. 13. Therefore, we assume that whoever is speaking in vv. 9–10 continues to speak here.

end of this indictment is marked by the messenger formula in v. 16 which introduces the announcement of judgment. In MT this unit is marked off on both ends by *sethuma*.

The unit opens with a monocolon (v. 14a) followed by a tricolon (v. 14b–d). The tricolon follows an AA'B pattern. The lines of this tricolon are united by content. And by alliteration (אָשֶׁר, מִשְׁלֵי, אֲנִשִּׁי). In v. 15a there is a second monocolon linked to the preceding text by כִּי. This line introduces a quotation from the rulers which encompasses the three succeeding bicola. This quotation indicts of the rulers of Jerusalem by using their own words to characterize the motives behind their plans. The quotation probably does not represent the actual words of Jerusalem's leaders, but rather presents Isaiah's interpretation of the real implications of their foreign policy decisions. Verse 15b–c is a chiasmic bicolon which characterizes the treaty in which Jerusalem's ruling class trusted as a covenant with "Death" and "šhēʾôl." In other words it is a "deal with the Devil." The concluding bicolon (v. 15f–g) is connected to what precedes it by means of כִּי. It characterizes the plans of the rulers as rooted in falsehood and subterfuge.

Section 3, Subsection B: (Verses 16–19c). This subsection also begins with an introductory monocolon featuring the prophetic messenger formula preceded by לְכֹהֵן. Following the messenger formula the announcement of judgment is delivered by YHWH speaking in the first-person. This announcement opens with the discourse marker הִנְנִי. Each of the four following bicola are then linked to this announcement by *waw*-consecutive perfect verbs. The concluding tricolon begins with a temporal clause "whenever it passes over," preceding the main clause "it will take you." The antecedent of the 3ms pronominal suffix in 19a (עֲבֹרֶיךָ) is שׁוֹט שׁוֹטֶיךָ from the previous bicolon, which is also the subject of the verb (יִקָּח).

Verse 16b–e is a quatrain with a chiasmic ABB'A' pattern. The first and last lines describe YHWH's action ("I am about to establish Zion as a stone") and the proper response ("He who

believes will not hurry”). The two middle members explicate the nature of the stone which YHWH will lay (“A stone of testing/A weighty corner stone of a well founded foundation”). Exum notes, “The firmness of YHWH’s foundation stone is emphasized through repetition. The piling up of phrases in v, 16 is itself a building process.”⁵⁸ Indeed there is a building up of the stone idea from 16b to 16d (16b אבן, 16c בחן אבן, 6d מוסד מוסד יקרת). The next four verses are couplets.

Section 3, Subsection C: (Verses 19d–21d). This short unit contains four balanced bicola of increasing length (2+2; 3+3; 3+3; 4+4). It begins with the discourse marker וְהָיָה (v. 19d).⁵⁹ The two following bicola (20a–b; 21a–b) are both connected to 19d–e by means of the conjunction כִּי. The two lines of the concluding bicolon (21c–d) both begin with infinitive constructs which express the purpose of the verb יִרְגֵז (21b). Since YHWH is spoken of in the third person in vs. 21a–b; c–d we may assume that there has been a change of speaker from the previous subsection.

Section 3, Subsection D: (Verse 22). This subsection opens with the discourse marker וְעַתָּה, which indicates a logical conclusion, “in light of, therefore,”⁶⁰ or a “shift in argumentative tack with a continuity of subject and reference.”⁶¹ The change of subsection is also indicated by the jussive verb form אַל-תִּתְלַחֲצוּ (v. 22a). The first bicolon (v. 22a–b) warns Isaiah’s hearers not to mock, i.e. reject his word. The concluding tricolon (v. 22c–e) provides the basis for this solemn warning, “For (כִּי) a destructive decree I have heard from Adonay YHWH of Hosts

⁵⁸ Exum, “Isaiah 28–32,” 139.

⁵⁹ “וְהָיָה” “Precedes a sentence or an adverbial phrase (often with a temporal connotation) that introduces a new paragraph or subparagraph,” *BHRG*, §44.4.

⁶⁰ *BHRG*, §44.6.

⁶¹ *IBHS*, §39.3.4f.

concerning all the land.” That Isaiah is the speaker here is made explicit by the use of the first person.

Section 4, Subsection A: (Verses 23–26). The boundaries of this unit are marked off by the call to attention in v. 23 and the summary statement regarding the source of the farmer’s wisdom in v. 28. The subsection begins with 4 imperative verbs calling the reader/hearer to attend to the teaching offered. Whedbee identifies this call to attention as a “*Lehröffnungsformel*” and points out that this type of formula “occurs frequently in wisdom literature to introduce a lesson (e.g. Prov. 4:1; 7:24; Job 33:1, 31; 34:2; Ps. 49:2; et al.).”⁶² This is followed by two rhetorical questions (v. 24a–b; 25a–c) designed to secure the reader/hearer’s assent to the wisdom being offered. The subsection is drawn to a close with a short summary bicolon asserting that the source of the farmer’s wisdom is God (v. 26a–b).

Section 4, Subsection B: (Verses 27–29). The same wisdom which the farmer displays in the plowing and planting process is also evident in the process of threshing the grain. The beginning of this unit is marked by the use of וְ with asseverative force (v. 27a).⁶³ This subsection, like the preceding one concludes with a summary bicolon indicating that God is the sources of the farmer’s wisdom (v. 29a–b). The phrase וְגַם-אֱלֹהִים links v. 29 with v. 26 in addition to concluding the section and the subsection.

⁶² J. William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 54.

⁶³ Concerning units beginning with וְ Schoors writes, “There are good examples of Hebrew sentences or clauses opening with *kî* and we find it even at the beginning of a literary unit.” A. Schoors, “The Particle וְ,” in *Remembering All the Way: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Wekeuzelschap in Nederland*. (ed. Bertril Albrektson et al.; OTS 21; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 224. See also Muilenburg who writes, “The subsections are often introduced by וְ.” James Muilenburg, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle וְ in the Old Testament,” *HUCA* 32 (1961): 148. Aejmelaeus also writes, “Particularly in poetic texts, וְ often seems to introduce an independent clause or even a new paragraph.” A. Aejmelaeus, “Function and Interpretation of וְ in Biblical Hebrew,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 203.

Sections

Section 1 (vv. 1–6). The boundaries of this section are marked by *inclusio* with the noun phrase עֲתֶרֶת נְאוֹתָהּ (v. 1) repeated in modified form עֲתֶרֶת צָבִי near the end of the section (v.5).

Chiasm is also a structural feature of this unit.

A	Woe to the <i>proud crown</i> (v. 1a)
B	<i>Fading flower</i> (v. 1b)
C	<i>Crown cast down</i> (v. 2d)
C'	<i>Crown trampled</i> (v. 3a)
B'	<i>Fading flower</i> devoured (v. 4)
A'	YHWH the <i>crown of beauty</i> (vv. 5–6)

The unit is also characterized by repetition with most of the words and phrases in verse one recurring in the same or modified form throughout the section. These include עֲתֶרֶת (3x), צָבִי (3x), and תִּפְאֶרֶת (3x). Verse 1a is repeated in 3b, 1b in 4a–b (with slight modifications), and 1c in 4c.

The section consists of a הוֹי oracle (vv. 1–4), to which is appended a promise of salvation (vv. 5–6). Many scholars regard vv. 5–6 as a post-exilic interpolation.⁶⁴ However, it need not be understood that way.⁶⁵ However, we could just as easily argue that Isaiah has introduced this word of promise for rhetorical effect. By contrasting the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, which is “fading” (v. 1b) and about to be “trampled: (v. 3a) and “swallowed up” (v. 4c), the prophet emphasizes that YHWH is the true crown of His people. When the false crown has been removed and the true crown established, then there will be true justice and security.

Section 2 (vv. 7–13). The beginning of this section is marked by the phrase וְנִגְמַת אֱלֹהֵי (v. 7a). This verse is linked to vv. 1–4 by the words בְּשִׁכָר and בְּיַיִן. Thus the theme of drunkenness carries over to this section from Section 1. The boundaries of this section are marked by *inclusio* with

⁶⁴ Kaiser, *Isaiah*, 241; J. Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique*, (Paris: Gabalda, 1977), 388; Clements, *Isaiah*, 224; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 5; David Petersen, “Isaiah 28: A Redaction Critical Study,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers*, (2 vols.; ed. P. Achtemeier; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 1:107.

⁶⁵ Hayes and Irvine, *Eighth Century Prophet*, 323–324.

vv. 7 and 13 both speaking of the effects of alcohol. Verse 7 speaks of priests and prophets who “err with wine, and are addled by beer” while v. 13 identifies the consequences of their drunken ambulation, i.e. “They will proceed on, and fall backward, and be shattered and ensnared and captured.” Within this *inclusio* a parallel structure is evident.

- A Effects of alcohol (v. 7–8)
- B Isaiah’s message (v. 9a–b)
- C *ṣāw lāṣâw*...(v 10)
- B’ Isaiah’s message (v. 12)
- C’ *ṣāw lāṣâw*...(v. 13b–d)
- A’ Effects of alcohol (v. 13e–f)

The unit is also marked by repetition. Prominent in this respect is the repetition of the word pairs *תָּעוּ/שָׁגוּ* and *שָׁכַר/עִיָּן*. Also significant is the repetition of *לָצַו נָו* etc. in verses ten and thirteen.

Scholars are of differing opinions regarding the genuineness of vv. 7–13. Some, scholars see these verses as a unit originating with Isaiah,⁶⁶ while others hold that vv. 7a and 13 are secondary redactional additions.⁶⁷ However, the parallel structure supports the unity of this passage.

The section begins and ends with allusions to drunkenness and its effects (vv. 7–8, 13). These effects include diminished judgment, “they err,” “are addled,” and result in physical impairment and injury; they “walk on...fall backwards...are broken...ensnared and captured.” This metaphor of drunkenness echoes Isaiah’s earlier depictions of those in leadership who rejected his prophetic message (cf. Isa. 5:11–12, 22).

⁶⁶ Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe*, 390; Hayes and Irvine, 322.

⁶⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 18; Clements, 226.

Section 3 (vv. 14–22). The chiasmic structure of this section of Isaiah 28 has long been recognized. Lund discerned a seven-part symmetry in this passage.⁶⁸ Irwin also stresses the concentric structure of verses 15–18.⁶⁹

Scoffers' word:	A	Covenant with Death. (vs. 15)
	B	Safety from flood.
	C	Refuge in Lie.
Yahweh's word:	D	Cornerstone. (vs. 16)
	C'	Refuge in Lie swept away. (vs. 17)
	A'	Covenant with Death cancelled (vs. 18)
	B'	No safety from flood.

Exum also sees the text a chiasmic in structure, with the following result.⁷⁰

A	Covenant with death (v. 15)
B	We have made a lie our refuge (v. 15)
C	I am founding in Zion a stone (v. 16)
B'	I will make justice a line (v. 17)
A'	Cancelled will be your covenant with death (v. 18)

We agree that this unit is shaped chiasmically, but we differ from Irwin, Lund and Exum regarding the details. In our view this chiasmic structure includes all of vv. 14–22. The root לָצַן occurs at both ends of this section, thus its boundaries are marked by inclusion.

A	אֲנָשִׁי לָצַן (v. 14b)
B	כָּרַתְנוּ בְרִית אֶת־מֹות (v. 15b)
C	כִּי שָׁמְנוּ כֶּזֶב מִחֶסְנוּ (v. 15f–g)
D	הִנְנִי יֹסֵד בְּצִיּוֹן אֲבֶן (v. 16)
C'	וְשָׁמְתִי מִשְׁפָּט לְקַו (v. 17a–b)
B'	וּכְפַר בְּרִיתְכֶם אֶת־מֹות (v. 18a)
A'	אֶל־תְּחַלּוּצְנוּ (v. 22a)

According to many redaction critics, vv. 14–18 form an Isaian core to which vv. 19–22 are added by way of enlargement or relecture.⁷¹ Within this core vv. 16–17a are regarded by

⁶⁸ N. W. Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament," *AJSL* 46 (1930): 112–113.

⁶⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 26.

⁷⁰ Exum, "Isaiah 28–32," 136–137.

⁷¹ O'Kane, 54.

some as secondary on form-critical grounds. Childs writes, “From the perspective of classic form-critical analysis there can be little doubt that the oracle of promise reflects all the elements of a separate oracle originally distinct from the invective threat which brackets it on both sides.”⁷² Others, however, have argued for the authenticity of these lines.⁷³ Melugin acknowledges that the promise in 16–17a seem incongruous with the form of the judgment oracle, but insists that this may simply be Isaiah’s creative use of the genre.⁷⁴ At any rate the tight chiasmic structure of this section tends to support arguments in favor of literary unity.

Section 4 (vv. 23–29). This unit is connected to the three preceding sections by means of the repetition of the root שָׁמַע in vv. 9b (שָׁמוּעָה), 19e (שָׁמוּעָה), 22c (שָׁמַעְתִּי) and 23 (שָׁמַעַי). It divides neatly into two subsections each of which concludes with a summary statement regarding YHWH’s wisdom (vv. 26, 29). The unit divides in the following manner—

Subsection A	A	Summons to receive instruction (v. 23)
	B	Lesson from plowing and planting (vv. 24–25)
	C	Source of instruction—“His God” (v. 26)
Subsection B	B’	Lesson from threshing (vv. 27–28)
	C’	Source of instruction—“YHWH of Hosts” (v. 29)

The paragraphs in this section are nearly identical in length. Verses 23–26 contain 5 verses, 12 cola, 86 syllables and 32 stresses. Verses 27–29 contain 5 verses, 12 cola, 83 syllables and 33 stresses. This near perfect symmetry argues for the status of this poem as an independent unit.

Subsection A:	vv. 23–26	85/(86) syllables, 32 stresses, 12 cola
Subsection B:	vv. 27–29	83 syllables, 33 stresses, 11 cola

Scholars are divided over the authorship of this unit. Those defending its authenticity include Duhm, Skinner, Schoors, Wright, R. B. Y. Scott, Fohrer, Wildberger, Blenkinsopp,

⁷² Childs, *Isaiah*, 207.

⁷³ R. F. Melugin, “The Conventional and the Creative in Isaiah’s Judgment Oracles,” *CBQ* 36: 308–310; Petersen, “Isaiah 28: A Redaction Critical Study,” 111.

⁷⁴ Melugin, “The Conventional and the Creative in Isaiah’s Judgment Oracles,” 306–310.

Whedbee, and Dietrich. Those challenging Isaian authorship include Cheyne, K. Marti, R. H. Pfeiffer, O. Kaiser, Barth, Vermeulen and Clements.⁷⁵ Scholars who accept Isaian authorship tend to date the parable to the period just prior to the Assyrian invasion in 701 BC,⁷⁶ (e.g. Wildberger), while those who question Isaian authorship either date it to the time of Josiah (Barth; Clements) or to the postexilic period (Vermeulen). Blenkinsopp writes regarding these differences, “These questions are rarely answerable with assurance. It can at least be said that, if it is an independent literary composition, it was composed specifically for use at this point, as a kind of exegetical reflection in parabolic form on the preceding words of judgment.”⁷⁷ Sweeney’s evaluation seems reasonable. He writes, “Because Isaiah is known for his extensive use of wisdom traditions and forms of discourse, one need not doubt that he composed these verses.”⁷⁸

The wisdom character of this unit is widely acknowledged. It features an invitation to receive instruction (*Lehröffnungsformel*), makes use of rhetorical questions, features vocabulary characteristic of the wisdom tradition, and it closes with a “Summary-Appraisal” which Childs has identified as a wisdom form.⁷⁹ Delitzsch has identified the genre of the unit as a *Mashal* or parable with a majority of scholars concurring.⁸⁰ While its connection with the rest of chapter 28 is not stated explicitly, most are agreed that the prudent activity of the farmer which he wisely learns from divine instruction presents a sharp contrast to Judah’s leaders who refuse to be taught (v. 9) and therefore reject YHWH’s message and His messenger.

⁷⁵ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 232–233.

⁷⁶ cf. Hayes and Irvine, who date chapters 28–33 to “the period of Ephraim’s last years as a state” i.e. 728–22. *Eighth Century Prophet*, 321.

⁷⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 398.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

⁷⁹ Whedbee, *Wisdom*, 54.

⁸⁰ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 15.

Thought Progression

Up till now, we have focused primarily on the parts of ch. 28: cola, verses, subsections and sections. We have also noted that this chapter is generically diverse. Nevertheless we believe that ch. 28 is a unified composition. At this point we will turn our attention to those factors which make this chapter which work together to create a sense of unity.

On a very basic level, the entire chapter is given a sense of unity or cohesiveness by the repetition of key words throughout the unit. These key words and phrases occur across the major sections and divisions of the text. Significant in this regard are terms like שמע (vv. 9b, 12e, 14a, 19e, 22c, 23a, 23b), יהוה צבאות (v. 5a, 22d, 29a), שטף (vv. 2c, 17d, 18c), ברד (vv. 2b, 17c), ייך/שקר (vv. 1, 7),⁸¹ חזק (vv. 2a, 22b), רמס (vv. 3a, 18d), קו (vv. 10b, 13c, 17a), ירה (vv. 9a, 26b), בין (vv. 9b, 19e), לייך (vv. 14b, 22a), בלע (vv. 4e, 7d).

In addition to vocabulary, the sections the chapter are linked via syntactical markers.⁸² Section 2 (vv. 7–13) is linked to Section 1, specifically vv. 1–4 by means of the opening phrase וְגַם־אֱלֹהִים, and by its emphasis upon wine, beer and drunkenness. The *waw* in this construction is coordinate and not subordinate, so it introduces something new, it adds something to what has already been mentioned, which is why it introduces a new section. Nevertheless, it still creates a link to what precedes. Interestingly, it is not linked syntactically to what immediately precedes it (vv. 5–6), but does display verbal links to v. 1 (“drunkenness”) and v. 4 (“swallow”). In this way Isaiah draws a comparison between two groups whose demeanor evokes charges of drunkenness, the leaders of Ephraim and the prophets and priests of Judah.

⁸¹ Perhaps שקר “falsehood” (v. 15g) is an intentional pun on the root שכר “drunken” (v. 1).

⁸² Our determination of the sections and subsections is based upon the identification of the following significant syntactical markers—v. 1a, הוֹי; v. 5a, בְּיַד־יְהוָה; v. 7a, וְגַם־אֱלֹהִים; v. 9a, אֶת־מִי; v. 13a, וְהָיָה; v. 14a, לְכֹן; v. 16a, לְכֹן; v. 19d, וְהָיָה; v. 22a, וְעַתָּה; v. 23a, הַאֲזִינוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ.

Furthermore, Sections 2 and 3 are linked to one another in several ways which support grouping them together. First, לָכֵן in v. 14a links this section to what precedes it.⁸³ Second, the emphasis on scoffers and scoffing in Section 3 (vv. 14, 22) mirrors the mocking of Isaiah’s teaching in Section 2 (vv. 9–10). Third, both sections describe Isaiah’s auditors as הָעָם הַזֶּה “this people” (vv. 11c, 14c). Fourth, “the strange speech of v. 11 corresponds to the strange operations of Yahweh in v. 21.”⁸⁴ Finally, both sections speak of the YHWH’s offer of security to a people that reject it in favor of other sources of security (vv. 12, 16). It would appear from the preceding considerations that both Sections 2 (vv. 7–13) and 3 (vv. 14–22) are broadly addressed to the same audience, i.e. the leaders and people of Jerusalem. Sections 3 and 1 also have strong links to each other. Notable in this regard is the storm imagery in v. 2 (בָּרָד בְּזָרָם) and vv. 17–18 (בָּרָד, שׁוֹט שׁוֹטָה, מַיִם יִשְׁטַפוּ). Also, the promise in v. 17a that YHWH will “make מוֹשָׁפֵט a line” is reminiscent of the promise in v. 6 to the remnant that YHWH will promote justice.⁸⁵

Despite its unique form, Section 4 also exhibits significant linkage with other parts of the poem. In the opening bicolon 23a–b the imperative שָׁמְעוּ is repeated twice. This is strongly reminiscent of the summons to attention in v. 14a, שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה. Not only so, but it also echoes the people’s refusal to listen to Isaiah’s message in v. 12e, and their inability to understand the message in v. 9b and v. 19e. Verse 26b, אֵלֶּהּ יוֹרְנוּ echoes the query in Section 2 (v. 9a) אֵת־מִי אֵלֶּהּ. Finally, the description of YHWH’s counsel as “wonderful” in 29b connects Section 4 with Section 3 which speaks of זָר “strange” deed and “alien” נִכְרִיָּה (v. 21c–d).

The following outline summarizes the thought progression of ch. 28:

⁸³ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 361.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Exum, “Isaiah 28–32,” 139.

- Section 1: Woe to Ephraim’s Proud Crown—vv. 1–6 (הוי)**
 Subsection A: Doom Pronounced on Ephraim’s Proud Crown—vv. 1–4
 Subsection B: YHWH Becomes a Crown for the Remnant—vv. 5–6
- Section 2: Judah’s Prophets and Priests—vv. 7–13 (וְגַם אֱלֹהִים)**
 Subsection A: Isaiah’s Unflattering Description of the Prophets/ Priests—vv. 7–8
 Subsection B: Prophets/ Priests’ Unflattering Description of Isaiah—vv. 9–12
 Subsection C: Isaiah’s Rejoinder—vv. 13
- Section 3: Judah’s False Refuge—vv. 14–22 (לִבְךָ שְׁמֵעוּ)**
 Subsection A: Indictment: Judah’s Leaders Erect a False Refuge—vv. 14–15
 Subsection B: Announcement: False Refuge to Be Removed—vv. 16–19c
 Subsection C: Illustration—vv. 19d–21
 Subsection D: Warning—v. 22
- Section 4: The *Mashal* of the Farmer—vv. 23–29 (הָאֲזִינוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ קוֹלִי)**
 Subsection A: Divine Wisdom Illustrated by Plowing/Planting—vv. 23–26
 Subsection B: Divine Wisdom Illustrated by Threshing—vv. 27–29

Thematic Coherence

When considered as a unit ch. 28 presents several themes. First, the blindness of the rulers characterized as drunkenness. This theme is introduced in section 1 (vv. 1–6) with a woe utterance which is directed at the “drunkards of Ephraim” (v. 1a), and “those hammered by wine” (v. 1d, הַלְלוּמֵי יַיִן). This is picked up in v. 7a with the words “these also are drunk with wine (וְגַם אֱלֹהִים שָׁגוּ בִּיַיִן). The “these” identified in this passage are the priests and prophets who “err in vision” and “totter in judgment” (v. 7f–g). In v. 14 the “rulers of this people which is in Jerusalem” are also identified as blind leaders who “mock” the word of YHWH (v. 14a, 22a).

A second theme which emerges from ch. 28 has to do with the threat of destruction at the hands (and feet, v. 3a) of a “strong and mighty one” (v. 2a). This unnamed destroyer, presumably Assyria, is not an independent agent, but an instrument of Adonay (הַזֶּקֶן וְאֲמִיץ). Its destructive power is compared to that of a “hail storm” (זָרְחַם בְּרָד), a “storm of destruction” (שַׁעַר קָטָב), and a “a storm of mighty overflowing waters” (זָרְחַם מַיִם פְּבִירִים שֹׁטְפִים). The fact that this storm imagery is repeated in vv. 15–18 (v. 15d, שִׁיט שׁוֹטֵף; v. 17c, בְּרָד; v. 17d, מַיִם יִשְׁטְפוּ) shows that the same destroyer will ravage both Ephraim and Jerusalem. The theme of

threat is picked up again in v. 21, which announces that YHWH will “rise up” (יָקִיִּם יְהוָה), as at Mt. Perazim, and the Valley of Gibeon in order to do his “his strange deed” and his “alien work.” This enigmatic announcement apparently envisions YHWH adopting the role of a foreign invader by using Assyria to attack Zion (cf. 1:4, 7). The theme of destruction climaxes in v. 22 where Isaiah reports “I have heard a decree of destruction from Lord YHWH of Hosts against all the land” (עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ). Here “against all the land implies both Ephraim and Jerusalem, north and south.

A third major theme of ch. 28 is Judah’s covenant with Death and *Šhēḏl* (v.15c). This “covenant” is believed by many, if not most, interpreters to be a foreign alliance, most likely with Egypt, which the leaders of Judah believe will protect them from the Assyrian onslaught cf. 20:5). Their false sense of security is revealed by the bold pronouncement that “the overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes over” (v.15d–e). They believe that though the scourge may overwhelm Israel to the north, their covenant will be an effective “refuge” (v. 15f), and “shelter” (v.17d). This misplaced trust is offensive on two counts, 1) it demonstrates a lack of trust in God, and 2) it constitutes a rejection of YHWH word through Isaiah indicating that the Assyrian flood would first overwhelm Israel and then sweep on into Judah (8:7–8). For this reason Isaiah announces, “your covenant with death will be wiped away” (v. 18a).

A fourth theme emerges in this text which is related to the previous three, yet merits separate consideration. That is Judah’s rejection of YHWH’s plan for its salvation—a plan which offers salvation through resting/trusting/waiting. In v. 12 Isaiah reminds His audience that he had offered them salvation on these terms, but that they “were not willing to listen” (cf. 7:4, 9). Also, within the judgment oracle found in vv. 16–19 is the promise that YHWH will lay “foundation-

stone” in Zion (v. 16b), and that “the one who believes will not hurry” (v. 16e). This text sets forth YHWH’s response to the rulers’ rejection of his offer of salvation and the inevitable failure of their “covenant with death” (v. 18a). While they seek to erect a false shelter, YHWH proceeds with his own plan for Zion’s future, and exhorts those who believe to wait patiently for it (i.e. not hurry”). This plan will take time to unfold and its rationale will not readily apparent, but nevertheless it is purposeful and wise. This is the message of the parable of the farmer in vv. 23–33. The parable calls those who are willing to listen to learn from the farmer who is taught of God. Despite the fact that to the uninstructed the agricultural process may be inscrutable, yet the ordered activities of the farmer are effective in producing a crop. So YHWH’s plan (עֲצָה), while inscrutable to us (הַפְּלִיא), is nevertheless wise and will produce the desired outcome in time.

There is a final theme which, while not prominent in ch. 28, is still clearly present—the theme of conversion after disaster. Verses 5–6 announce that, following the trampling of the proud crown of Ephraim’s drunkards, YHWH’s will become a “A crown of glory and a diadem of beauty To the remnant of his people.” This text foresees a time YHWH will once again take his proper place in the esteem of his people. The remnant which is here spoken of may refer to the southern kingdom of Judah which will remain after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. With YHWH as their ruler the remnant will experience a restoration of just (מִשְׁפָּט) rule (v. 6a, (לְרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט לְיוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַמִּשְׁפָּט), and hence restored success in turning aside foreign aggressors (v. 6b, (וּלְגִבּוֹרָה מְשִׁיבֵי מִלְחָמָה שְׂעָרָה).

The themes detailed here also appear elsewhere in chs. 28–33. As our study progresses we will observe how these themes are modified and expanded in the succeeding chapters. In this way we will attempt to demonstrate the thematic unity and cohesion of this part of the book of

Isaiah. In our final chapter we will show how these themes have a special connection to ch. 30 which we maintain is the heart of chs. 28–33.

CHAPTER THREE

ISAIAH 29

Text and Translation

Section 1: 29:1–8

Vs	Text	S	A ¹	Translation
1a	הוֹי אֲרִיאֵל אֲרִיאֵל	7	3	Alas! Ariel, Ariel
1b	קִרְיַת חָזָה דָּוִד	6	3	City where David encamped.*
1c	סָפוּ שָׁנָה עַל־שָׁנָה	7	3	Pile year upon year
1d	חַגִּים יִנְקְפוּ	5	2	Let festivals go round.
2a	וְהִצִּיקוֹתִי לְאֲרִיאֵל	8	2	Yet I will distress Ariel,*
2b	וְהָיְתָה תִּאֲנֶנְיָה וְאֲנֶנְיָה	11	3	And there will be mourning and lamentation
2c	וְהָיְתָה לִי כְּאֲרִיאֵל	8	3	And she will be to me like an altar hearth.*
3a	וְחָנִּיתִי כְּדֹוֹר עָלֶיךָ	8	3	And I will encamp in a ring against you.*
3b	וְצִרְתִּי עָלֶיךָ מִצָּב	7	3	And I will encircle you with an entrenchment.*
3c	וְהִקְיַמְתִּי עָלֶיךָ מִצְרֹת	10	3	And I will set up against you siege works.

¹ S = syllables, A = accents.

4a	וּשְׁפַלְתָּ מֵאֲרֶץ תְּדַבְּרִי	9	3	Then, you will speak low,* from the earth. ²
4b	וּמִעָפָר תִּשָּׁח אִמְרֹתֶיךָ	9	3	And from the dust your word will mutter.
4c	וְהָיָה כְּאוֹב מֵאֲרֶץ קוֹלֶךָ	9	4	And your voice shall be like a spirit from the earth.
4d	וּמִעָפָר אִמְרֹתֶיךָ תִּצְפָּצֵף:	10	3	And from the dust your word shall whisper.
5a	וְהָיָה כְּאֶבֶק דֶּק הַמּוֹן זְרוֹף	11	5	And it shall become as fine dust, the horde of your haughty ones.*
5b	וּכְמוֹן עֵבֶר הַמּוֹן עָרוּצִים	10	4	Even as passing chaff the horde of tyrants.
5c	וְהָיָה לִפְתָע פְּתָאִם	7	3	Then it shall happen quite suddenly.
6a	מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּפְקַד	10	4	From YHWH of Hosts there will be visitation.*
6b	בְּרָעַם וּבְרַעַשׁ	5	2	With thunder and earthquake,
6c	וְקוֹל גָּדוֹל	4	2	and loud noise.
6d	סוּפָה וּסְעָרָה	6	2	Storm and tempest,
6e	וְלֹהֵב אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה:	6	3	and devouring flame of fire.
7a	וְהָיָה כְּחִלּוֹם חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה	9	4	And it shall be as in a dream-vision of the night
7b	הַמּוֹן כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם הַצְּבָאִים עַל-אֲרִיאֵל	14	4	The multitude of all the nations who make war against Ariel.
7c	וְכָל-צְבִיָּהּ וּמִצְדָּתָהּ וְהַמְצִיקִים לָהּ:	16	4	Even all who war against her and her stronghold or distress her.*

² Here ארץ may substitute for שׂאול (HALOT).

8a	וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחְלֹם הָרָעֵב	10	4	And it shall be as when the hungry dreams
8b	וְהָיָה אוֹכֵל	5	2	And he is eating,
8c	וְהִקְיִין וְרִיקָה נַפְשׁוֹ	8	3	Then he awakens and his throat is empty.
8d	וּכְאֲשֶׁר יַחְלֹם הַצָּמֵא	8	3	Or as when the thirsty dreams,
8e	וְהָיָה שֹׁתֵה	5	2	And he is drinking,
8f	וְהִקְיִין וְהָיָה עָוֵף	8	3	And he awakens and behold, he is faint,
8g	וּנְפָשׁוֹ שׁוֹקֵקָה	6	2	And his throat is parched.
8h	כֵּן יִהְיֶה הַמּוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם	9	3	So shall be the multitude of all the nations
8i	הַצְּבָאִים עַל־הַר צִיּוֹן:	8	3	Which war against Mount Zion.
Totals:	cola 34	279	103	

Section 2: 29:9–14

9a	הִתְמַהְמְהוּ וְתִמְהוּ	8	2	Stop and be amazed*
9b	הִשְׁתַּעֲשְׂעוּ וְשַׁעוּ	7	2	Blind yourselves and be blind.
9c	שִׁכְרוּ וְלֹא־יַיִן	5	3	Be drunken, but not with wine,*
9d	נִעוּ וְלֹא שִׁכָּר:	6	3	Stumble but not from beer.
10a	כִּי־נִסַּף עֲלֵיכֶם יְהוָה רוּחַ תְּרִדְמָה	12	5	For YHWH has poured out upon you a spirit of slumber.
10b	וַיַּעַצֵּם אֶת־עֵינֵיכֶם אֶת־הַנְּבִיאִים	13	3	And he has closed your eyes O prophets
10c	וְאֶת־רָאשֵׁיכֶם הַחֲזִים כִּסָּה:	10	3	And your heads, O seers, he has covered.*

11a	וַתְּהִי לְכֶם חֲזוֹת הַכָּל	9	4	And the vision of all this has become to you
11b	כְּדִבְרֵי הַסֵּפֶר הַחֲתוּם	8	3	As the words of the sealed book.
11c	אֲשֶׁר־יִתְּנוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־יֹדֵעַ הַסֵּפֶר	12	4	Which they give to one who knows writing,*
11d	לֵאמֹר קְרָא נָא־זֶה	6	3	Saying, “please read this.”
11e	וְאָמַר לֹא אוּכַל	6	3	But he says, “I cannot,”*
11f	כִּי חֲתוּם הוּא:	4	2	“For it is sealed.”
12a	וְנָתַן הַסֵּפֶר עַל אִשֶּׁר לֹא־יֹדֵעַ סֵּפֶר	12	6	Then one gives the book to someone who does not know writing,
12b	לֵאמֹר קְרָא נָא־זֶה	6	3	Saying, “please read this.”
12c	וְאָמַר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי סֵפֶר:	8	4	But he says, “I do not know writing.”
13a	וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי	6	2	Then Adonay said,
13b	יַעַן כִּי נִגַּשׁ הָעָם הַזֶּה בְּפִיו	10	5	“Because this people draws near with its mouth,
13c	וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כִּבְדוּנִי	8	2	And with its lips they honor me,*
13d	וְלִבּוֹ רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי	8	3	But its heart it has sent far from me.*
13e	וַתְּהִי יִרְאַתְכֶם אֹתִי	8	3	And their fear of me has become,
13f	מִצְוַת אַנְשִׁים מִלְמֻדָּה:	9	3	A commandment learned from men.”
14a	לְכֵן הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף	6	3	Therefore, behold I will once more,*
14b	לְהַפְלִיא אֶת־הָעַם־הַזֶּה	8	2	Overawe this people,

14c	הַפֶּלֶא וְהַפֶּלֶא	4	2	Absolutely overawe.*
14d	וְאַבְרָהָה חֲכָמִת חֲכָמָיו	9	3	And the wisdom of its wise men will perish.
14e	וּבִינַת נְבִיָּיו תִּסְתָּתֵר:	9	3	And the insight of its intellectuals will hide itself.
Totals	cola = 27	217	84	

Section 3: 29:15–24

15a	הוּי הַמַּעֲמִיקִים מִיַּהֲנֶה	8	3	Alas! Those who burrow deep away from YHWH,*
15b	לְסַתֵּר עֲצָה	4	2	In order to conceal counsel.
15c	וְהָיָה בְּמַחְשָׁף מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם	9	3	And their deeds are in a dark place. ^{3*}
15d	וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי רֹאֵנוּ	8	3	For they said, “Who sees us?
15e	וּמִי יוֹדְעֵנוּ:	6	2	Or knows us?”
16a	הַפְּכֹכְכֶם	3	1	Oh your perversity!*
16b	אִם־כְּחַמְרֵי הַיֵּצֵר יִחָשֵׁב	9	3	As if clay thought itself the potter!*
16c	כִּי־יֹאמֵר מַעֲשֵׂה לַעֲשֹׂהוּ לֹא עָשִׂנִי	13	5	That a made thing should say with respect to its maker, “He did not make me!”
16d	וַיֵּצֵר אָמַר לְיוֹצְרוֹ לֹא הֵבִין:	11	5	Or a thing formed say to the one forming it, “He does not understand.”
17a	הַלֹּא־עוֹד מְעַט מְזֻעָר	7	3	Lo! Yet a little while,*
17b	וְשֵׁב לְבָנוֹן לְפָרְמֶל	8	3	And Lebanon will turn into an orchard,*

³ Sheol? Cf. Isa. 28:15.

17c	והפרמל ליער יחשב:	9	3	And the Carmel region will be regarded as forest land.
18a	ושמעו ביום-ההוא החרשים דברי-ספר	15	5	And the deaf will hear in that day, the words of a book,
18b	ומאפל ומחשך עיני עורים תראינה:	14	5	and from gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see.
19a	ויספו ענוים ביהוה שמחה	12	4	And the humble will increase joy in YHWH
19b	ואביוני אדם בקדוש ישראל יגילו:	14	5	And the poorest of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*
20a	כי-אפס עריץ וכלה לץ	9	4	For the tyrant shall be no more, And the scorner shall come to an end;
20b	ונכרתו כל-שקדי און:	9	3	And all the guardians of iniquity shall be cut-off.
21a	מחטיאי אדם בדבר	8	3	Those who make a person guilty with a word,*
21b	ולמוכח בשער יקשון	9	3	And set a trap for the advocate in the gate,*
21c	ויטו בתהו צדיק:	8	3	And with vacuous arguments they turn aside the one in the right.
22a	לכן פה-אמר יהוה	7	3	Therefore, thus said YHWH,
22b	אל-בית יעקב	4	2	God of the House of Jacob, ^{4*}
22c	אשר פדה את-אברהם	8	3	Who redeemed Abraham—

⁴ Here, along with Wildberger (p. 103) and Irwin (p. 66) I have followed the suggestion of *BHS* to repoint אל as אל.

22d	לֹא־עֲתָהּ יִבוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב	7	3	No longer will Jacob be ashamed,
22e	וְלֹא עֲתָהּ פָּנָיו יִחְוָרוּ:	9	4	No longer will his face be pale.
23a	כִּי בְרֵאתוֹ יִלְדִּיו	7	3	For when his children see,*
23b	מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי בְּקִרְבּוֹ	7	3	The work of my hands in their midst,
23c	יִקְדִּישׁוּ שְׁמִי	5	2	They will sanctify my name.*
23d	וְהִקְדִּישׁוּ אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב	9	3	And they will sanctify the Holy one of Jacob
23e	וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִעֲרִיצוּ:	11	3	And the God of Israel they will reverence.
24a	וַיֵּדְעוּ תַעֲוִירוֹת בִּינָה	9	3	And the wayward of spirit will know understanding,
24b	וְרוֹגְנִים וְלְמַדּוּ־לִקְחָ:	8	3	And the rebellious ones will learn doctrine.
Totals:	cola 33	284	106	
Totals Speech:	94	780	293	

Translation Notes

v. 1b קְרִית חָנָה דָּוִד—“The city where David encamped.” Here the construct noun indicates a relative clause. *IBHS* states, “The relative clause may be used after a construct noun with no prepositional force.”⁵

v. 2a וְהִצִּיקוֹתִי לְאַרְיֵאל—“Yet I will distress Ariel.” The *waw* here is translated adversatively to emphasize the contrast between the peaceful cycle of festivals envisioned in 1c–d and the coming distress. ל frequently designates the object after hiphil verbs.⁶

⁵*IBHS*, §9.6.d.

⁶*Dav* §73.R7.

v. 2c כְּאַרְיֵאל לִי וְהָיְתָה לִי—“And she will be to me like an altar hearth,” *BHS* strongly suggests emending וְהָיְתָה to read וְהָיִיתָ “you shall be.” However, Ariel is already spoken of in the 3d person in v. 2a and it is not absolutely necessary to switch to the 2d person here.

v. 3a וְהָנִיתִי כְדֹר עָלֶיךָ—“And I will encamp in a ring against you.” Following the LXX, many want to emend כְדֹר to כְדֹר in this verse.⁷ This would work nicely since it parallels the reference to David in v. 1. The repetition of the verb חָנָה from v. 1 also makes it tempting to push the case for parallel verbiage. However, while כְדֹר is evocative of the preceding reference to David, this may be all that the poet intended—i.e. we may simply have a case of the poetic use of sound that works too well. Additionally, the LXX reading *hōs dauid* is more easily explained as an assimilation of כְדֹר to v. 1 than vice versa.

v. 3b וְצָרְתִי עָלֶיךָ מְצָב—“And I will encircle you with an entrenchment.” The noun מְצָב is a hapax and its meaning is uncertain. *NIDOTTE* derives it from נָצַב I “stand, station oneself.”⁸ Cognates include *maṣṣāb*, “pillar, tower,” *maṣṣābâ*, “outpost, sentry,” and *maṣṣēbâ*, “standing stone pillar.” Irwin translates it “pickets.”⁹ Wildberger suggests that the parallel relation of מְצָב to מְצָרָה “siege works, ramparts” (also a hapax) suggests that מְצָב is some sort of structure, and not simply a contingent of troops like a garrison or group of pickets.¹⁰

v. 4a וְשַׁפְּלֵת מֵאַרְצֵי תְדַבְּרִי—“Then you will speak low from the earth.” Here the two verbs are coordinated “asyndetously” with the second verb representing the principal verbal idea.¹¹

⁷ Labarge, p. 171.

⁸ Elmer E. Martens, “נָצַב,” *NIDOTTE* 3:134–36.

⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 46.

¹⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 65.

¹¹ *Dav* §83c, *GKC* §120g.

According to Wildberger “שפל is used instead of an adverbial designation of place.”¹² מֵאֲרֵיץ may be being used metonymously for שְׂאוּל (*HALOT*).

v. 5a וְהָיָה כְּאֶבֶק בֶּקֶת הַמִּזֶּן זָרִיךְ—“Then it shall become as fine dust, the horde of your haughty ones.” 1QIsa^a reads זָרִיךְ “your arrogant ones” in place of זָרִיךְ “your foreigners.” This reading is suggested by *BHS* and is followed by several commentators (Wildberger, Watts, Blenkinsopp, Clement, etc.). The emendation צָרִיךְ “your enemies” is followed by several translations including, *RSV*, *NRSV*, *NIV*, *NEB*, *NJV*, *SR*, *TOB*, *FC*.¹³ However, MT is adopted by the UBS textual committee based on the fact that “in this context הַמִּזֶּן, ‘multitude,’ occurs three times, and it is constructed with זָרִיךְ, ‘your foreigners,’ עֲרִיצִים, ‘tyrants’ and כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם ‘all the nations,’ respectively. The same three nouns occur in a stereotyped expression in Ezek 28.7 and 31.12 and this makes their association in Is 29.5 plausible.”¹⁴ The LXX translation ἀσεβῶν “impious” cannot confidently be said to support either reading. Oswalt opts for זָרִיךְ maintaining that “it carries with it the idea of hostility (1:7; 25:2, 5; Ps. 54:5 [Eng. 3]).”¹⁵ We have chosen to follow the DSS reading for the following reasons; (1) the 2fs suffix form continues a series of 6 such pronouns in vv. 3a–4d, all of which belong to the description of Ariel’s humiliation, (2) the verb שָׁפַל (v. 3a) and the adjective עָרִיץ (v. 5b) occur elsewhere in Isaiah (13:11) with זָרִיךְ in a context predicting the humiliation of the proud and arrogant, (3) עָרִיץ occurs elsewhere in this chapter with the tyrants of Israel as its referent (v. 20a).

v. 6a מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּפְקֹד—“By YHWH of Hosts there will be visitation.” Scholars debate the meaning of תִּפְקֹד in this line. Some take it in a positive sense as promising divine intervention

¹² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 65.

¹³ Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, 122.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 525.

to save Ariel, while others construe it negatively as indicating divine judgment or punishment.

LXX translates it impersonally (ἐπιλοκοπή γὰρ ἔσται), a solution which is also suggested by *GKC* and others.¹⁶

v. 7c וְכָל-צָבִיָּהּ וּמִצְדָּתָהּ וְהַמְצִיקִים לָהּ:—“Even all who war against her and her stronghold or distress her.” *BHS* proposes reading מִצְבֵּיָהּ וּמִצְרָתֶיהָ “her guard towers and her siege works” in place of מִצְדָּתָהּ וְצָבִיָּהּ “those who war against her and her stronghold.” This is partially in response to 1QIs^a which reads וּמִצְרָתָהּ in place of וּמִצְדָּתָהּ. *BHS* apparently accepts the DSS text as original and, desiring to match a noun with a noun, replaces צָבִיָּהּ with מִצְבֵּיָהּ. This is, however, unnecessary as the text makes tolerable sense as it is and the DSS reading is probably influenced by the preceding occurrence of מִצְרָתָהּ in v. 3.¹⁷

v. 8g וְנִפְשׁוֹ שׁוֹקֵקָה—“And his throat is parched.” Irwin follows Dahood in translating נִפְשׁוֹ as “throat.”¹⁸

v. 9a הִתְמַהְמְהוּ וְהִתְמַהְמְהוּ—“Stop and be amazed.” הִתְמַהְמְהוּ is difficult to make sense of in this context. Most agree with Wildberger that it is the *hithpalpel* form of מָהָה “to linger or tarry.”¹⁹ However with *HALOT* he proposes reading הִתְמַהְמְהוּ instead (*hithpael* of תַּמְהָה) and translates it “horrify yourselves and be dumbfounded because of horror.” However Irwin (along with Delitzsch) suggests that the line forms a hendiadys and translates it “falter in your stupor.”²⁰ Emendation would also destroy the symmetry between v. 9a and v. 9b.

¹⁶ See also *GKC* §144b; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 86.

¹⁷ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 67.

¹⁸ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 55; M. Dahood, “Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography,” *Bib* 49 (1968): 368.

¹⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 80.

²⁰ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 55.

v. 9c וְלֹא־יִין שָׁכְרוּ—“Be drunk, but not with wine.” *BHS* suggests emending שָׁכְרוּ “they are drunken” to שָׁכְרוּ “be drunken.” This advice is followed by several translations—*NIV*, *NRSV*, *RSV*, while others retain the indicative along with *MT*, *NASB*⁹⁵, *NKJV*, *JPS*, *NVSR* (Segond). Jan de Waard cites the UBS textual committee as considering “all readings different from M as due to either syntactical or contextual harmonization, and it attributed a majority B evaluation to the more difficult reading of M with its stylistic relief.”²¹ However, the verbs in this verse may be read as imperatives without tampering with the consonantal text. The “more difficult reading” argument is hard to support in this context since it deals, not with the consonantal text itself, but with the masoretic pointing.

v. 10c וַיַּעֲצֵם אֶת־עֵינֵיכֶם אֶת־הַנְּבִיאִים—“And he has closed your eyes O prophets...” Wildeberger regards “the prophets” and “the seers” in this verse as glosses.²² There is, however, no textual evidence for this. Here the definite article is translated as vocative.²³

v. 11c אֲשֶׁר־יִתְּנוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־יֹדֵעַ הַסֵּפֶר—“Which if they give it to one who knows writing.” This sentence is the protasis of a conditional clause even though the conditional particle is missing.²⁴ The article in הַסֵּפֶר is generic, therefore the *K* may be followed without recourse to the *Q* (pace *BHS*).²⁵ Note also the symmetry of syllable counts between 11c and the parallel line 12a (12/12). Verse 12a includes סֵפֶר two times, once with, and once without the article. Is it possible that 11c includes the article simply as a means of evening out the lines? Here הַסֵּפֶר is used

²¹ *A Handbook on Isaiah*, 123–124.

²² Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 81.

²³ cf. *IBHS*, 247.

²⁴ *Dav* §132a.

²⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 81.

metonymously for writing. We therefore translate, “one who knows writing,” rather than “one who knows the book” (cf. Dan. 1:4).

v. 11e **וְאָמַר לֹא אוֹכַל**—“Then he says, I cannot.” In this line “Vav perf. continues an impf. Expressing what is customary or general (freq. impf.) in pres. or past.”²⁶

v. 13c **וּבְשִׁפְתָיו כְּבָדוּנִי**—“And their lips they honor me.” *BHS* wrongly cites IQ4Is^a as reading **כְּבָרְתִי**. Actually it agrees with the MT. *BHS* also recommends emending **כְּבָדוּנִי** (3cp) to **כְּבָדְנִי** (3ms) in an attempt to harmonize the verb with the 3ms pronominal suffixes on two preceding nouns. Wildberger concurs with this.²⁷ However, the subject of the verb is the collective noun **הָעַם**. The sg. pronominal suffixes can be interpreted as collectives as well. Hence, the emendation is unnecessary.²⁸ Irwin chalks up *BHS*’ proposed emendation to its “insensitivity to Heb. Style.”²⁹

v. 13d **וְלִבּוֹ רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי**—“But its heart it has sent far from me.” The factitive meaning of the piel stem converts the stative verb **רָחַק** “be distant” (qal), to transitive “send away.”³⁰

v. 14a **לְכֵן הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף**—“Therefore, behold I am about to once again.” The particle **הִנְנֵה** plus the participle should be translated as the “imminent future.” The masoretic pointing of the verb suggests that **יוֹסֵף** should be read as *hiphil* imperfect 3ms. However, as Wildberger points out, this does not coordinate with **הִנְנִי**. Therefore, we have taken the suggestion of *GKC* that **יוֹסֵף** be read as an unusual form of the *qal* participle.³¹

²⁶ *Dav* §54.a.

²⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 86.

²⁸ Watts, *Isaiah* 1–33, 384–385.

²⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 58.

³⁰ *J-M* §52d, n3.

³¹ *GKC*, §50.e; cf. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 22–23.

v. 14c הַפְּלֵא וְפִלֵא—“Absolutely dumbfound.” Here the combination of the infinitive absolute plus substantive is translated as a hendiadys intensifying the verbal idea. “The infinitive absolute may equally well be represented by a substantive of kindred stem. In Is. 29:14 the substantive intensifying the verb is found along with the infinitive absolute.”³² Combining words of similar sound and derivation appears to be a deliberate technique in this poem as this is the fifth example of it in this chapter.³³

v. 15a הַיּוֹי הַמְעַמְיָקִים מִיְהוָה—“Alas! Those who burrow deep away from YHWH.” *GKC* suggests that הַמְעַמְיָקִים is here used as an auxiliary verb with the infinitive לְסַתֵּר in order to suggest the depth of the action (120g).³⁴ *HALOT* suggests the translation “bury deeply in order to conceal.” We have translated “burrow” in order to emphasize more strongly that it is their hiding activity which is being condemned and not simply what they were hiding (their plans).

v. 15c מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם בְּמַחְשֶׁךְ וְיִהְיֶה—“And their deeds are in a dark place” According to *GKC waw* is here used, “To express *present* actions, &c., as the temporal or logical consequence of actions or events which continue or are repeated in the present, especially such as have, according to experience, been at all times frequently repeated, and may be repeated at any time.”³⁵

v. 16a הַפְּכָכְכֶם—“Oh your perversity!” *BHS* suggests emending הַפְּכָכְכֶם to הַכְּפָכִים, “flasks,” but cites no support from the manuscripts. The noun הַפְּךָ is here translated as an interjection. The verb has the sense of to “turn” or “put on the other side” (*HALOT*). Some translations render the noun in this way, e.g. *NIV*, “You turn things upside down” (so also *NRSV/RSV*). Others follow the translation we have chosen, e. g. *JPSV*, “How perverse of you!” Segond, “*Quelle*

³² *GKC*, §113w; see also Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, “completely overawe.”

³³ *Ibid*, 22.

³⁴ *GKC*, §120g.

³⁵ *Ibid*, §112m–n.

perversité est la vôtre!” and the Vulgate, “*perversa est haec vestra cogitatio.*” HALOT gives the meaning, “*Verkertheit, perversity*” for the noun. BDB supplies the meaning, “the contrary, contrariness, perversity.” הַפְּךָ is used in Ezek. 16:34 to describe someone who does the opposite of what is expected or customary. NIV et al, appear to have paraphrased the meaning of the noun in light of the usual sense of the verb.

v. 16b אִם-כָּחָמֶר הַיֵּצֵר יִחָשֵׁב—“As if the clay thought itself the potter.” Verse 16b depicts the “perversity” introduced in 16a; namely, that the clay should think itself the potter. Here we have translated the *niphal* verb יִחָשֵׁב reflexively and have identified חָמֶר as the subject. In our translation rather than introducing an interrogative, v. 16b continues the exclamatory objection to Judah’s sinful thinking introduced in v. 16a.

v. 17a הֲלוֹא-עוֹד מְעַט מְזַעֵר—“Lo! Yet a little while.” Concerning הֲלוֹא Irwin writes, “In certain OT texts *hl*³⁶ is practically indistinguishable in meaning from *hnh/hn* and should be likened to Ugar. *hl* ‘look’.”³⁶

v. 17b וְשָׁב לְבָנוֹן לְכַרְמֶל—“And Lebanon will turn back into an orchard.” Beuken notes, “the verb שׁוּב almost invariably means ‘to turn back to a point of departure.’”³⁷

v. 19b וְאֶבְיוֹנֵי אָדָם בְּקִדּוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל יִגִּילוּ:—“And the poorest of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” GKC includes אֶבְיוֹנֵי אָדָם among the examples of the simple adjective being used to express the superlative.³⁸ Irwin accepts Dahood’s suggestion that אָדָם in this verse is an example of the masculine form of אֶרֶץ “land.”³⁹ However, if “the land” were the intended

³⁶ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 17.

³⁷ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 118.

³⁸ GKC, §133h.

³⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 64.

meaning rather than “mankind” one might expect the article to be attached (הַאֲדָמָה). As it is, the meaning “mankind” fits quite nicely without the article.

v. 21a מַחֲטִיאי אָדָם בְּדָבָר—“Those who make a person guilty with a word.” Jouon and Muraoka point out that the hiphil participle in v. 21a מַחֲטִיאי involves “a forced action, possibly against someone’s will”⁴⁰

v. 21b וְלִמּוֹכֵיהָ בְשַׁעַר יִקְשׁוּן—“And set a trap for the advocate in the gate.” יִקְשׁוּן is a hapax legomenon probably derived from קוּשׁ “to lay bait” (*HALOT*). None of the proposed emendations would make any difference in translation.

v. 22b אֵל-בֵּית יַעֲקֹב—“God of the House of Jacob.” We have accepted the recommendation of *BHS* and *BHK* to repoint אֵל “unto” or “concerning” as אֱל “God.” As the text now stands the most natural antecedent to אֱשֶׁר in 22c is “the House of Jacob.” However, this makes no sense. *LXX* has attempted to solve the problem by translating ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακωβ οὗ ἀφώρτισεν ἕξι Ἀβρααμ. However, as Wildberger points out, ἀφώρτισεν is not a good translation of פָּרַה.⁴¹ When אֵל is repointed as אֱל we get a much more satisfactory reading with “God” as the antecedent of the relative pronoun and the subject of the verb פָּרַה. This appears to be the simplest solution to the problem and does not require emendation of the consonantal text.⁴²

v. 23a וְלִדְרֵי יִלְדָּיו בְּרֵאֲחוֹ וְלִדְרֵי יִלְדָּיו—“For when his children see.” *BHS* suggests that וְלִדְרֵי be omitted as a gloss. This, however, ignores the possibility that וְלִדְרֵי serves a poetic function of adding symmetry to this tricolon. Lines 23a–b appear to be arranged chiastically in an abb’ a’ pattern.

⁴⁰ *J-M*, §54.d.

⁴¹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 105.

⁴² Oddly, Kaiser rejects this change because “It is contrary to the received text,” but then proceeds to switch the sequence of 22b–c; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 277.

v. 23c יִקְדִּישׁוּ שְׁמִי—“They will sanctify my name.” *BHS* suggests emending יִקְדִּישׁוּ to read יִקְדִּישׁ in an effort to match the verb with the singular pronominal suffixes which precede it. But this is not necessary considering the fact that the 3ms suffixes have the collective noun יַעֲקֹב as their antecedent. Consider also the possibility that the plural ending serves the poetic purpose of joining 23c to 23d–e which also feature plural verbs—הִקְדִּישׁוּ (23d), יַעֲרִיצוּ (23e).

Structure

Syllable and Stress Counts

Syllable Counts. By our count ch. 29 has 94 lines. The total syllable count ranges from 770 (short count) to 780 (long count). Taking the average of these two figures (775) and dividing by the number of lines yields an average line length of 8.24 syllables. Median line length is 8 syllables as is the mode. Lines ranging from 5 to 9 syllables (72) account for 74 percent of total lines. Taking only bicola into account we achieve similar results. Mean bicolon length is 16 syllables (16.68), the median is 17 as is the mode. Mean line length in bicola is 8.3 syllables, median line length 8 syllables, while the mode is 9 syllables.

Stress Counts. We count 293 stresses in this chapter. With 94 cola this results in an average of 3.1 stresses per line. This matches the theoretical average of 3 stresses per line closely. Lines range in length from 1 to 6 stresses. There is only one line (16a) with a single stress and one with 6 stresses (v. 12a). There are 7 lines with 5 stresses or 7.2 percent of the total. This is a significant but small percentage. 53 lines of this unit have 3 stresses (56 percent of the total) making 3 stress lines the dominant pattern. Two stress lines are next in frequency comprising 22 percent of the total.

Prose Particle Counts

Of the 326 words in chapter 29, 36 are prose particles, an average of 11 percent. This is just outside the range for texts considered almost certainly poetic (5–10%), and just inside the range of texts considered “mixed in character” (10–20%). This number may be misleading since a high concentration of prose particles is found in verse 11(7), a verse treated by many as prose (*BHS*), but which we have argued should be lineated poetically due to a high degree of parallelism.

Verses and Subsections

Section 1, Subsection A: (Verses 1–5b). The first subsection of ch. 29 opens with הָיָה (v. 1). This subsection is the first subsection of the unit which includes vv. 1–8. Its focus is the divine assault on Mt. Zion. The subsection opens with a woe addressed to Ariel (identified as Zion in v. 8) followed by an imperative command (v. 1c–d) exhorting Ariel to allow the cycle of annual festivals to continue. This is followed by a switch in v.2 to perfect *waw*-consecutive verbs in the first person describing YHWH’s impending action against Ariel. Verses 3–5b continue the series of *waw*-consecutives, and expounds further upon YHWH’s intentions for Zion. The opening verb of v. 3 (וַחֲנִיתִי) forms a verbal link with v.1 via its reference to “David’s encampment” (הַחֲנִית). The verbs in vv. 3–5b switch from first (v. 3) to second (v. 4) to third person verbs (v. 5a–b). Nevertheless they are linked together by a series of 2fs pronominal suffixes (7x) which have Ariel as their antecedent. Hence, the focus of the unit is on Ariel who is addressed directly in vv. 1–2, spoken of by name in v. 3 and addressed by means of 2d person pronouns in vv. 3–5b.

Section 1, Subsection B: (Verses 5c–8). This subsection of vv. 1–8 introduces a shift in emphasis from Ariel’s distress to YHWH’s sudden and unexpected intervention on her behalf. We agree with Blenkinsopp’s opinion that “‘suddenly, in an instant’ (5) is the pivot on which the

passage turns,” and that “The adverb ‘suddenly’ (*pit̄ōm*) is the fulcrum of the passage.”⁴³ This is supported by the balanced lengths of subsections A and B with (*pit̄ōm*) in the center. The role Verses 5c–6e describe the divine theophany which will accompany YHWH’s intervention. Here we split off v. 5c from v. 5a–b. Many interpreters mark the start of a new section at the beginning of v.5, yet, in our opinion, the 2fs pronoun in v. 5a (אֲנִי) is part of the series of second person pronouns which begins in v. 3a. Thus v. 5a–b should be included as part of the description of Ariel’s distress. It seems better to group v. 5c with 6a as the first line of a bicolon. This bicolon introduces the sudden action of YHWH which results in Ariel’s deliverance. In keeping with this we suggest that אֲנִי should be translated as a 3fs (rather than a 2ms) verb with Ariel as the subject. We also suggest that this verb should be understood as indicating visitation for salvation rather than punishment. Blenkinsopp argues that it is improbable that אֲנִי speaks of judgment here since “After the near-death experience of 3–4 it would make no sense to speak of punishment suddenly being visited on the city.”⁴⁴

Section 2, Subsection A: (Verses 9–12). This unit opens with a series of imperative verbs directing the hearers to “stop,” “be stupefied,” “blind yourselves,” “be blind,” “be drunken,” and “stumble.” This is followed by an explanatory אֲנִי, declaring the unseen cause of this unfortunate condition, i.e. “YHWH has poured out upon you a spirit of deep slumber” (v. 10a). Verse 10 also informs us as to the addressees of v. 9, “he has closed your eyes O prophets, and your heads, O seers, he has covered” (v. 10b–c).⁴⁵ Verses 11 and 12 goes on to specify what the blindness of the

⁴³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 400, 402.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 401.

⁴⁵ Though the 6 imperatives in v. 9 are naturally read as commands, it is possible that the illocutionary force of the utterances is declarative. That is, by making the utterance the prophet is actually bringing about the condition he is commanding.

prophets and seers is in relation to, namely “the vision of all this” This is Isaiah’s way of describing his own message.⁴⁶

Verses 11c–12c form a heptacolon or seven line verse.⁴⁷ *BHS* typesets vv. 11–12 as prose and is followed in this by most major translations—*JPSV*, *NIV*, *NRSV*, et al. However, despite a rather high prose-particle count the text still has poetic qualities, and given the fact that it is flanked by poetry on both sides, an attempt to lineate it is not out of the question. Note the resulting parallel pattern in which **כִּי הַתּוֹם הוּא** is the pivotal term.

A	v. 11c	אֲשֶׁר-יִתְּנוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-יַדְּעֵי הַסֵּפֶר
B	v. 11d	לֵאמֹר קָרָא נְאֻזָּה
C	v. 11e	וְאָמַר לֹא אוֹכַל
D	v. 11f	כִּי הַתּוֹם הוּא:
A´	v. 12a	וְנָתַן הַסֵּפֶר עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע סֵפֶר
B´	v. 12b	לֵאמֹר קָרָא נְאֻזָּה
C´	v. 12c	וְאָמַר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי סֵפֶר:

Section 2, Subsection B: (Verses 13–14). The beginning of this subsection is indicated by a monocolon introducing a divine utterance—**כִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְעִן כִּי** (13a). Indeed, the entire unit may be identified as a prophetic judgment oracle.⁴⁸ The form of the messenger formula in v. 13a is unusual but obvious enough. Verse 13b–f presents the accusation, while v. 14 contains the announcement of judgment introduced by **לִכֵּן** with YHWH speaking in the first person. The two parts of the oracle, the accusation and announcement, both consist of a tricolon and concluding bicolon.

Section 3, Subsection A: (Verses 15–16). The beginning of this subsection is clearly marked by the particle **הִוִּי**. It follows the normal pattern for **הִוִּי** oracles, identifying the targets of

⁴⁶ Cf. Isa. 8:16.

⁴⁷ Though rare such long poetic verses do occur in biblical Hebrew poetry. See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 188–189.

⁴⁸ Claus Westerman, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, (trans. Hugh Clayton White; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 94ff.

the prophecy by means of a participle. Verses 15 and 16 are not linked syntactically, but are linked by a common focus on the reversal of proper roles. The planners of Judah do their deeds in darkness and assume that YHWH does not know what they are doing. They ask the rhetorical question *יִדְעֵנוּ וְיָמִי יוֹדְעֵנוּ* with its implied answer, “no one,” with specific reference to YHWH from whom they have taken special pains to hid their plans. This is echoed in v. 16d where the clay pot says regarding the one who formed it, *לֹא הֵבִין* “he does not understand.” The two verses are also held together by means of the catchword, *מַעֲשֵׂהוּ* (v. 15c *מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם*; v. 16c *מַעֲשֵׂהוּ*; v. 16d *מַעֲשֵׂהוּ*). The center of the unit is the one word monocolon in v. 16a which reads *הַפְּכֹכְכֶם* “O your perversity.” There are 35 syllables and 13 stresses before this verse and 33 syllables and 13 stresses after it. This places this word at the center of the unit and suggests that it encapsulates the message of the subsection.

Section 3, Subsection B: (Verses 17–21). The start of this subsection is marked by the interrogative *hē* introducing a rhetorical question (v. 17a). Its end is indicated by *לִכֵּן* which begins the next unit. Generically, vv. 17–21 constitute a salvation oracle.⁴⁹ Verses 17–19 are linked syntactically by wcp verbs. Verse 20 is connected to what precedes it by means of *כִּי*.

Section 3, Subsection C: (Verses 22–24). The final subsection of Isaiah 29 (vv. 22–24) is marked by *לִכֵּן* which links it with the preceding. *לִכֵּן* introduces an expanded form of the messenger formula. Verse 22d–e gives the essence of the prophetic announcement: *לֹא-עֲתָהּ*. The explanation for the removal of Jacob’s shame in v. 23 is introduced by *כִּי*. Further description of the basis of Jacob’s conversion is introduced by wcp verbs in v. 23d and 24a. The

⁴⁹ Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament*, (trans. Keith Crim; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 78, 99, 246.

focus of this unit is Jacob who is mentioned in 22b, 22d, and 23d. The section closes with a summary bicolon (v. 24a–b).

Sections

Chapter 29 divides into three main sections: vv. 1–8, 9–14 and 15–24. The first and second sections begin with masculine plural imperatives (v. 2. v. 9a–b) followed by series of *waw*-consecutive perfect verbs.⁵⁰ Section 1 (vv. 1–8) announces the coming trial and miraculous deliverance of Ariel. Section 2 (vv. 9–14) invokes a spirit of slumber upon the intelligentsia of Judah rendering them incapable of understanding YHWH's divine plan. Section 3 (vv. 15–24) describes a grand reversal which will occur after the folly of Ariel's prophets, wise men and political counselors have been exposed.

Section 1 (vv. 1–8). This section opens with a woe utterance (v. 1). The woe speech here follows the typical pattern; the particle הוי followed by a sustentative, in this instance the proper name Ariel. The address to אֲרִיאֵל is matched in v. 8i, at the end of the section, by the more explicit reference to הַר צִיּוֹן, thus forming an inclusion. The woe utterance in v. 1 is followed by a mp imperative verb in v. 2a. Once again this imperative form is matched by the mp imperatives which begin the following section (v. 9). Verses 3–8 are then linked to each other by a series of wcp verbs. Prominent among these wcp verbs is the form וְהִיָּה which occurs 5 times in the section (v. 4c, 5a, 5c, 7a, 8a). If the two occurrences of וְהִיָּה (v. 2b, c) and the single occurrence of יִהְיֶה (v. 8h) are added, then the total number of occurrences for the root הִיָּה with a future tense increases to 8.

This section is comprised of two subsections or subparagraphs of very nearly equal length. The first subsection (vv. 1–5b) is 135 syllables in length. It contains 16 cola and 50 stresses. The

⁵⁰ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 376.

second subsection (vv. 5c–8) is 144 syllables in. It has 18 cola and 53 stresses. The balanced lengths of these two subsections support our earlier identification of v. 5c as the pivotal line of this section. Thus,

Subsection A:	vv. 1–5b	135 syllables, 50 stresses, 16 cola
	v. 5c	7 syllables, 3 stresses, 1 colon
Subsection B:	vv. 6a–8	137 syllables, 50 stresses, 17 cola

These two subsections present two different yet related foci. Subsection A (vv. 1–5b) depicts the distress of Ariel in graphic detail. The dominance of Ariel in this subparagraph is seen in the fact that this appellative is repeated 4 times. Subsection B (vv. 5c–8) is dominated by the image of YHWH’s theophanic intervention on behalf of Ariel against **הַצְבָּאִים כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַמּוֹן** (vv. 7b, 8h–i). Here the notion of warfare dominates as the root **צבא** is repeated 4 times (**צָבָאוֹת** 6a, **הַצְבָּאִים** 7b, 8i, **צָבִיָּה** 7c). While vv. 1–5b emphasize what YHWH will do to Ariel, vv. 5c–8 emphasize what will become of the “hoard of all the nations” which come against Zion. Yet the connection between the two units is strengthened by interlocking occurrences of **אֲרִיאֵל** in subsection B and the double occurrence of **הַמּוֹן** in subsection A. The noun **הַמּוֹן** which plays such a prominent role in subsection B, occurs twice in v.5, albeit with a different referent.⁵¹ There are two references to **אֲרִיאֵל** in subsection B, one in the middle of the subsection (v. 7b) and another at the end of subsection, under the more familiar name **הַר צִיּוֹן** (v. 8i).

הַמּוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַצְבָּאִים עַל־אֲרִיאֵל (7b)
הַמּוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַצְבָּאִים עַל־הַר צִיּוֹן (8i)

Section 2 (vv. 9–14). Boundaries of this unit are marked by the mp imperative verbs in v. 9, and by the woe utterance which opens vv. 15–24. The focus of the section is the blindness Judah’s leaders. The addressees of Isaiah’s command to be stupefied are not immediately

⁵¹ See our translation notes for arguments that **הַמּוֹן זָרִיף** (read **הַמּוֹן זָרִיף**) and **הַמּוֹן עָרִיצִים** refer to Judah’s leaders and not to foreign invaders.

identified. Yet as the section progresses it becomes clear whom Isaiah is addressing: namely, Judah's prophets and seers on the one hand (v. 10) and its sages on the other (v. 14). Indeed, as noted by Exum, descriptions of the spiritual confounding of these two groups bracket the unit.⁵²

- A Command to be confounded (v. 9)
- B Prophets and seers— blinded eyes (v. 10)
- C The vision a sealed book (vv. 11–12)
- B' This people— distant heart (v. 13–14c)
- A' Promise to confound (v.14d–e)

The unit opens with a series of 6 imperative verbs invoking amazement, blindness, drunkenness and stumbling upon the addressees. These addressees are not identified initially, but their identity becomes quite clear in v. 10 (prophets and seers) which is linked to v. 9 by means of the conjunction **כִּי**. Verses 11 and 12 are then connected to v. 10 by the wci verb **וַתְּהִי** (v. 11a), so vv. 9–12 form a unit together. Verses 13–14 form a prophetic judgment oracle, and, hence, a separate unit. Nevertheless they are joined to vv. 9–12 by the wci verb **וַיֵּאמֶר** (v. 13a). So vv. 9–14 form a single unit focusing upon the inability of Judah's people and leaders to understand Isaiah's message. Coincidentally, v. 11f (**כִּי הִתְרוֹם הוּא**), “for it is sealed,” stands at the center of this section (101 syllables in vv. 9–11e; 110 syllables in vv. 12a–14) and expresses the very heart of its message.

Section 3 (vv. 15–20). This unit is bounded by **הוּי** on both ends (15:1; 30:1). It may be divided into three distinct units identified by three discourse markers: **הוּי** (v. 15a), **הֲלוֹא** (v. 17a) and **לִכֵּן** (v. 22a).⁵³ Beuken points out that “Each of these has a word with a deictic function nearby which produces a subordinate clause.”⁵⁴ In subsection E (vv. 15–16) this word is **הַפְּכָכִים**

⁵² Cheryl Exum, “Of Broken Pots, Fluttering Birds and Visions in the Night: Extended Simile and Poetic Technique in Isaiah,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 348.

⁵³ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

“your overturning” (v. 16a), in subsection F (vv. 17–21) it is פִּי (v. 20a) and in subsection G (vv. 22–24) it is again פִּי (v. 23a).

The movement of the section is from perversion to conversion.⁵⁵ Beuken points out that the vocative הַפְּכֹכִים (v. 16a) stands in contrast to וְשָׁב (v. 17b). He argues persuasively that the verb שׁוּב “almost invariably means ‘to turn back to a point of departure’”⁵⁶ and that “‘Lebanon’ is a metaphor for those who have raised themselves up in their pride against YHWH.”⁵⁷ Hence vv. 17–21 describe in a reversal of the condition of spiritual obduracy which now governs the actions of Judah’s leaders. By the end of the section the transformation of Judah’s leaders has been completed as is acknowledged in the final couplet (v. 24),

וְיָדְעוּ תַעֲרִירוֹחַ בֵּינָה
וְרוֹגְנִים יִלְמְדוּ לְקַח

Thought Progression

Despite the presence of a third woe oracle in v. 15 scholars have generally regarded chapter 29 as a literary unity. Delitzsch’s comments are typical of this view, “ch. xxix. 15–24 also commences with *hoi*, though it does not form a distinct address in itself, since ch. xxix forms a complete whole.”⁵⁸ Likewise M. Sweeney who writes, “The appearance of a *hōy* oracle in 29:15 does not indicate the beginning of a new unit that is structurally independent of 29:1–14; rather, there are a number of indications that 29:15–24 is linked to 29:1–14.”⁵⁹ Among the “links” between 29:1–14 and 29:15–24, Sweeney lists the following:

⁵⁵ Idem, *Isaiah 29:15–24: Perversion Reverted*, in *The Scriptures and the Scrolls: Studies in Honor of A. S. van der Woude on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, (ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 43–63.

⁵⁶ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 119.

⁵⁸ F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 2.

⁵⁹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 375.

(1) The woe oracle in vv. 15–16 illustrates the lack of wisdom among the wise predicted in v. 14.

(2) The predicted restoration of the “fear” and “sanctification” of YHWH in v. 23 answers to the lack of true godly fear which Isaiah decries in v. 13.

(3) The promised removal the “tyrant” (עֲרִיץ) in v. 20 answers to the promised overthrow of Ariel’s “tyrants” (עֲרִיצִים) in v. 5b, as does the verb used to describe Jacob’s fear in v. 23e (יַעֲרִיצוּ).

(4) “Verse 18 resolves the issue of people’s blindness and deafness portrayed in vv. 9–12.”

(5) The “spirit of understanding” (רוּחַ בִּינָה) in v. 24 answers to the “spirit of deep sleep” (רוּחַ תְּרִדָּמָה) in v. 10.⁶⁰

To these five points of contact we may add the following.

(6) The attempt of Judah’s leaders to hide (לְסַתֵּר) their machinations from YHWH (v. 15b) mirrors His determination to hide understanding (תְּסַתֵּר) from them (v. 14e).

(7) YHWH’s promise that the “deaf will hear the words of a book” (סֵפֶר) in v. 18a remedies the inability to read a book (סִפְרָה) in vv. 11–12.

From the preceding it seems safe to assume that ch. 29 forms a complete unit, and that both woe-sections belong together. Structurally, 29:1–14 and 29:15–24 constitute two divisions or “sections,” each of which begins with a הוֹי oracle and closes with a divine utterance introduced by the prophetic messenger formula (vv. 13–14; 22–24). In the case of Section I, this divine utterance is a prophetic judgment oracle, while Section II closes with an oracle of salvation. The three sections of this speech each begin with definite structural markers. Section 1 opens with הוֹי

⁶⁰ Ibid.

(v. 1a) followed in v. 1c by a plural imperative form. The beginning of Section 2 is also marked by plural imperative verbs (v. 9a).⁶¹ The transition to Section 3 is signaled by הוֹי (v. 15a).

Section 1 forms a literary unit in that both of its sections (vv. 1–8; 9–14) are linked by an emphasis on “vision” (v. 7a, וְהָיָה בְּחִלּוֹם חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה, v. 11a, הַכֹּל וַתְּהִי לְכֶם חֲזוֹת,)⁶² and by the motif of dreaming (v. 8a, וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחֲלֵם, and sleeping (v. 10a, כִּי־נִסְדָּךְ עָלֵיכֶם יִהְיֶה רוּחַ, תִּרְדָּמָה).⁶³ Exum argues that the two units are also unified by inclusio in that the “first section of the poem 29:1–8 and the last section of the poem 29:9–14 concern the cult.”⁶⁴ Sweeney suggests that vv. 1–14, though broadly characterized as prophetic instruction, “is constituted as an inverted prophetic announcement of judgment.”⁶⁵ He explains,

Whereas the typical prophetic announcement of judgment presents an accusation followed by an announcement of consequences, 29:1–14 presents the consequences in the form of an assault against Ariel, followed by the prophet’s report of YHWH’s judgment speech that establishes the cause for the punishment.⁶⁶

The thought progression in ch. 29 moves from obduracy to clarity, from spiritual blindness and lack of perception to the restoration of sight and, hence, spiritual understanding. The woe oracle in v. 1a–b sets a tone of impending disaster for Ariel, the city of David’s encampment and the site of Judah’s cultic center. A command to continue the annual cycle of religious festivals emphasizes Ariel’s complete lack of appreciation of the danger she is in (v. 1c–d). Ariel’s inability to appreciate the gravity of her situation continues throughout the first section (vv. 1–8). The prophet declares that YHWH will besiege Ariel, thus bringing her to the brink of annihilation

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Exum, “Broken Pots,” 351.

⁶³ Beuken, *Isaiah*, 89.

⁶⁴ Exum, “Broken Pots,” 351.

⁶⁵ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 379.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

only to intervene on her behalf at the last minute. He predicts that, in hindsight the army of invasion which YHWH will bring against Ariel will seem unreal, like a bad dream (vv. 7–8). Statements at the beginning and end of this unit emphasize the unreal texture which the coming siege and deliverance will have for the people of Ariel. Verse 1 depicts Ariel as complacent and unreflective, whereas vv. 7–8 describe the dreamlike quality which these event will have for her.

Section 2 develops this idea further. Here Isaiah attributes Ariel’s stupefaction to the action of YHWH. The people of Ariel are unable to comprehend the gravity of their situation because YHWH has poured out a “spirit of deep sleep” upon the prophets and seers (v. 10). It is because of this “spirit of slumber” that the people of Ariel, who look to the prophets for guidance, are unable to perceive what YHWH is doing or to appreciate the danger they are in. The fact that it is YHWH who has covered the eyes of the prophets indicates that this lack of spiritual perception is the result of divine judgment (cf. Isa. 6:9–10). This is made explicit in vv. 13–14 which take the form of a prophetic judgment oracle. God has imposed this dream state upon the leaders and hence upon “this people” (הָעָם הַזֶּה) because their “hearts are far from me” (v. 13d) and because their worship is insincere. Therefore He has determined to do His work in a way that is “wonderful (פֶּלִא), that is, impenetrable to human understanding. Because of this “the wisdom (חֵכְמָה) of the wise will perish” (v. 14d) and “the insight (בִּינָה) of the intellectuals will hide itself” (v. 14e). This juxtaposition of the “bad dream” in vv. 1–8 with the incapacitation of the prophets and sages in vv. 9–14 is significant since, under normal circumstances, these are the ones to whom one would turn for the interpretation of a dream (Dan. 2:27–29; Gen. 41:15–16; Num. 12:6). Yet here they are totally deprived of their ability to perform this function.

Section 3 opens with a woe oracle directed toward those who attempt to conceal their plans from YHWH (v. 15a–b). These are the wise men addressed in Section 2. The link between these

two sections is made by means of the repetition of the verb סתר in vv. 14 and 15. The difference here is that whereas in Section 1 YHWH hides his counsel from the wise, in Section 2 the wise attempt to hide their counsel from YHWH. In v. 16 their attitude is characterized as “turning things upside down” (הפְּכֹכָם). It is as if the clay considered itself the potter, or regarded its maker as lacking in understanding (לא הִבִּין). This constitutes a complete reversal of roles, a perversion of the proper order of things.

Verse 17 begins with a rhetorical question (הלוֹא) which signals an abrupt break with the situation described in v. 16. The prophet here indicates that in a short space of time YHWH will act to reverse the current situation. Beuken points out that וְשָׁב in this passage most likely indicates an about face from the current situation.⁶⁷ He points out that Lebanon “was...a symbol for those who opposed YHWH in their arrogance, those who would ultimately taste humiliation.”⁶⁸ He writes,

On the level of the original myth it implies the recovery of an original, unsullied condition, while on the level of the context it suggests the recovery of the correct attitude and behavior, i.e. the end of the abuses described in vv. 15f.⁶⁹

The outcome of all of this is that those who, due to spiritual blindness (v. 10) we unable to read the words of the book, i.e. vision (v. 11) will now be given back their sight and, hence, be enabled to read the book (v. 11, 18) and understand the vision. This section foresees a time when those who did not give honor to their Maker (v. 16c, לֹא עָשִׂנוּ לְעֹשֶׂהוּ) will see “the work (מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי) of my hands” (23b) and will “sanctify me” (v. 23c). The “haughty ones” (עֲרִיזִים) will be in awe of YHWH (v. 23e, וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲרִיצוּ). Thus the “wayward of spirit” (cf. v. 10,

⁶⁷ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 118.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 119.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*,

תִּרְבֵּמָה (רוּחַ תִּרְבֵּמָה) will know understanding (בִּינָה, cf. v. 14d), and learn true doctrine from God rather than men. (מִלְמֹדָה, cf. v. 13f., יִלְמְדוּ).

The following outline summarizes the thought progression of ch. 29.

Panel I ⁷⁰	Section 1:	A Bad Dream—vv. 1–8 (הוֹי)
	Subsection A:	Ariel’s Distress—vv. 1–5b
	Subsection B:	Ariel’s Deliverance—vv. 5c–8
	Section 2:	A Deep Sleep—vv. 9–14 (הִתְמַמְּהוּ וְחָמְהוּ)
	Subsection A	Prophets and Seers Incapacitated—vv. 9–12
	Subsection B:	Wisdom of Sages Hidden—vv. 13–14
Panel II	Section 3:	An Overdue Awakening—vv. 15–24 (הוֹי)
	Subsection A:	O Your Perversion—vv. 15–16
	Subsection B:	Just a Little While—vv. 17–21
	Subsection C:	Understanding at Last—22–24

Thematic Coherence

As with ch. 28, the blindness and folly of Judah’s religious and political leaders features prominently in this chapter. Of the three sections of ch. 29, this theme is most prominent in the middle section (vv. 9–14) which commences with a command to “stop and be amazed. Blind yourselves and be blind” (v. 9a–b). The connection to ch. 28 in this text is immediately apparent in the recurrence of the motif of drunkenness—“be drunk, but not with wine” (v. 9c). Also reflecting the language of ch. 28 is the reference to “seers” (v. 10b–c). This also points links with ch. 30 where “seers” are mentioned yet again (v. 10).

Other “blindness” motifs within this passage include that of eyes closed/opened (10b, cf. 29:18; 30:20; 32:3), and that of the sealed book (29:11, 19; 30:8). The cause of blindness in this pericope is false devotion (בְּשִׁפְתָיו כְּבָרוּנִי) which covers actual alienation from God (v. 13d, וְלִבּוֹ רָחֵק מִמּוֹנֵי). They are not truly taught by God, but instead their religious teaching comes from men (v. 13f, מִלְמֹדָה אֲנָשִׁים מִצְּנוֹת). Verse 14 indicates that the blindness of the leaders is divinely

⁷⁰ Here we adopt the term “panel” as an arbitrary designation for units higher than the “section.”

imposed. YHWH proclaims, “Truly, I shall further baffle that people with bafflement upon bafflement” (*NJPS*). The verb and noun of the root פלא indicates something wonderful, perhaps of a supernatural nature which is also difficult to comprehend or even impenetrable to human understanding (cf. Job 42:3, וְלֹא אֶדְעַ, נִפְלְאוֹת מִמּוֹנֵי וְלֹא אֶדְעַ).

That this is the meaning is confirmed by v. 14c–d, “the wisdom of its wise men will perish, and the insight of its intellectuals will hide itself.” The use of פלא in this passage recalls 28:29b which declares that YHWH “makes his plan marvelous” (הַפְּלִיא עֲצָה). The impiety and lack of faith of Judah’s leaders is also evident in 29:15–16. Here we see the leaders attempting to hide their plans from YHWH, thus demonstrating that they do not believe in his comprehensive knowledge and wisdom. Indeed, v. 16 accuses them of regarding themselves as wiser than God. They “overturn” (הִפְּכֶם) the creature/creator relationship, like clay that thinks itself the potter (v. 61b).

There is a second theme in ch. 29 which is carried over from ch. 28—the distress of Zion. This theme is introduced in vv. 1–5, where, as in ch. 28, Zion (called “Ariel”) is threatened with a devastating attack by an unnamed foreign power. This attack is also similar to the one described in ch. 28 in that here, as there, while the attacker is a human agent, YHWH is the actual power behind the attack (cf. 28:21, יְקוּם יְהוָה; 29:2a, הַצִּיקוֹתִי לְאַרְיֵאל), and, in ch. 29 as in ch. 28, the realm of the dead is emphasized (v. 4a, וְשִׁפְלֵת מֵאֲרָץ חַדְבְּרִי). On the other hand, there are differences as well. Whereas in ch. 28 the attacker is depicted using the image of storm and flood, here we find the more conventional description of a siege (v. 3), and, whereas in ch. 28 the attacker is depicted as an individual entity, in ch. 29 the enemy of Judah is a “horde of nations” (v. 7b, הַמּוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַצְּבָאִים עַל־אַרְיֵאל).

A significant development in this theme from ch. 28 is the announcement that YHWH will intervene to deliver Zion at the eleventh hour. Suddenly (פְּתָאֵם לַפְתָּע) YHWH will intervene (תִּפְקֹד) with “thunder,” “earthquake,” “loud noise,” “violent storm” (סִיפָה וּסְעָרָה),⁷¹ and “devouring flame of fire” (v. 5c–6e). In ch. 28 the attacker was depicted as an unstoppable juggernaut, “a storm of mighty overflowing waters” (v. 2). Its destructive power seemed total. But here we discover that its role is limited. Rather than destroying Ariel, its purpose is to humble her in preparation for conversion and transformation.

The theme of conversion and transformation comes to the fore in vv. 17–24. This is described in v. 17 as a change in the realm of nature. Lebanon will “return” (v. 17b, וְשָׁב) to the status of a “fruitful field” and the “fruitful field” will be regarded as “scrubland.” Beuken suggests that “the change in landscape should be seen as a metaphor for a change in human society.”⁷² He argues that Lebanon was “a symbol of those who opposed YHWH in their arrogance, those who would ultimately taste humiliation....Jerusalem could be conceived of as Lebanon, her inhabitants as trees of the forest and YHWH as their sometime defied owner”⁷³ Hence we have here a depiction of those who once exalted themselves in proud opposition to YHWH, but who have now recovered “the correct attitude and behaviour, i.e. the end of the abuses described in vv. 15f.”⁷⁴

Such an understanding appears to be supported by v. 18 which envisions the reversal of the blindness and spiritual insensitivity which was described in vv. 9–14. Hence, “the deaf will hear the words of a book” (v. 18a; cf. v. 11a–b), and “the eyes of the blind will see” (v. 18b; cf. v.

⁷¹ Hendiadys.

⁷² Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 118.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

10b). The transformation of the attitudes of the rulers will result in a more just society for the lowly (v. 19) in which those who formerly exploited the weak will cut off. Jacob (i.e. Israel, Ephraim, cf. 28:1, 5f.) will come to acknowledge YHWH (v. 22ff.). The goal of the spiritual transformation is described as restoration of the spiritual insight which was so glaringly missing in 28:7–13 and 29:9–14—“ And the wayward of spirit will know understanding, and the rebellious ones will learn doctrine” (v. 24).

As we examine the message of ch. 29 in the light of ch. 28 a continuity of themes becomes apparent. Three themes are especially prominent; (1) Judah’s spiritual and political leaders exhibit the same type of spiritual blindness which characterizes the rulers of Samaria; (2) this blindness is the primary cause of their rejection of the YHWH’s message through Isaiah; (3) since they consider themselves wiser than YHWH Judah’s leaders are busy making their own plans in secret (28:15; 29:15–16); 4) Zion will experience devastation at the hands of a foreign power as a prelude to conversion and transformation (28:5–6; 29:17–24). The dominant message which emerges from these two chapters is that Zion’s rejection of divine guidance will result in the withdrawal of divine assistance, which, in turn, will lead to military disaster. In the following chapter we will show how these themes are developed in ch. 30, the central section of chs. 28–33.

CHAPTER FOUR

ISAIAH 30

Text and Translation

Section 1: 30:1–11

Vs	Text	S	A	Translation
1a	הוּי בָּנִים סוֹרְרִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה	10	4	Alas rebelling children! [Utterance of YHWH]
1b	לַעֲשׂוֹת עֵצָה וְלֹא מִנִּי	8	4	To form a plan, but not by me,
1c	וְלַנְסֹךְ מִסִּכָּה וְלֹא רוּחִי	10	4	To pour out a libation, but not my spirit.*
1d	לְמַעַן סִפּוֹת חַטָּאת עַל־חַטָּאת:	9	4	In order to add rebellion to rebellion.*
2a	הַהֹלְכִים לְרִדְתַּת מִצְרַיִם	8	3	Those who go down to Egypt,
2b	וּפִי לֹא שָׁאֵלוּ	6	3	But they have not asked for my guidance,
2c	לְעֹז בְּמַעוֹז פְּרָעָה	7	3	To seek refuge in the stronghold of Pharaoh,*
2d	וּלְחַסוֹת בְּצֵל מִצְרַיִם:	7	3	To seek protection in the shadow of Egypt.

3a	והָיָה לָכֶם מְעוֹז פְּרַעֲהַ לְבִשְׁת	11	4 ¹	But the stronghold of Pharaoh shall become shame to you.
3b	וְהַחֲסוֹת בְּצֵל־מִצְרַיִם לְכִלְמוֹהָ	11	4	And the refuge in the shadow of Egypt will become a reproach.
4a	כִּי־הָיוּ בְּצֹעַן שָׂרָיו	8	3	Though his captains are in Zoan,
4b	וּמַלְאָכָיו חָנְסוּ יְגִיעוּ:	9	3	And his messengers reach Hanes.
5a	כָּל הַבְּאִישׁ	3	2	All are put to shame, ^{2*}
5b	עַל־עַם לֹא־יִוְעִילוּ לָמוֹ	8	3	Because of a people which does not profit them.
5c	לֹא לְעֹזֵר וְלֹא לְהוֹעִיל	8	4	Neither as a help nor yet as an asset,
5d	כִּי לְבִשְׁת וְגַם־לְחִרְפָּה:	8	3	Rather as a shame and also as a disgrace.
6a	מִשָּׂא בְהֵמוֹת נֹגֵב	5	3	The burden of the beasts of the south
6b	בְּאֶרֶץ צָרָה וְצוּקָה	7	3	In a land of distress and difficulty,
6c	לְבִיָּא וְלִישׁ מִהֶם	6	3	lioness and lion are among them;*
6d	אֲפַעָה וְשָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף	8	3	The viper and flying seraph.
6e	וְשָׂאוּ עַל־כַּתְּף עֲרִימֵי חִילָהֶם	11	4	They carry their wealth upon the shoulder of asses,
6f	וְעַל־הַבִּשְׁת גְּמֻלִים אוֹצְרֵתָם	11	3	Their treasure upon the hump of camels

¹ According to Irwin לָכֶם והָיָה should be treated as an accentual unit and v. 3 “read as a *“Doppelvierer”*”; *Isaiah* 28–33, 74.

² Translation reflects the *qere* הביש rather than the *kethib*.

6g	על-עם לא יועילו:	6	3	Unto a people they shall not profit. ³
7a	ומצרים הבל נריק יעזרו	9	4	For Egypt is but wind, and vainly they help.
7b	לכן קראתי לזאת	7	3	Therefore I dub this one,
7c	רהב הם שבת:	3	3	“ <i>Rahab</i> , they stay put.”*
Totals:	cola = 26	204	86	
Section 2: 30:8–26				
8a	עתה בוא	3	2	Now Go!
8b	כתבה על-לוח אתם	6	3	Write it on a tablet with them,
8c	ועל-ספר חקה	5	2	And inscribe it on a book,
8d	ותהי ליום אחרון	7	3	That it may be for a later time,
8e	לעד עד-עולם:	5	3	For ever and ever.*
9a	כי עם מרי הוא בנים פחשים	10	5	For this is a rebellious people, false sons,
9b	בנים לא-אבו שמוע תורת יהוה:	11	5	Sons not willing to hear the <i>tôrâ</i> of YHWH.
10a	אשר אמרו לראים לא תראו	11	5	Who said to the seers, “Do not see!”
10b	ולחזים לא תחזו-לנו נכחות	12	4	And to the visionaries, “Do not reveal to us right things!”
10c	הברו-לנו חלקות	8	2	Speak to us smooth things.

³ Here reading על as the equivalent of אל.

10d	חזוי מִהַתְּלוֹת:	5	2	See falsehoods.
11a	סוּרוּ מִנִּי־דֶרֶךְ הַטּוֹ מִנִּי־אֶרֶץ	10	4	Turn aside from the road; turn away from the path!
11b	הַשְּׁבִיתוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:	13	4	Remove from before us, The Holy One of Israel.
12a	לִכֵּן כֹּה אָמַר קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	10	5	Therefore, thus said the Holy One of Israel:
12b	יַעַן מָאַסְתֶּם בְּדַבָּר הַזֶּה	9	4	Because you have rejected this word,
12c	וַתִּבְטְחוּ בְּעֶשֶׂק וְנָלוּז	9	3	And trusted in oppression, perversity,
12d	וַתִּשָּׁעֲנוּ עָלָיו:	7	2	And relied upon it.
13a	לִכֵּן יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הָעוֹן הַזֶּה	11	5	Therefore this iniquity shall be to you,
13b	כַּפְרִיץ נֹפֵל נֹבְעָה בְּחוֹמָה נִשְׁגָּבָה	12	5	Like a breach ready to fall, bulging out in a high wall.*
13c	אֲשֶׁר־פָּתְאִים לִפְתָּע יָבוֹא שְׁבָרָה:	10	5	Whose breaking comes all at once.
14a	וּשְׁבָרָה כַּשֶּׁבֶר נִבְל יוֹצְרִים	10	4	For he will break it as a potter's vessel is broken;
14b	כְּתוֹת לֹא יִחַמֵּל	5	3	Crushing, he will have no compassion.*
14c	וְלֹא־יִמָּצָא בְּמִכְתָּתוֹ חֶרֶשׁ	10	3	And there will not be found among its fragments a shard,
14d	לְחַתוֹת אֵשׁ מִקִּיּוֹד	6	3	For scooping fire from a hearth,
14e	וּלְחֹשֶׁף מַיִם מִגִּבְעָא:	6	3	Or for skimming water from a pool.

15a	כִּי כֹה־אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה	9	4	For, thus said Lord YHWH,
15b	קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	5	2	The Holy One of Israel.
15c	בְּשׁוּבָה וְנַחַת תִּוָּשָׁעוּן	9	3	In returning and rest you will be saved,
15d	בְּהַשְׁקֵט וּבְבִטְחָה תִּהְיֶה גְּבוּרַתְכֶם	13	4	In quietness and trust will be your might.*
15e	וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם:	5	2	But you were not willing,
16a	וְהֵאמַרְוּ לֹא	5	2	And you said no.*
16b	כִּי עַל־סוּס נָנוּס	5	2	Upon horses we will flee*
16c	עַל־כֵּן תִּנוּסוּן	5	2	Therefore you will flee
16d	וְעַל־קַל נִרְכָּב	5	2	And upon swift horses we will ride
16e	עַל־כֵּן יִקְלוּ רֹדְפֵיכֶם:	9	3	Therefore your pursuers will be swift
17a	אַלֶּף אֶחָד מִפְּנֵי גְעֵרַת אֶחָד	10	5	One thousand will flee before the rebuke of one,*
17b	מִפְּנֵי גְעֵרַת חֲמִשָּׁה תִּנְסוּ	11	4	Before the rebuke of five you will all flee.
17c	עַד אִם־נִוְתַרְתֶּם	5	2	Until you are left
17d	כַּתֵּוֶן עַל־רֹאשׁ הַהָר	6	3	Like a flagstaff on the mountaintop
17e	וְכִנֹּס עַל־הַגְּבֵעָה	7	2	Like a banner on the hill.

18a	וְלֹכֵן יִחַפֵּה יְהוָה לְחַנּוּכְכֶם	11	4	Therefore YHWH waits to be gracious to you.
18b	וְלֹכֵן יָרוּם לְרַחֲמֵיכֶם	9	3	And therefore he will rise up to pity you.
18c	כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה	8	3	For a God of justice is YHWH,
18d	אֲשֶׁר־י בָּל־חֹזְכֵי לוֹ:	6	3	Happy are all who wait for him.
19a	כִּי־עַם בְּצִיּוֹן יֵשֵׁב	7	3	Indeed a people in Zion shall dwell;*
19b	בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּכֹו לֹא־תִבְכֶּה	8	3	In Jerusalem you shall surely weep no more.
19c	חֲנוּן יַחַנֵּד לְקוֹל זַעֲקֶךָ	10	4	He will be more than gracious to you, to the voice of your complaint;
19d	כַּשְׁמִיעָתוֹ עֲנֶדְךָ:	6	2	As soon as he hears, he will answer.*
20a	וְנָתַן לָכֶם אֲדֹנָי	8	3	Now <i>Adonay</i> has given to you,*
20b	לֶחֶם צָר וּמַיִם לְחִיץ	5	4	Meager bread and minimal water.*
20c	וְלֹא־יִכְנַף עוֹד מוֹרֶדְךָ	9	3	But (in the future) your teacher shall no longer be hidden,*
20d	וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רֹאוֹת אֶת־מוֹרֶדְךָ:	12	4	And your eyes shall be seeing your teacher.
21a	וְאָזְנֶיךָ תִּשְׁמַעְנָה	7	2	And your ears shall hear
21b	דְּבַר מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ לֵאמֹר	8	3	A word behind you, saying
21c	זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ לָכֹו בוֹ	6	4	This is the way, walk in it;
21d	כִּי תִמְיִינוּ וְכִי תִשְׁמְאַלְוּ:	10	4	Whether you turn to the right of to the left.

22a	וּטְמֵאתֶם אֶת־צְפוּי פְּסִילֵי כִּסְפֵּךְ	13	4	And you shall regard as polluted the silver-plating of your idols;
22b	וְאֶת־אֹפֶקֶת מִסְכַּת זְהָבְךָ תִּזְרַם	14	4	And the golden overlay of your molten images you will scatter.*
22c	כְּמוֹ דָּוָה צָא תֹאמַר לוֹ:	8	4 ⁴	Like a used menstrual cloth, you will declare it filthy.*
23a	וְנָתַן מָטָר זֶרְעֶךָ	8	3	And he will grant rain to your seed,
23b	אֲשֶׁר־תִּזְרַע אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה	9	3	When you sow the ground,
23c	וְלֶחֶם תְּבוֹאֵת הָאֲדָמָה	9	3	And grain, the produce of the ground.
23d	וְהָיָה דָשֵׁן וְשָׂמֵן	8	3	And it will be fat and rich.
23e	יִרְעֶה מִקְנֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא	9	4	Your flocks will graze, in that day,
23f	כֶּרֶם נִרְחָב:	3	2	A spacious pasture.
24a	וְהָאֵלָפִים וְהָעִירִים	10	2	And the oxen and the donkeys
24b	עֲבָדֵי הָאֲדָמָה	7	2	Which work the ground
24c	בְּלִיל חֲמִיץ יֹאכְלוּ	7	3	Will eat seasoned fodder
24d	אֲשֶׁר־זֶרָה בְּרַחַת וּבִמְזֹרָה:	10	3	Which one scatters with a winnowing shovel and pitchfork.
25a	וְהָיָה עַל־כָּל־הַר גְּבוּהָ	8	3	And there will upon every high mountain
25b	וְעַל כָּל־גְּבוּעָה נִשְׂאָה	8	3	And upon every elevated hill,

⁴ For arguments that כמו should not be counted as an accentual unit see, William Holladay, “*Hebrew Verse Structure Revisited (I): Which Words ‘Count’?*” *JBL* 118 (1999): 19–32.

25c	פְּלָגִים יְבֵלֵי־מַיִם	6	3	Channels, streams of water.
25d	בְּיוֹם הַרְגֵי רָב	4	3	In the day of great slaughter,
25e	בְּנִפֹל מִגְדָּלַיִם:	5	2	When towers fall.
26a	וְהָיָה אֹרֶה־הַלְבָּנָה כְּאֹרֶה הַחַמָּה	13	4	And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun
26b	וְאֹרֶה הַחַמָּה יִהְיֶה שִׁבְעָתַיִם	10	4	And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold,
26c	כְּאֹרֶה שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים	7	3	Like the light of the seven days.
26d	בְּיוֹם חִבְשׁ יִהְיֶה אֶת־שִׁבְרֵ עַמּוֹ	10	5	In the day when YHWH sets his people's fracture,
26e	וּמַחֲזִין מִכַּתּוֹ יִרְפָּא:	7	3	And the wound cause by his blow he will heal.
Totals:	cola = 49	643	256	
Section 3: 30:27–33				
27a	הִנֵּה שֵׁם־יְהוָה בָּא מִמְרוֹקֶק	9	4	Behold! The name of YHWH comes from afar,
27b	בֵּעַר אָפוֹ וְכִבְדַּר מִשְׁאָה	9	4	Burning is his nose, and his liver is raging.*
27c	שִׁפְתָיו מְלֵאוּ זַעַם	7	3	His lips are full of indignation,
27d	וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ כְּאֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת:	8	3	And his tongue, like fire, devours.
28a	וְרוּחוֹ כִּנְחַל שׁוֹטֵף	7	3	And his breath like an overflowing wadi,
28b	עַד־צְוֹאֵר יַחֲצֶה	5	2	Reaches unto the middle of the neck.

28c	לְהַנְפִּיחַ גוֹיִם בְּנֶפֶת שׁוֹא	10	4	To yoke nations with a yoke leading to nothingness,*
28d	וְרָסַן מִתְעָה עַל לְחַיֵּי עַמִּים:	10	5	And to strap a misleading bridle upon the jaws of peoples.
29a	הַשִּׁיר יִהְיֶה לָכֶם	6	3	You will have singing,
29b	כְּלַיִל הַתְּקֵדֶה-שָׂחָג	6	3	Like a night when a festival is observed,
29c	וְשִׂמְחַת לֵבָב	5	2	And joy of heart,
29d	כַּהוֹלֵךְ בְּחִלְלִיל	6	2	Like one who walks with a flute,
29e	לָבוֹא בְּהַר-יְהוָה	6	2	To come into the Mount of YHWH,
29f	אֶל-צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל:	5	2	Unto the Rock of Israel.
30a	וְהִשְׁמִיעַ יְהוָה אֶת-הוֹד קוֹלוֹ	9	4	And YHWH will make heard the glory of his voice
30b	וְנִחַת זְרוּעוֹ יִרְאֶה	7	3	And the lowering of his arm he will reveal.
30c	בְּזַעַף אַף וְלֵהַב אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה	9	4	With vehemence of anger, and flame of fire devouring,
30d	נֶפֶץ נוֹרָם וְאֶבֶן בָּרָד:	7	4	With cloudburst, and downpour and hailstone.
31a	כִּי-מִקוֹל יְהוָה נִחַת	7	3	For from the voice of YHWH he will be dismayed,
31b	אַשּׁוּר בַּשֶּׁבֶט יַכֶּה:	6	3	Asshur, who smites with a rod.*
32a	וְהָיָה כָּל מַעְבֵּר מַטֵּה מוֹסְדָה	11	5	And it shall be that every passing of the rod of destiny,*

32b	אֲשֶׁר יָבִיחַ יְהוָה עָלָיו	8	4	Which YHWH will bring down upon him.
32c	בְּתַפִּים וּבְכִנּוֹרוֹת	8	2	Will be with hand-drums and lyres,
32d	וּבְמִלְחָמוֹת תִּנּוּפָה נִלְחַם־בָּהּ:	11	3	With upraised instruments of war he wars against him,*
33a	כִּי־עָרוּף מֵאֶתְמוֹל תִּפְתָּהּ	8	3	For Tophet has been set in order since long ago,
33b	גַּם־הוּא לְמֶלֶךְ הוּכָן	6	3	Indeed, it has been appointed for the king.
33c	הַעֲמִיק הָרָחֵב מִדְּרָתָהּ	8	3	Deep, wide, he has made its pyre,
33d	אֵשׁ וְעֵצִים הֲרֵבָה	6	3	Fire and wood are plentiful
33e	נִשְׁמַת יְהוָה	4	2	The breath of YHWH,
33f	כְּנַחַל גַּפְרִית	4	2	Like a stream of brimstone,
33g	בְּעָרָה בָּהּ:	4	2	Kindles it.
Totals:	cola = 31	222	95	
Totals Speech	cola = 136	1069	437	

Translation Notes

v. 1c עֲצָה לַעֲשׂוֹת—“To make a plan.” Irwin follows Dahood here in translating עֲצָה as “a wooden idol,” arguing that עֲצָה represents עֵץ with an accusative הַ, ending.⁵ However the usual translation, “make a plan,” or execute a plan have the support of LXX and Watts argues

⁵ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 72.

convincingly that it makes no sense to suggest that one might make a wooden idol “with my [YHWH’S] consent.”⁶

v. 1c וְלִנְסֹךְ מִסִּכָּה —“To pour out a libation.” Both of these words are derived from the root נסך which *HALOT* indicates may mean either “pour”/ “cast (metal)” (I נסך) or “interweave” (II נסך). The presence of רִוְחִי in the same colon suggests “pour out” rather than “cast” or “weave” as the meaning of נסך in this instance (cf. Isa. 29:10).

v. 1d לְמַעַן סִפּוֹת חַטָּאת עַל-חַטָּאת —“In order to add rebellion to rebellion.” Here we translate חַטָּאת as “rebellion” rather than “sin.” According to Hayes and Irvine, “in international relations, the Assyrians used the term in both its nominal and verbal forms to denote rebellion against their authority.”⁷ Here “adding rebellion to rebellion” may indicate that, in seeking help from Pharaoh, the leaders were rebelling against two overlords, Assyria and YHWH.

v. 2c לָעוֹז בְּמַעוֹז פָּרַעֲהַ —“To seek refuge in the stronghold of Pharaoh.” *BHS* suggests לָעוֹז as the proper form here, but the substitution of ו for ו in Ayin-Waw verbs is not uncommon.⁸ Irwin comments, “The assonance of *lāˁôz bʾmāˁôz parˁôh* must take precedence over such fussy normalizations.”⁹

v. 5a כָּל הַבְּאִישׁ —“All are put to shame.” This translation assumes Q (הַבִּישׁ) rather than K (הַבְּאִישׁ). The form found in the text assumes *hiphil* perfect 3ms of באש, “to stink,” while Q suggests *hiphil* perfect 3ms of בוש “to be ashamed.” *BHS* suggests emending the text to read כָּל-הַבְּאִישׁ “all that come are ashamed,” *BHK* suggests כָּלֵה באש which is in agreement with

⁶ Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 392–93.

⁷ Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 339.

⁸ *J-M*, 80.k.

⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 73.

IQIs^a, and may be translated either “utterly ashamed” or “destruction by fire” depending upon the pointing.¹⁰ Watts suggests retaining K as the most difficult reading, but this suggestion is rejected by most.¹¹

v. 6c לְבִיא וְלִישׁ מִהֶם—“lioness and lion are among them.” Numerous emendations have been proposed for מִהֶם which is difficult in this context.¹² In our translation *min* = ב.¹³ This translation takes בַּהֲמוֹת נֶגֶב as the antecedent of מִהֶם. Wildberger finds this problematic.¹⁴ However, there is precedent for treating בַּהֲמוֹת as masculine when it is bound to a masculine noun (cf. Joel 2:22 אֶל־תִּירְאוּ בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדֵי where בַּהֲמוֹת is the subject of a 2mp verb).

v. 7d הֵם שָׁבַת רָהַב—“*Rahab* They Sit.” The sentence הֵם שָׁבַת רָהַב is notoriously difficult to translate. *BHS* recommends emending the text to read הֵם שָׁבַת. Irwin recommends retaining MT but treating הֵם “as a substantive meaning ‘roaring.’” He then translates the appellative as “Roar-Inaction.”¹⁵ However, such an interpretation assumes that the readers/hearers would have understood רָהַב, not according to its common use as a symbolic name for Egypt, but according to the meaning of its root. This is a classic example of the “root fallacy,” which ignores the fact that when people use words they don’t often use them for the meaning of their roots. With Kaiser, Delitzsch, and others, we have chosen to follow MT.¹⁶ Our translation treats שָׁבַת as the infinitive construct of יָשַׁב rather than as a noun derived from שָׁבַת.

¹⁰ Ibid, 75.

¹¹ Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 393.

¹² Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 76–77; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 131.

¹³ See Dahood, *Psalms III*, 395–396.

¹⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 131.

¹⁵ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 77.

¹⁶ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 287; Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 29.

v. 8e עַד-עוֹלָם: לְעַד—“forever and ever.” Based on evidence from the versions and 2 mss *BHS* suggests reading לְעַד for לְעַד. Irwin concurs with this though he ignores his own observation that *lāʿad ʿad ʿōlām* exhibits “an A//A B repetitive parallelism.”¹⁷ This colon is also united by both alliteration and assonance. Thus, on poetic grounds alone it seems advisable to accept MT here.

v. 13b כְּפֶרֶץ נֹפֵל—“Like a breach ready to fall.” Here the participle is taken as describing an event that is imminent.¹⁸

v. 14b לֹא יִחַמֵּל לָא כְּתוּת—“Crushing, he will have no compassion.” This translation reads כְּתוּת (*qal* passive ptc.) as the infinitive absolute כְּתוּת.¹⁹

v. 15c בְּשׁוּבָה וְנַחַת תִּשְׁעוֹן—“In returning and rest you will be saved.” The noun שׁוּבָה is a hapax legomenon in the Old Testament. Most derive its meaning from שׁוּב “to return,” but some have attempted to derive it from יָשַׁב “to sit, dwell, remain” (Gesenius, Dahood, Irwin). IQIsa^a reads בְּשִׁיבָה. Irwin insists that this reading supports a derivation from יָשַׁב. However, this form occurs in post-biblical Hebrew with the meaning “going back, return” or “*Zurückkehren*.”²⁰ On balance, the traditional rendering, “returning” appears the most natural as it makes sense in context without requiring exotic etymological theories for support.

v. 16a וְתֹאמַרְוּ לֹא—“And you said no.” With *BHS* and *BHK* we remove the *maqeph* and read כִּי with the following colon. With Irwin, “*ky* is left untranslated since its adversative force is

¹⁷ Ibid, 80.

¹⁸ *GKC* 116.d.

¹⁹ Cf. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 29; Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 149.

²⁰ “שִׁיבָה,” Jastrow; G. H. Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch, zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch*, (Göttingen: Pfeiffer, 1938; reprint ed.; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1987), s.v. שִׁיבָה.

readily perceived in English without benefit of conjunction.”²¹

v. 16b על-סוס ננוס—“Upon horses we will flee.” We translate סוס as a “class noun.”

According to *IBHS*, “Such a singular noun has a broad referent, each member of the group.

Hebrew may use the singular with this meaning even without the article, especially in poetry.”²²

In the following colon קל is also translated this way and understood metonymously as the quality standing in for the noun (swift horses).

v. 17a אֶלֶף אָחָד מִפְּנֵי גַעְרַת אָחָד—“One thousand will flee before the rebuke of one.”

Verse 17 is an example of *zeugma*, a type of figurative language in which one part of speech, most often a verb, governs two or more parts of a sentence. Here the verb תִּנְסוּ which occurs at the end of 17b governs both lines of the couplet, and can be supplied in the translation of 17a. Since the verb which “yokes” the two units together occurs at the end it is technically an example of *hypozeugma*.²³

v. 19a בְּיִשׁוּב יְשׁוּב בְּצִיּוֹן יֵשֵׁב—“For a people in Zion shall dwell.” This translation moves the *ʔatnāḥ* from בִּירוּשָׁלַם to יֵשֵׁב. *BHS* recommends reading יֵשֵׁב as *qal* active participle in agreement with the Targum. However, Young argues that this does not take sufficient account of the introductory בְּ, and so effaces this verse’s connection with v. 18. He also agrees with Delitzsch that “were this a vocative, we should certainly expect to find the personal pronoun ‘thou.’”²⁴ Also, moving the accent relieves the pressure to explain the redundancy in the repetition of “in Zion, in Jerusalem,” and hence removes the need to resolve this by emending the text.

²¹ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 86.

²² *IBHS*, 114.

²³ “Zeugma.” *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. <http://rhetoric.byu.edu>.

²⁴ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 355.

v. 19e כְּשִׁמְעֶתוּ עֲנֶדְךָ:—“When he hears it, he will answer you.” Though feminine in form, the second person pronoun in this colon is masculine in gender.²⁵ Davidson describes the use of the perfect in this sentence as “the perfect of confidence.” Here “the perfect is used to express actions which a lively imagination conceives as complete, but for which the fut. is more usual in Eng.”²⁶

v. 20a וְנָתַן לְכֶם אֲדֹנָי—“Now *Adonay* has given to you.” This couplet causes problems for interpreters since it predicts hardship for Israel in the midst of a message of salvation. In order to address this problem scholars have proposed numerous emendations. Our translation attempts to solve the problem grammatically by reading וְנָתַן as disjunctive *waw* with suffix conjugation (perfective action).²⁷ Thus, the difficulties which are being experienced in the present will be relieved in the future.

v. 20b לֶחֶם זָר וּמַיִם לְחֵץ—“Meager bread and minimal water.” *BHS* proposes to emend the text to read מִזָּר and מְלַחֵץ, apparently on the basis of supposed haplography. This solution is adopted by Wildberger who characterizes Fohrer’s attempt at a grammatical solution (similar to that adopted above by us) as playing “around with Hebrew grammar.”²⁸ Yet, it might be better to tinker with the grammar than with the consonantal text as *BHS* does with no support from either the manuscript tradition or the versions. This is unnecessary when grammatical solutions can be offered which make tolerable sense. Irwin follows Dahood in analyzing “*mym lhṣ* as a construct chain broken by enclitic *mem*, *my–m lhṣ*.”²⁹ He then translates “water of adversity.” This works,

²⁵ *GKC*, 58.g.

²⁶ *Dav* 86.b.

²⁷ Bruce Waltke, personal correspondence with author, July 28, 2006.

²⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 167.

²⁹ Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 90.

but is not necessary if our reading of וְנִתַּן (20a) is adopted. Beuken bypasses both grammatical and conjectural solutions by insisting that “Even a concessive interpretation of v. 20...is not needed if one considers the gift of bread and water to be the beginning of salvation.”³⁰

Our translation, “meager bread and minimal water,” is based on the understanding that צָר and לֶחֶם describe “nourishment of which there is extreme need, the very opposite of bread and water in abundance.”³¹

v. 20c וְלֹא־יִכְנֹף עוֹד מוֹרִיךְ—“But (in the future) your teacher shall no longer be hidden.” The subject of this sentence מוֹרִיךְ may be either singular or plural.³² The 3ms verb יִכְנֹף tips the scales in favor of a singular noun, “your teacher.”

v. 22b תִּזְרֹם—“you will scatter.” Here we follow Irwin in reading תִּזְרֹם with what precedes it (וַיִּאֲחַזֶּפְדֵת מִסִּכַת זֶהָבָה), rather than what follows (כִּמוֹ דָּוָה צָא תֹאמַר לוֹ). He suggests that “the final *mem* of *tzrm* is either a resumptive pronominal suffix, or the enclitic particle.”³³ This solution alleviates the difficulty of applying the notion of “scattering” to a menstrual cloth. While it would appear strange to “scatter” a menstrual cloth, there is precedent in the Hebrew Scriptures for “scattering” the dust of an idol which has been burnt and pulverized (cf. Exod. 32:20; 2 Kings 23:6).

v. 22c כִּמוֹ דָּוָה צָא תֹאמַר לוֹ—“like a used menstrual cloth, you will declare it filthy.” The noun דָּוָה is short for כְּלִי דָּוָה “the cloth worn by a woman at the monthly period.”³⁴ Interpreters

³⁰ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 136.

³¹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 35.

³² *GKC*, 91d, nouns ending in הָ which normally take הַ in the singular have הִ when in pause.

³³ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 92.

³⁴ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 36.

read צֵא as either the imperative of יצא “go out,” or as a form of the noun צֵאָה. *BHS* suggests emending to צוֹא “filthy.” But *HALOT* recognizes צֵא as alternative form of the word.³⁵

v. 27b וּכְבֹד מִשְׁאָה—“and his liver is raging.” This text has long been a “*crux interpretum*.”³⁶ Difficulties associated with this verse center on the meaning of מִשְׁאָה which is a hapax legomenon. *BHS* derives מִשְׁאָה from מִשָּׂא “burden, oracle,” and accounts for final *he* by pointing with *holem*, thus suggesting that it is an archaic form of the 3ms pronominal suffix = “his burden.” Others derive מִשְׁאָה from נָשָׂא “lift or carry” and translate “heavy is his lifting up,”³⁷ or “*brennend sein Zorn und unerträglich*.”³⁸ Victor Sasson argues that מִשְׁאָה is actually *maśśū’āh* “a smoke-signal,” the singular form of *ms’ṭ* which is a plural form in the Lachish letters.³⁹

Hummel has proposed emending the text to make מִשְׁאָה וּכְבֹד parallel to בער אפו...as well as to the rest of the verse” which contains a list of body parts which, as Irwin observes, reads “like an anatomy book.”⁴⁰ Hummel’s emendation involves separating מִ from מִשְׁאָה and attaching it to כְּבֹד as enclitic *mem*. He then repoints שָׂה with *šin* to achieve the reading שָׂה “raging.” The resultant emendation, כְּבֹד־וֹם שָׂה “his liver raging,” achieves the desired parallelism. As Irwin notes, Hummel’s emendation also results in an *abb’a’* chiasm. This is the reading adopted in our translation.⁴¹

³⁵ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 93.

³⁶ Paul A Kruger, “The Obscure Combination מִשְׁאָה וּכְבֹד in Isaiah 30:27: Another Description for Anger?” *JNSL* 26 (2000): 155.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

³⁸ L. Sabotka, “Is 30,27–33: Ein Übersetzungsvorschlag,” *BZ* 12 (1968): 241.

³⁹ Victor Sasson, “An Unrecognized ‘Smoke-Signal’ in Isaiah XXX 27,” *VT* 33 (1983): 92–93.

⁴⁰ Hummel, “Enclitic Mem,” 100; Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 97.

⁴¹ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 97.

v. 28c **לְהַנְפִּיחַ גוֹיִם בְּנֶפֶת שׂוּא**—“To yoke nations with a yoke leading to nothingness.” Here we translate **נפה** (in agreement with *NEB* and *JPS*) in light of the Arabic word *naf*, “yoke” and treat the infinitive **לְהַנְפִּיחַ** as a denominative form of the noun. This translation follows evidence cited by Ginsberg.⁴² The usual translation “sieve” is supported by *HALOT* and *BDB* and makes tolerable sense, but is not parallel with the following colon as one would expect. Also, Ginsberg points out that the meaning “sieve,” “has not been claimed for it anywhere else in the Bible, and its retention therefore involves the assumption of a *hapax eiromenon*.” Based on analogy with Joshua 23:12 which describes the elevated ridge surrounding the plain of Dor, south of the Carmel Ridge as **נֶפֶת דּוֹר**, Ginsberg reasons that **נפה** can come to mean “yoke” by means of metonymy. Since the text is difficult, and Ginsberg’s reading provides a proper parallel for **מִתְעָה רֶסֶן** in 28d, his suggestion has been taken here. However, the text remains problematic and our translation is only provisional.

v. 31b **אֲשׁוּר בְּשִׁבְטֵי יָפֶה**:—“Asshur who smites with a rod.” In this verse we have moved *ʿatnāh* from **אֲשׁוּר** to **יָפֶה** and translated 31b as a relative clause.⁴³

v. 32d **וּבְמִלְחָמוֹת תְּנוּפָה נִלְחַם-בּוֹ**:—“with upraised instruments of war he wars against him.” Here we read **מִלְחָמוֹת** as a metonym for “weapons of war” (cf. *BDB*, “brandished weapons”). The noun **תְּנוּפָה** does not have the sense of “waving, swinging” but rather of “elevation.”⁴⁴ Hence we translate “upraised instruments of war.” *BHS*’s suggested emendation of **בְּמִלְחָמוֹת** to **בְּמַחֲלוֹת** is tempting, but not necessary. Q **בָּם** for K **בָּהּ** is also tempting, but not necessary as the text may be

⁴²H. L. Ginsberg, “An Obscure Hebrew Word,” *JQR* 22 (1931): 143–145.

⁴³Cf. *IBHS*, 338.

⁴⁴J. Milgrom, “The Alleged Wave-Offering in Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” *IEJ* 22 (1972): 33–38.

repointed בַּהּ “with/against him,” understanding Asshur (31b) as the antecedant (3ms suffix).⁴⁵

Structure

Syllable and Stress Counts

Syllable Counts. We count 136 cola in ch. 30 and 1069 syllables. Cola range from 3 to 14 syllables in length. Mean line length is 7.86 syllables which is only .14 syllables off of the norm of 8—statistically insignificant. The median is 8 syllables and also conforms to the theoretical norm, as does the mode which is 8 syllables.

Line lengths for bicola are slightly shorter. There are 43 bicola in this unit ranging from 9–23 syllables in length. The mean for these bicola is 15.55 syllables or 7.78 syllables per colon. With a mean of 15 and a mode of 14 syllables, we see that line length for bicola are slightly shorter.

Stress Counts: By our count there are 437 stresses in this speech. Cola range from 2 to 5 stresses in length. Mean colon length is 3.21 stresses; the median is 3 stresses. Cola with 3 stresses are by far the most common, making up 44% of the total (60 cola). Two and 4 stress cola are next in frequency with 34 and 36 cola respectively. Hence cola ranging from 2 to 4 stresses account for 95.5% of the total. Five stress cola also occur with a fair degree of frequency accounting for 8% of the total (11 cola).

Of the 60 verses in this speech, 43 are bicola (72%). Bicola range from 4 to 10 stresses in length. Mean length for bicola is 6.44 stresses, or 3.22 stresses per colon. The median is 6 stresses as is the mode (16 bicola). It is fairly clear then, that colon length when only bicola are taken into account matches the norm of 3 stresses per colon or 6 per bicolon.

Prose Particle Counts

⁴⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 188.

Of the 492 words in this section, 31 are prose particles—6.3 percent of the total. This is well within the range of texts almost certainly considered poetry ((5–10%). These results confirm the poetic character of the speech. Thirteen of these particles occur in verses 19–26, a section widely regarded as prose. However, even including this long “prose” section, the prose particle count for the speech is quite low. This is in keeping with the suggestion that prophetic speech may often be a kind of poetic prose or prosaic poetry. In any case such a low prose particle count appears to support our decision to lineate verses 19–26 as poetry rather than prose.

Verses and Subsections

Section 1 (Verses 1–7). This section is bounded on one end by the woe utterance in v. 1a, and on the other end by the phrase **בוא כְּתִבָּה עֲתָה** (v. 8a.) which begins the next section. The woe utterance which opens this unit is followed immediately by the oracular formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה**. This is a highly unusual variation on the woe oracle form. It ensures that the following message is understood to be the very words of YHWH. Indeed, the 1cs pronominal suffixes in the next two cola make it clear that YHWH is the speaker throughout this unit.

Despite the presence of **מִשָּׂא** in v. 6, vv. 1–7 form a single unit. Many scholars, following the lead of MT which signals a division between vv. 1–5 and vv. 6–7 with *setûmâ*, take v. 6a to be a heading on analogy to the **מִשָּׂא** oracles in chs. 13–23 and treat vv. 6–7 as an independent oracle. Tempting as this is, it is probably best to interpret **מִשָּׂא** as a load or burden that is physically carried, rather than as a pronouncement or oracle. This interpretation is supported by the description of pack animals carrying their burdens to Egypt, and by the verb **יִשְׂאוּ** in v. 7a (so Beuken, Goldingay, and Oswalt). The unity of these verses is also supported by the repetition of **לֹא יוֹעִילוּ** in v. 6g (cf. v. 5b), **עֹזֵר** (v. 5c and 7a), **מִצְרַיִם** (v. 2a and 7a), and by **שֶׁבֶת** (v. 7d) which plays on the sound of **לִבְשָׁת** (vv. 3a, 5d). Finally, the unity of vv. 1–7 is supported by alliteration

through a combination of infinitives with initial לְ (לְהוֹעִיל, לְחַסוֹת, לְרַדֵּת, לְנַסֵּךְ, לְעֲשׂוֹת), nouns with initial לְ (לִישׁ, לְבִיא, לְבַשֶּׁת, לְכַלְמָה, לְעוֹזֵר, לְבַשֶּׁת, לְחַרְפָּה), the particle לֹא (7x), and other words with initial לְ (לְזַאֲת, לְכֹן, לְמַעַן, לְכֶם, לְמוֹ).⁴⁶

Section 2, Subsection A: (Verses 8–11). This section is not connected syntactically to the previous section. It is set off from vv. 1–7 by the discourse marker עֲתָה followed by the imperative form בּוֹא. The unit is made up of two parts, a directive to the prophet to write (v. 8) and an explanation of the basis for this command introduced by כִּי (v. 9a). The end of the unit is marked by prophet messenger formula introduced by לְכֹן (v. 12a) which introduces the next subsection. With the exception of a single tricolon (v. 8a–c), the unit is made up of bicola. These bicola are relatively long with 5+5 (v. 9a–b), 5+4 (v. 10a–b) and 4+4 (v. 11a–b) stress patterns. Beuken lineates v. 9 as a tricolon,⁴⁷ but we have elected to lineate it as a bicolon with internal parallelism in the first line.⁴⁸ This yields a 4+4 bicolon rather than an unbalanced 2+2+4 tricolon.

Section 2, Subsection B: (Verses 12–14). This unit opens with לְכֹן introducing the prophetic messenger formula. It announces the consequences of Judah’s refusal to pay heed to YHWH’s word. The result of their refusal is also introduced by לְכֹן (v. 13). These consequences are described using the image of a protruding breach in a wall ready to collapse. Verse 14 extends this simile by drawing a comparison with a clay vessel which is shattered so completely that nothing useful can be salvaged from it. Exum identifies these tandem images as an “enclosed simile, or a simile within a simile.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Altogether לְ occurs 43x in vv. 1–7. That is a 23% higher frequency than the following seven verses (vv. 8–14) where לְ occurs a total of 33x.

⁴⁷ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 157.

⁴⁸ Wilfred Watson, “Internal Parallelism in Classical Hebrew Verse,” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 367.

⁴⁹ Cheryl Exum, “Broken Pots, 334.

Section 2, Subsection C: (Verses 15–18). The following subsection (vv. 15–18) is linked to vv. 12–14 by means of the conjunction **וְ**. It also opens with the prophetic messenger formula, and, like v 12a employs Isaiah’s special divine title **קְרוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל** (v. 15b, yet here it is expanded for emphasis). Verses 15–18 provide further justification for the judgment announced in vv. 13–14. In a previous oracle YHWH had offered salvation to Isaiah’s audience through “returning and rest,” etc, but they were “not willing to listen” (cf. v. 13b), preferring to seek security in military might (ironically, while they chose to trust in horses, they did not intend to fight with them, but rather to flee). Here the simile of the collapsing wall and the shattered pot becomes explicit. Judah’s army will be utterly routed (shattered?) until Jerusalem is abandoned and left standing alone like a military banner abandoned by the troops it was intended to rally (v. 17c–e). The image of the abandoned banner and the shattered pot depict the same outcome, utter destruction.

Verse 18 links to v. 13a and to v. 15 by means of **וְלָכֵן** (v. 18a, b). This conjunction introduces a further consequence of Judah’s rejection of the divine offer of salvation in v. 15, namely a delay of YHWH’s planned intervention on their behalf. The devastation announced in vv. 12–17 might have been avoided had Judah chosen to believe YHWH’s word and accept his offer of deliverance. But, because Judah’s leaders chose the path of self-salvation, the realization of this deliverance had to be deferred to a future time of YHWH’s own choosing. Yet in spite of the gloomy prospect in the near term, the proper attitude for those who wish to participate in the salvation proffered for the future is set forth—“blessed are all who wait for him” (v. 18d). What sets Isaiah’s ideal readers, the community of survivors, apart from the leaders and populace of Judah is a quiet trust in YHWH’s plan, and a willingness to wait patiently for its realization (v. 15).

This subsection serves as the center of a parallel structure discernable in ch. 30 based upon key-word correspondences.⁵⁰ The thematic centrality of vv. 15–18 is evident in the transition of the message of the chapter from threat to promise which takes place at v. 18. This verse brings the threats of the first half the chapter to a climax with its announcement that, because of their rejection of his offer of salvation through returning and rest, YHWH is delaying his plan to bring deliverance to Zion. It also contains the central admonition of the chapter which is couched in the form a blessing pronounced on all who wait on YHWH. Each of the sections following this admonition presents the reversal of its counterpart in the first half of the chapter.

A vv. 1–7	Going down to Egypt	הֵהָלַכְתִּים לָרֶדֶת מִצְרַיִם
B vv. 8–11	Departing from the path	סוּרוּ מִנִּי־דֶרֶךְ הַטּוֹ מִנִּי־אֶרֶץ
C vv. 12–14	Breaking	פָּתַחְתֶּם לְפָתַח יָבוֹא שְׂבָרָה
D vv. 15–18	Admonition	אֲשֶׁרִי פֶל־חֹכִי לֹ
B' vv. 19–22	Walking on the path	זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ לָכֹוּ בּוֹ
C' vv. 22–26	Healing	בְּיוֹם חִבַּשׁ יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁבְרֵ עַמּוֹ
A' vv. 27–33	Going up to Zion	כְּהוֹלֵךְ בְּחַלְיִל לְבוֹא בְּהַר־יְהוָה

Section 2, Subsection D (Verses 19–22). The first verse of this subparagraph (v. 19) picks up the theme of delayed salvation from v. 18 by signaling an end to the period of desolation announced in vv. 12–17. Whereas Zion had been abandoned (v. 17), in the future she will again be inhabited (v. 19a); whereas, in the near-term, the people of Jerusalem will experience weeping, in the future weeping will cease (v. 19b); whereas during the period of delay YHWH withheld his grace and mercy, refusing to listen to their cries, in the future he would respond to their cries for help at the very moment he hears them. This verse is connected to v. 18 by means

⁵⁰ Note that this structure is partly chiasmic and partly linear (ABCDB'C'A'). Parallel structures of this type are not uncommon in Hebrew literature, whether prose or poetry. John Welch writes, “chiasmus, like poetical or artistic forms generally, lends itself to a variety of application and arrangements which may on some occasions only approximate to its ideal composition. Where the inversion is less than perfect, some might contend that this is evidence that no inversion was ever intended by the writer at all. Rather this might better be explained as evidence that the author simply took some liberty with the form.” John Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, (Hildesheim: Gerstenberger, 1981), 13. A. Bartelt also notes the presence of mixed chiasmic and linear ordering in Isaiah chs. 5 and 9. See, Bartelt, *The Book Around Immanuel*, 138.

of פִּי. This connection is enhanced by the use of the key word חָנַן, which appears at the beginning of v. 18 and the end of v. 19 (vv. 18a, 19c–d).

Beuken sees a chiasmic structure in vv. 18–19 which repeats the verb חָנַן in vv. 18a and 19a, and two פִּי clauses in v. 18c–d and 19a–b.

- | | |
|----|---|
| A | v. 18a–b YHWH waits to be gracious (לְחַנֵּנְכֶם) |
| B | v. 18c–d For (פִּי) He is a God of justice |
| B´ | v. 19a–b For (פִּי) a people shall dwell in Jerusalem |
| A´ | v. 19c–e YHWH will surely be gracious (חָנֵן יְחַנֶּדֶךָ) |

If this is valid, it would seem to argue that vv. 18–19 form a unit together. We have argued above that v. 18 should be grouped with vv. 1–17. However, the strong connection between vv. 18 and 19 serves, at the very least, to demonstrate the pivotal and transitional role in of v. 18 in ch. 30. It appears to serve equally well as a conclusion for vv. 1–17 and as an introduction to vv. 19–33. We have suggested that v. 18 “YHWH waits to be gracious” is an announcement of judgment, but the following statement, “blessed are all who wait for Him” contains a note of promise! It announces YHWH’s intention to show mercy to Zion after a period of suffering. In this sense v. 18 sits Janus-like in the middle of ch. 30; both looking backward to the condemnation of vv. 1–17 and rounding off the announcement of judgment contained therein, and also looking forward to vv. 19–33 and opening the door to the message of hope found there. Verse 18 announces YHWH’s intention to be gracious, while v. 19 punctuates this by announcing he “will *surely* be gracious to you” (חָנֵן יְחַנֶּדֶךָ). The switch in v. 19 to 2ms pronouns links it with vv. 20–26, but the message of graces echoes v. 18. It is this message of grace that v. 19 picks up from v. 18 and carries forward to vv. 20–26.

Verse 19a–b features the parallel terms בְּצִיּוֹן (v. 19a) and בִּירוּשָׁלַם (v. 19b). This bicolon is also united by the repetition of ב which appears in every word except the two particles (e.g. יָשָׁב,

בציון, בכּוּ, בִּירוּשָׁלַם, תְּבַבְּהָ, בִּירוּשָׁלַם, בכּוּ, בציון). The second bicolon employs a sophisticated use of sound, especially the similar sounding consonants כּ and ק, and the consonant נ (נִחַנְּךָ, נִחַנְּךָ, עֲנֶךָ, זַעֲקֶךָ, לִקְוֹל). Each of its lines ends with ךּ.

Verses 20–22 contrast the present with the future. This contrast is introduced by disjunctive *waw* with the perfect verb נָתַן, i.e. “Now Adonay has given to you...but (in the future) your teacher will no longer be hidden, but your eyes will see...” In other words, the present distress is a necessary prelude to a coming time of spiritual renewal characterized by a restoration of spiritual sight (v. 20d) and a reversal of spiritual deafness (v. 21a). This renewed ability to “see” and “hear” is indicative of a renewed capacity to receive divine instruction (v. 21). As a result of their spiritual transformation, the inhabitants of Zion will discern the true nature of their false gods and cast them aside like filthy refuse (v. 22). Hence, this pericope has Zion’s recovery from spiritual blindness and deafness as its main theme. This indicates a kind of conversion which results in a renewed obedience to God.

Verses 23–26 also have renewal as their theme. However, whereas in the previous verses the people of Jerusalem are the object of renewal, here the transformation takes place in the natural world. The fact that the two are juxtaposed here probably indicates that they are outcomes of the same divine action. Indeed, they are extensions of one another, and may simply be different ways of depicting the same reality. If so, this would not be the only place in Scripture where the redemption of humanity and nature are linked or where transformations in human society are depicted in natural terms (cf. ch. 29:17–24; 32:15–20; Rom. 8:18–25).

Section 2, Subsection E (Verses 23–26). Verses 23–26 are linked to vv. 19–22 by the *wcp* verb וְנָתַן (v. 23a). The subject of the verb וְנָתַן here, as in v. 20a, is *Adonay*. The eschatological orientation of the unit is indicated by 3 iterations of וְהָיָה (v. 23d, 25a, 26a), and by the phrases

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (v. 23e), בַּיּוֹם הַרְגֵי רַב (v. 25d), and בַּיּוֹם חִבַּשׁ יְהוּה (v. 26d). Semantically the focus of the pericope is the superabundance of nature which will characterize the age of consummation when God’s kingdom is realized in its fullness. Descriptions of the eschatological future as a time of natural abundance are not uncommon in the prophets (cf. Joel 4:18; Amos 9:13). This description of superabundance shows movement in an upward direction, from the land (הָאָרֶץ) which will produce abundant food (vv. 23–24), to the mountains and hills from which will flow down streams of water (v. 15), and finally to the heavens from which the sun and moon will produce light in abundant measure (v. 26). So then, in the day of Zion’s restoration, all that sustains life, food, water, and light, will be provided in copious measure. This age of redemption is further portrayed as a time when threats from external enemies are removed, i.e. “when towers fall” (v. 25e), and a time when the wounds inflicted by divine discipline are healed, i.e. “when YHWH...heals the wound caused by His blow” (v. 26d–e). That this healing constitutes a reversal of the verdict of judgment announced in vv. 13–14 may be discerned from the repetition of the noun שָׁבַר in both from v. 14.

Section 3, Subsection A (Verses 27–28). Scholars differ as to the structure of this section. Beuken suggests that the opening clause (הִנֵּה שָׁם יְהוָה בָּא) is “taken up twice at an equivalent level of syntax” in v. 30 (וְהִשְׁמִיעַ יְהוָה), and again in v. 32 (וְהָיָה כֹּל מִעֵבֶר מִטָּה). Hence, the passage should be divided into three parts: vv. 27–29, 30–31, 32–33. He labels these “announcement of theophany,” “YHWH’s victory over Assyria,” and “the celebration of Assyria’s execution.”⁵¹ Sweeney, on the other hand divides the unit into two main parts, vv. 27–28 (description of YHWH’s approach) and 29–33 (description of YHWH’s victory over Assyria). Our view of the structure of these verses coincides with Sweeney’s for the following reasons. Verses

⁵¹ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 177.

27–28 constitutes a single compound sentence of which v. 27a **בָּא מִמְרֹתָק שְׁמִי הוּא** is the main clause. This is followed by a series of five circumstantial clauses, each of which depicts some aspect of YHWH’s person.

- v. 27b **בְּעַר אָפוֹ**
- v. 27b **וְכִבֵּד מִשָּׂאָה**
- v. 27c **שִׁפְתָיו מִלֹּא זַעַם**
- v. 27d **וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ כִּי־אֵשׁ אֶכְלֶת**
- v. 28a **וְרוּחוֹ כִּנְחַל שׁוֹטֵף**

These clauses are followed by two coordinate final clauses in v. 28 which are introduced by an infinitive construct (**לְהַנְפִּיחַ**) and serve as the complement to the main clause. Hence, while the circumstantial clauses lend detail to the sentence, even when they are removed the kernel of the sentence remains—“Behold the name of YHWH comes from afar...to yoke nations with a yoke leading to nothingness...”

Section 3, Subsection B (Verses 29–33). The second section of vv. 27–33 begins in v. 29 which has no syntactical connection to what precedes it. Verse 29 also appears to be a single compound sentence joined in the middle by *waw* conjunctive and forming two coordinate clauses. The verb **יְהִי־הוּא** (v. 29a) does double duty for both main clauses and has two subjects (**הַשִּׁיר** and **לְבַב לְבָב**). Each of the clauses is modified by a comparative clause introduced by **כִּי**, thereby creating a pair of similes comparing YHWH’s intervention to a night festival in which the people go in solemn procession to the holy mountain. The second coordinate clause is completed by a final clause with initial infinitive construct (**לְבוֹא**).

Verse 30 is linked to v. 29 by means of the *wcp* verb **וְהִשְׁמִיעַ**. It describes the manifestation of YHWH’s divine power as “the majesty of his voice” (**הוֹד קוֹלוֹ**) and “the descent of his arm”

(נחת זרועו). The causative conjunction כִּי links v. 30 to v. 31, as does the repetition of קִיל in v. 31a. YHWH's voice is the instrument of Assyria's discomfiture. In v. 32 Isaiah employs the image of the sacral dance to depict Assyria's chastisement. YHWH's rod will fall to the rhythmic patterns of "hand drums and lyres" (בְּתַפִּים וּבְכַנְרֹת). This verse is connected to v. 31 by means of the wcp verb וְהִיָּה. Verse 33 is linked to v. 32 by an explicative כִּי. Here the cultic imagery of vv. 29–32 (festal procession, and sacral dance) is extended in v. 33 to include sacrifice. 33b (גַּם־הוּא לְמַלְךְ הַיָּכֵן) is the key line in this verse.

Sections

Section 1 (vv. 1–7). The boundaries of this section are marked by initial הוּי (v. 1a) and by the phrase בּוֹא עֲתָה (v. 8:1) which begins Section 2. The central theme of the section is the misguided foreign policy of Judah's leaders. A major feature of this section is the travel motif which depicts Judah as sending ambassadors down to Egypt in a futile attempt to find refuge in its military might. The quixotic nature of this embassy is portrayed graphically in vv. 6–7. For a detailed description of this section see our discussion above.

Section 2 (vv. 8–26) The next major section of ch. 30 includes most of the chapter, vv. 8–26. The beginning of the section is marked by the lack of any syntactical connection between vv. 7 and 8. In contrast vv. 8–26 are syntactically of a piece. The connections within vv. 2–26 are presented below.

1. עֲתָה—Verse 8 begins the section with the discourse marker עֲתָה + three imperative verbs, בּוֹא (v. 8a), כְּתִבָּה (8b), and חֲקֵה (8c).
2. כִּי—connects vv. 8 and 9.
3. לְכֵן—connects vv. 9–11 to v. 12.
4. לְכֵן—connects v. 13 to v. 12.

5. וַ—connects the twin similes in vv. 13 and 14.
6. כִּי—connects vv. 14 and 15 as well as vv. 15 and 16.
7. Verse 17 is an elaboration of v. 16.
8. לְכֹן—A double לְכֹן (v. 18a, b) connects v. to vv. 12–17. In v. 18a this connection is strengthened by conjunctive וַ.
9. כִּי—Verse 18c and 19a are connected to v. 18a–b by כִּי.
10. וַנִּתֵּן—Verse 20 connects to v. 19 by means of the wcp verb וַנִּתֵּן.
11. וַנִּתֵּן—The wcp verb וַנִּתֵּן links vv. 22 and 23.
12. וַהֲיָה—The sequence of wcp verbs is continued in v. 25 by וַהֲיָה, and again in v. 26

It is clear from this series of connectors that vv. 8–23 is a continuous unit. This sequence of syntactically connected units is broken however in v. 27 which begins the next section with הִנֵּה (v. 27a). In terms of form, vv. 8–14 constitutes a prophetic judgment or invective threat speech. Verses 8–11 contain the accusation or invective section of the speech, while vv. 12–14 contains the judgment announcement or invective portion of the speech. Verses 15–17 comprise a further elaboration on the announcement of judgment in vv. 12–14 and the reasons for it. Verse 18 announces a further consequence of Judah’s refusal to listen, i.e. Yahweh waits to be gracious, but then pivots to an announcement of salvation (vv. 19–26).

Scholars are divided on whether to group v. 18 with what follows (vv. 19–26) or what precedes (vv. 12–17). MT uses *sethuma* to indicate that v. 18 forms a unit with v. 15ff. On the other hand, *BHS* suggests by means of a gap between vv. 17 and 18 that v. 18 is to be taken with vv. 19–26. Grouping v. 18 with v. 17 are Oswalt, Watts, Hayes and Irvine, Laberge, *NIV* and MT. Those grouping v. 18 with vv. 19ff include, Sweeney, Clements, Blenkinsopp, Wildberger,

Beuken, Childs, *NRSV*, *NJB*, *BHS*. A third group suggests that v. 18 should stand alone. This group includes, Kaiser, Fohrer, Delitzsch, Goldingay, *ESV*, *NASB*⁵², and *JPSV*.

The fact that v. 18 is joined to what precedes by וְלָכֵן and to v. 19 by כִּי argues against allowing it to stand alone. Those who see it as standing alone tend to do so on redaction-critical grounds rather than on the basis of the present text. Those who join it to v. 19ff. do so primarily based upon the change of tone from judgment to salvation. They see וְלָכֵן as marking a new section. This is a tempting alternative since v. 18 is clearly connected to v. 19 by means of כִּי. However, we consider the following factors decisively in favor of grouping v. 18 with vv. 12–17. First, while v. 18 does mark a transition from judgment to salvation, it clearly indicates a further consequence of Judah’s rejection of YHWH’s promise. “And therefore YHWH waits to be gracious to you,” while sounding a hopeful note, is clearly a penalty for refusing to trust, and hence, further judgment. Second, וְלָכֵן is an inferential conjunction which links what is about to be said to what has been said before. The prefixed *waw* strengthens this connection, particularly with the previous uses of וְלָכֵן in vv. 12, 13. Third, vv. 12–17 address the audience using 2mp plural verbs and pronominal suffixes (כֶּם). This is continued in v. 18a–b (לְחַנּוּנְכֶם, לְרַחֲמֵנֶם). However, in vv. 19–26 2ms pronominal suffixes (יְ) dominate (with the single of v. 20a). Finally, Laberge has suggested that the macarism in v. 18d (אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל-חַוְכִי לוֹ) is a concluding formula intended to round off the end of a section.⁵² Laberge compares the end of v. 18 to concluding macarisms in Ps. 2:12, (אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל-חַוְסִי בּוֹ), Ps. 84:13 (אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם בְּטַח בְּדָךְ), and Isa. 32:20 (אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם זֶרְעִי עַל-כֹּל) and suggests that they serve the same function. While it is true that macarisms sometimes mark the beginning of a unit (cf. Ps. 1:1), Laberge remarks “this addition does not fit very well as the beginning of a pericope which would include vv. 18–26. Therefore we concur with

⁵² Léo Laberge, “Is 30, 19–26: A Deuteronomic Text?” *Église et Théologie* 2 (1971): 38–39.

Laberge that v. 18d marks the conclusion of a section. The centrality of v. 18 within the structure of ch. 30 is supported by syllable and line counts which show that it sits in the very center of the chapter.

Ch. 30:1–17	Jerusalem’s devastation	524 syllables, 66 cola
Ch. 30:18	YHWH’s explanation	34 syllables
Ch. 30:19–33	Jerusalem’s restoration	511 syllables, 66 cola

Section 3 (vv. 27–33). Verse 27 clearly marks the beginning of a new unit. This is supported by the following observations. First, verse 27 lacks any syntactical connection with the preceding verses. Second, הִנֵּה often serves as a discourse marker whose function is “to focus attention on the utterance that follows it.”⁵³ Third, vv. 27–33 mark a sharp departure from the subject matter of vv. 19–26. Finally, the boundaries of the section are marked by inclusio with the reiteration of בָּעֵר in vv. 27b and 33g.⁵⁴

This section of ch. 30 is divided into 2 subsections, vv. 27–28 and vv. 29–33. The boundary between these two subsections is marked by a break in syntax. Verse 29 begins with a noun הַשִּׁיר which has no syntactical connection to what precedes it. This noun also introduces a change in imagery from that of YHWH’s theophanic approach in vv. 27–28, to the cultic imagery of vv. 29–33. This cultic imagery depicts singing (הַשִּׁיר), musicians (בְּחִלְיָל), procession (עָרוּךְ מֵאַחַמּוּל תַּפְתָּהּ), the war dance (וּבְמִלְחָמוֹת תְּנוּפָה גִלְחָם־בָּהּ) and sacrifice (בְּהַר־יְהוָה לְבוֹאֵי כִּי).

Thought Progression

The thought of Isa. 30 moves from judgment to salvation. Verses 1–18 contain an accusation (vv. 1–11) and announcement of judgment (vv. 12–18). This half of ch. 30 seems to presuppose an

⁵³ BHRG, §44.3.

⁵⁴ Others have identified the phrases שָׁם־יְהוָה (v. 27a) and נִשְׁמַת יְהוָה (v. 33e) as forming an inclusio bracketing this section. Cf. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 175.

earlier word of warning or admonition from YHWH which has been rejected by the leaders of Judah in favor of their own plans for a defensive alliance with Egypt. In vv. 9–10 Isaiah describes them as a “sons not willing to hear the *tôrâ* of YHWH,” and accuses them of encouraging the prophets and seers to “see falsehoods” designed to “remove from before us, the Holy One of Israel.” This theme is picked up once again in v. 12 where they are said to have “rejected this word.” The “word” in question here is probably the same one which they refused to listen to in v. 9. Verses 15–16a supply the essence of this earlier word of admonition—“For thus said Lord YHWH... ‘In returning and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust will be your might; but you were not willing, and you said no.’”

This rejected prophetic word, probably delivered by Isaiah himself, provides the backdrop for the woe pronounced in vv. 1–7 against those who “form a plan but not by me, who pour out a libation, but not by my spirit...who go down to Egypt, but have not asked for my guidance” (vv. 1–2). It also explains why Judah’s behavior is characterized here as “rebellion” (v. 1a; 9a). They had been offered an opportunity, much like Ahaz in ch. 7, to trust YHWH and wait upon his plan, but chose rather to make a plan of their own.

In contrast to vv. 1–18, vv. 19–33 contain a message of redemption and restoration for Zion. This message of redemption begins with a promise that Zion, which is depicted as deserted and abandoned in v. 17 will be inhabited in the future. What is more, the future inhabitants of Zion will undergo a spiritual renewal which will enable them to walk in the right path (v. 21) and will result in the rejection of false gods (v. 22). Verses 23–26 indicate that the spiritual renewal experienced by the people of Jerusalem will have its counterpart in the natural world. This will manifest itself in a superabundance of the products of nature, agricultural produce (vv. 23–24), water (v. 25), and light (v. 26). The natural transformation depicted in these verses may simply

be a metaphorical description of the spiritual transformation which takes place in the human sphere (cf. 11:6–9). The strange allusion to the day “when towers fall” (v. 25e) may echo the simile in v. 13 which describes Judah’s iniquity as a “falling breach” (v. 13b). If this is the case, then it may indicate that the disaster looming in Judah’s future may be a necessary prelude to the coming restoration. The reference to “towers” in this context would comport well with other passages in Isaiah where towers are listed with other tall and lofty objects which represent human pride destined to be brought low on the Day of YHWH (cf. 2:12–17; 29:17). The last section of the chapter, vv. 27–33, takes up the theme of Zion’s renewal by announcing YHWH’s theophanic approach to drive the foreign nations from the sacred mountain (vv. 27–28). In vv. 29–33 the image of YHWH’s coming gives way to a description of a sacred procession of the people of Zion to the mountain of YHWH to witness the ritual immolation of Assyria. Thus, with the defeat of her gentile oppressors and the annihilation her chief foreign attacker, Zion’s deliverance is complete.

In between vv. 1–17 and 19–33 sits v. 18. Formally, v. 18 marks the end of the subsection of ch. 30 which begins with v. 15. Nevertheless v. 18 is still connected to vv. 19ff. by means of the connective וְ. So, in an odd way, v. 18 brings to a climax the threat of punishment in vv. 12–17 while, at the same time setting the stage for the promise of redemption in vv. 19–33 by concluding v. 18 with a word of hope for those who wait patiently for YHWH’s plan to be fulfilled. This word of hope echoes the oracle alluded to in v. 15 which had earlier been rejected by Jerusalem’s ruling elite, “In returning and rest you will be saved; in quietness and trust will be your might.” This word, which had been rejected by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, is now reissued to Isaiah’s ideal readers, the community of survivors who trust YHWH and wait upon Him. It is

this faithful remnant who believe and therefore do not “make haste” (28:16) who will inhabit the renewed Zion of the future.

The following outline summarizes structure and thought progression of ch. 30.

- Section 1: Going Down to Egypt—vv. 1–7 (יְהוּ)**
- Section 2: Judgment and Deliverance—vv. 8–26 (עֲתָה בּוֹא)**
 - Subsection A: Departing from the Path—vv. 8–11
 - Subsection B: Zion Shattered—vv. 12–14
 - Subsection C: Blessing Pronounced—vv. 15–18
 - Subsection D: Returning to the Path—vv. 19–22
 - Subsection E: Zion Healed—vv. 23–26
- Section 3: Going up to Zion—vv. 27–33 (הַגָּה)**
 - Subsection A: Nations Driven from Zion—vv. 27–28
 - Subsection B: Remnant Returns to Zion—vv. 29–33

Thematic Coherence

Chapter 30 contains seven different themes which we will argue form the core Isaiah’s message in chs. 28–33. Each of these themes corresponds to one of seven parts of the structure of ch. 30, which discussed previously. Since a full exposition of these themes will be provided in ch. 7 of this dissertation we provide only a short summary here.

The first theme is Isaiah’s condemnation of Jerusalem’s mutual defense treaty with Egypt (vv. 1–7). Isaiah already condemned this alliance in somewhat veiled terms in 28:15–19 and 29:15–16. Here, for the first time, we discover the identities of the actants and the details of their plans.

The second theme, contained in vv. 8–11, is Isaiah’s condemnation of Jerusalem’s leaders for their lack of faith and spiritual obtuseness. Once again this theme is foreshadowed in the preceding chapters (28:7–13; 29:9–14), and this pericope picks up on earlier references to prophets and seers, and like 28:12 condemns the leaders for refusing to hear divine instruction (30:9).

The theme found in the third division of ch. 30 (vv. 12–14) is a reiteration of Isaiah's announcement of disaster upon Jerusalem in consequence of the foolish policies of its leaders. As with the previous themes, this one has already been encountered in the two preceding chapters (28:1–4, 14–22; 29:1–8). Here Isaiah further develops the threat of disaster by means of two similes; one describes the coming disaster using the image of an unstable wall which is ready to fall, the other describes Judah as a clay vessel which has been so thoroughly shattered that not a single shard can be salvaged for even the most humble purposes.

Verses 15–18 enunciate a fourth theme which may be traced throughout chs. 28–33; namely, Isaiah's condemnation of Jerusalem's leaders for their refusal of YHWH's offer of salvation through resting/trusting/waiting. Verse 15 alludes to this offer and its rejection. Rather than return to YHWH in trust and quietness, the leaders chose to look to horses (horses are emblematic of Egypt), therefore they will flee on horses. The message of this pericope echoes Isaiah's earlier offer of rest which was rejected by Judah's leaders (28:12).

The next pericope (vv. 19–23) contain Isaiah's prediction of a return of spiritual understanding to Jerusalem's leaders following a period of trial. This theme has already appeared in 28:5 where the Isaiah envisions the remnant returning to YHWH in the wake of the destruction of the northern kingdom, and in 29:17–14 which also foresees a spiritual transformation in the very same person who had once sought to hide their plans from YHWH and fooled themselves into thinking that no one saw their plots and machinations.

The sixth pericope (vv. 23–26) envisions a transformed Jerusalem and an ideal future for its inhabitants. This transformation is depicted in terms of a renewal of nature. Such nature imagery appears earlier in Isaiah (11:6–9), and is also in evidence in 29:17–24. Chapter 28 depicts a

newly founded Zion which has been laid out using “justice as a measuring line and righteousness as a plumb line” (vv. 16–17).

The final section of ch. 30 expresses the seventh theme of chs. 28–33, Isaiah’s prediction of destruction for Assyria (vv. 27–33). This is the first time that Assyria is mentioned by name in chs. 28–33. In earlier passages the invader had been described as a “strong and mighty one” (28:2). His destructive power was compared to a “hail storm” or a “flood.” Chapter 29 tells the reader that YHWH will lay siege to Ariel (v. 2), and mention is made of a “horde of nations” (v. 7–8). The motif of fire which plays such a prominent role in 30:27–33 is also present in ch. 29 with its use of the moniker “Ariel” or “altar hearth” for Jerusalem, and its depiction of YHWH’s intervention with “a flame of devouring fire” (v. 6, אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלֶתָהּ).

We have identified these seven themes as constituting the heart of Isaiah’s message in chs. 28–33, and we now turn to chs. 31–33 to discover whether these themes continue through the last two major sections of the corpus.

CHAPTER FIVE

ISAIAH 31–32

Text and Translation

Section 1: 31:1–9

Vs	Text	S	A	Translation
1a	הוּי הַיִּרְדִּים מִצָּרִים לְעֹזְרָה	10	4	Alas! Those who go down to Egypt for help,
1b	עַל־סוּסִים יִשְׁעֲנוּ	7	2	Upon horses they rely.
1c	וַיִּבְטְחוּ עַל־רֶכֶב כִּי רַב	8	4	They have confidence in chariots for they are many.
1d	וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים כִּי־עֲצֹמוּ מְאֹד	11	4	And in horsemen for they are very numerous.
1e	וְלֹא שָׁעוּ עַל־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	10	4	But they do not rely upon the Holy One of Israel,
1f	וְאֶת־יְהוָה לֹא דָרְשׁוּ:	8	3	Nor do they seek YHWH.
2a	וְגַם־הוּא חָכֵם וַיָּבֵא רָע	9	4	But he also is wise, he has brought disaster,
2b	וְאֶת־דְּבָרָיו לֹא הִסִּיר	8	3	And his word he has not revoked.
2c	וְקָם עַל־בַּיִת מְרָעִים	7	3	And he will rise up against a house of evil doers
2d	וְעַל־עֹזְרֵת פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן:	8	3	And against helpers of workers of iniquity.

3a	וּמִצְרַיִם אָדָם וְלֹא־אֱלֹהִים	8	3	For Egypt is human and not divine,
3b	וְסוּסֵיהֶם בָּשָׂר וְלֹא־רוּחַ	9	3	And their horses are flesh and not spirit.
3c	וַיִּהְיֶה יָטוּחַ יָדוֹ	7	3	And YHWH will stretch out his hand,
3d	וְכַשְׁלֵי עֹזֵר וְנִפְלֵ עֹזֵר	10	4	So that the helper shall stumble and the one helped will fall,
3e	וַיִּחָדְדוּ כָּל־הֵם יַכְלִיאוּ:	8	3	And together all of them will perish.
4a	כִּי כֹה אָמַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי	8	4	For thus said YHWH to me,
4b	כַּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאֲרִי	7	3	Just as the lion growls,
4c	וְהַכְפִּיר עַל־טְרָפוֹ	7	2	And the young lion over his prey,
4d	אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא עָלָיו מֵלֵא רְעִים	11	5	It is summoned against him a multitude of shepherds.*
4e	מִקּוֹלָם לֹא יִחַת	6	3	He is not dismayed by their voice,
4f	וּמִהֲמוֹנָם לֹא יַעֲנֶה	7	3	And he is not cowed by their tumult.
4g	כֵּן יֵרֵד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת	8	4	So also YHWH of Hosts will descend,
4h	לְצַבָּא עַל־הַר־צִיּוֹן	6	4	To war upon Mt. Zion,
4i	וְעַל־גִּבְעוֹתָהּ:	5	2	Even upon its hill.

5a	כְּצִפְרִים עֹפוֹת	6	2	Like birds flying over,
5b	כֵּן יִגֹן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם	13	5	So will YHWH of Hosts shield over Jerusalem,
5c	גָּנוֹן וְהִצִיל	5	2	He will shield, and deliver,
5d	פָּסַח וְהִמְלִיט:	5	2	He will protect and rescue.*
6a	שׁוּבוּ לְאִשֶׁר הֶעֱמִיקוּ סָרָה	9	4	Return to him whom they have so deeply rebelled against,
6b	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	5	2	O children of Israel.*
7a	כִּי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִמָּאֲסוּן אִישׁ	9	4	For, in that day, each one will reject,
7b	אֱלֹהֵי כֶסֶפּוֹ וְאֱלֹהֵי זָהָבּוֹ	12	4	His idols of silver and his idols of gold,
7c	אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָכֶם יְדֵיכֶם חַטָּא:	10	5	Which your hands have sinfully made for you.*
8a	וְנָפַל אֲשׁוּר בְּחֶרֶב לֹא־אִישׁ	9	4	And Asshur shall fall by a sword not of man,
8b	וְחֶרֶב לֹא־אָדָם תֹּאכְלֵנוּ	8	3	And a sword not of mankind will devour him.
8c	וְנָס לוֹ מִפְּנֵי־חֶרֶב	7	3	And he will flee for himself before the sword,
8d	וּבַחֲוָרָיו לְמַס יִהְיוּ:	8	3	And his choice young men will become forced labor.
9a	וְסִלְעוֹ מִמְּגוֹר יַעֲבוֹר	8	3	His rock from terror will pass away,
9b	וְחֲתוּ מִנֶּס שָׂרָיו	7	3	And his officers will be terrified.

9c	נאם־יהוה אשר־אור לו בציון	11	4	Utterance of YHWH, whose flame is in Zion,
9d	ותנור לו בירושלם:	8	3	And his furnace in Jerusalem.

Totals: cola = 41 333 137

Section 2: 32:1–8

1a	הן לצדק ימלך־מלך	6	3	Behold, according to righteousness a king shall reign,*
1b	ולשרים למשפט ישרו:	10	3	And as to princes, according to justice they shall rule.*
2a	והיה־איש כמחב־ארוח	8	2	And each shall be as a hiding place from wind,
2b	וסתר זרם	3	2	And as a shelter from storm.*
2c	כפלג־מים בציון	7	2	Like channels of water in a dry land,
2d	כצל סלע־כבד בארץ עיפה:	10	4	Like the shadow of a massive rock in a weary land.
3a	ולא תשעינה עיני ראים	9	4	And the eyes of those who see shall not be smeared over,*
3b	ואזני שמעים תקשבנה:	9	3	And the ears of those who hear will listen.
4a	ולבב נמהרים יבין לדעת	10	4	And the heart of the hasty will understand knowledge,
4b	ולשון עלנים תמהר לדבר צחות:	14	5	And the tongue of stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.*
5a	לא־יקרא עוד לנבל נדיב	10	4	No longer will a fool be called a nobleman;
5b	ולכילי לא יאמר שוע:	9	4	Nor a knave be spoken of as a gentleman.

6a	כי נבל נבֵּלָה יִדְבֵּר	9	3	For a fool speaks foolishness,
6b	וְלִבּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה-אָוֶן	6	2	And his heart devises iniquity,*
6c	לַעֲשׂוֹת חֲנָף	3	2	To act profanely,
6d	וְלִדְבַר אֱלֹהֵיהוָה תוֹעָה	9	3	To speak error concerning YHWH.
6e	לְהַרְיֵק נֶפֶשׁ רָעֵב	6	3	To make empty the throat of a hungry person,*
6f	וּמִשְׁקָה צָמֵא יַחְסִיר:	7	3	And the one giving drink to a thirsty person he causes to lack.
7a	וְכִלְיָ כָלֵי רָעִים	7	3	And the knave, his weapons are evil,
7b	הוּא זְמוֹת יַעֲזֵן	5	3	He plans stratagems
7c	לְחַבֵּל עֲנֻיִים בְּאִמְרֵי-שָׁקֶר	10	3	To ruin the needy with false words,*
7d	וּבְדַבַּר אֲבִיוֹן מִשְׁפָּט:	8	3	Even when the poor speak rightly.
8a	וְנָדִיב נְדִיבוֹת יַעֲזֵן	8	3	But as for the noble man, he plans noble things,
8b	וְהוּא עַל-נְדִיבוֹת יִקּוּם:	8	3	And he stands upon noble things.
Totals:	cola = 24	191	74	

Section 2: 32:9–20

9a	נָשִׁים שְׂאֵנָנוֹת קִמְנָה	8	3	Stand, O carefree women;
9b	שְׁמַעֲנָה קוֹלִי	5	2	Hear my voice.

9c	בנות ¹ בטחות	5	2	O Confident Daughters,
9d	האזנה אמרתִי:	6	2	Give ear to my word.
10a	ימים על־שנה	5	2	In a year or two,*
10b	תרַגְזְנָה בטחות	6	2	You will tremble, O Confident Ones.
10c	כי כָּלָה בְּצִיר	5	2	When the vintage is finished,
10b	אֶסֶף בְּלִי יָבוֹא:	5	3	The ingathering will not come.
11a	חֲרְדוּ שְׂאֲנֹנֹת	5	2	Tremble O secure ones;*
11b	רַגְזָה בטחות	6	2	Quake O confident ones,
11c	פִּשְׁטָה וְעָרָה	6	2	Strip naked,
11d	וּחְגוּרָה עַל־חֻלְצִים:	8	2	Gird sackcloth on loins,
12a	עַל־שָׁדַיִם סֹפְדִים	6	2	On wailing breasts.*
12b	עַל־שָׂדֵי־חֶמֶד	4	2	For the delightful fields,
12c	עַל־גֶּפֶן פְּרִיָּה:	5	2	For the fruitful vine.
13a	עַל אֲדָמַת עַמִּי	5	3	For the soil of my people,
13b	קוֹץ שְׂמִיר תַּעֲלֶה	5	3	Which grows up with thorn-bush and briar.

¹BHS recommends reading בטחות with several mss. Also cf. v. 10.

13c	כי על־כל־בתי מְשׁוֹשׁ	7	3	For upon every joyous house;
13d	קָרְיָה עֲלִיזָה:	5	2	Every exultant city.
14a	כי־אֶרְמוֹן נִטָּשׁ	5	2	For palace will be neglected;
14b	הַמּוֹן עִיר עָזַב	5	3	Bustling city will be forsaken.
14c	עִפְלֵ וּבַחֲן הָיָה בְּעַד מְעָרוֹת	10	5	Hill and watchtower will become barren places forever.*
14d	עַד־עוֹלָם מְשׁוֹשׁ פְּרָאִים	8	3	Forever a playground for wild donkeys,
14e	מִרְעֵה עֲדָרִים:	5	2	A pasture for flocks,
15a	עַד־יִעֲרָה עָלֵינוּ רוּחַ מִמְרוֹם	11	4	Until the Spirit is poured out on us from on high,
15b	וְהָיָה מִדְבָּר לְפֶרֶךְ	8	3	Then the desert becomes a fruit orchard,
15c	וּכְרָמֹל לַיַּעַר יִחָשֵׁב:	8	3	And a fruit orchard is regarded as a forest.
16a	וְשָׁכַן בַּמִּדְבָּר מִשְׁפָּט	8		Then justice will inhabit in the desert,
16b	וַיִּצְדָּקָה בַּכְּרָמֹל תֵּשֵׁב:	9		And righteousness will dwell in the fruit orchard.
17a	וְהָיָה מַעֲשֵׂה הַצְּדָקָה שָׁלוֹם	11	4	Then the deed of righteousness will be peace,
17b	וְעִבְדַת הַצְּדָקָה הַשְּׁקֵט וְנֶבֶטַח עַד־עוֹלָם:	15	5	And the work of righteousness will be quietness and trust forever.
18a	וַיֵּשֶׁב עַמִּי בְּנוֹה שָׁלוֹם	9	4	And my people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation,

18b	ובְּמִשְׁכְּנֹת מִבְּטְחִים	8	2	And in trustful abodes.
18c	ובְּמִנוּחַת שְׁאֲנִנּוֹת:	7	2	In secure places of rest.
19a	וּבְרַד בְּרֶדֶת הַיָּעַר	7	3	And it will hail when the forest comes down,*
19b	וּבְשִׁפְלָה תִשְׁפַּל הָעִיר:	8	3	And in humiliation the city will be laid low.
20a	אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם זָרְעוּ עַל־כָּל־מַיִם	9	3	Blessed are you who sow upon all waters,
20b	מִשְׁלַחַי הַגֹּלֵל־הַשּׂוֹר וְהַחֲמוֹר:	11	3	Who send forth the foot of the ox and the donkey.
Totals:	cola = 38	269	103	
Totals Speech	cola = 103	793	314	

Translation Notes

v. 4e מְלֵא רְעִים—“A multitude of shepherds.” The meaning of the noun מְלֵא is difficult to express here. It literally means “fullness,” “that which fills.” Most often it occurs either in the construct or with a pronominal suffix in conjunction with a noun designating something that can be filled or measured, e.g. אֶרֶץ (Micah 1:12), הַיָּם (Isa. 42:10), בַּךְ (Eccl. 4:6), תִּבְל (Ps. 89:11), קוֹמָתוֹ (1 Sam. 28:20), הַסֶּפֶל (Judges 6:38), בַּיִת (Num. 22:18), מִזְבֵּחַ (Lev. 16:12), עֵמֶד (Exod. 16:33). Perhaps the best analogue to the usage in Isaiah 31:4 is to be found in Gen. 48:19 מְלֵא הַגּוֹיִם “multitude of nations.”

v. 5e פָּסַח וְהִמְלִיט:—“He will protect and rescue.” The verb פָּסַח is used in parallel with גָּנַן “shield,” “cover,” “protect.” The other verbs in this verse have similar meanings: נָצַל (*hiphil*) “snatch,” “deliver,” מָלַט (*hiphil*) “deliver.” For this reason Glasson argues that a meaning like “defend” or “protect” is more suitable for פָּסַח than the traditional “pass over.”²

² T. Francis Glasson, “The ‘Passover’, a Misnomer: The Meaning of the Verb Pasach,” *JTS* 10 (1959): 79–84.

v. 6c: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל—“The children of Israel.” Some translators and commentators treat this phrase as a vocative, “O Israel.” It seems better however to regard it as the subject of הִעֲמִיקוּ.³

v. 7c: אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָכֶם יְדֵיכֶם חַטָּא—“Which your hands have sinfully made for you.” *BHS* recommends deleting חַטָּא as a gloss following the Greek, Arabic and Ethiopic versions. Delitzsch suggests reading it as a second object of עָשׂוּ indicating result.⁴ Irwin takes יְדֵיכֶם חַטָּא as a “construct chain with intervening suffix” and translates “your sinful hands.”⁵ In our opinion חַטָּא is an adverbial accusative of manner describing the way in which the action was performed.⁶

v. 32:1a הֵן לְצַדִּיק יִמְלֹךְ-מֶלֶךְ—“Behold, according to righteousness a king shall reign.” IQIsa^a reads הֵנָּה here. Some scholars translate הֵן conditionally as “if” or “when” (Irwin, Watts, Fohrer, Blenkinsop, *GKC*⁷), but the context and *DSS* coalesce here to support the traditional rendering “behold.” לְ with לְצַדִּיק indicates manner.⁸

v. 1b: וְלְשָׂרִים לְמִשְׁפַּט יִשְׁרוּ:—“And as to princes, according to justice they shall rule.” *BHS* recommends reading שָׂרִים without ל, and is followed in this by many commentators. However, Delitzsch’s suggestion that *lamedh* indicates respect in this line alleviates the problem.⁹

v. 3a: וְלֹא תִשְׁעֶינָה עֵינֵי רְאִים—“And the eyes of those who see shall not be smeared over.” MT vocalizes the verb in this line as 3fp of שָׁעָה “to gaze at,” “regard.” However, the resultant

³ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 217.

⁴ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 46–47.

⁵ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 116.

⁶ See, Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19.

⁷ See *GKC* 159.w, “הֵן *if*, generally supposed to be originally identical with הֵן *behold!* Probably, however, הֵן *if*, is a pure Aramaism, and since the Aramaic word never has the meaning *behold*, it is at least improbable that it had originally any connexion with הֵן or הֵנָּה.”

⁸ *GBHS*, 113.

⁹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 48. E. J. Young also supports this translation. He writes, “The prep. practically has the force of rendering the word as a *casus pendens*. *The Book of Isaiah*,” 386 n2.

translation, “and the eyes of those who see will not regard,” is not parallel to be next line, “and the ears of those who hear will consider” (3b). *BHS* and *BHK* suggest vocalizing the verb as either *qal* or *hop^{al}* of שׁעע “to smear over.” This suggestion is supported by the Vulgate and does not do violence to the consonantal text.

v. 4b וְלִשׁוֹן עֲלִינִים תִּמְהַר לְדַבֵּר צָחוֹת:—“And the tongue of stammerers will speak clearly.” *BHS* recommends deleting צָחוֹת for metrical causes. There is, however, no manuscript support for such an excision. צָחוֹת as a plural abstract noun, may be translated adverbially—“clearly.”¹⁰

v. 6b וְלִבּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה אָוֶן—“And his heart devises iniquity.” *BHS* and *BHK* both recommend reading חושב in the place of יַעֲשֶׂה on the authority of LXX (νοήσει) and 1QIsa^a. However Orlinsky has shown that LXX uniformly translates חשב with λογίζομαι and that עשה can mean to “think, plan, devise, plot, consider.”¹¹

v. 7c לְחַבֵּל עֲנִיִּים בְּאִמְרֵי-שָׁקֶר—“To ruin the needy with false words.” There is no real difference in meaning between K (עֲנִיִּים) and Q (עֲנִיִּים) in this line.

v. 10a עַל-שָׁנָה יָמִים—“In a year or two.” This ambiguous idiom has caused scholars a great deal of difficulty. Translations vary widely but it is generally rendered either, “in a little more than a year” or something similar (*NASB, NIV, NRSV, JPSV, Kaiser, Beuken, Leupold, Childs*), or “within a year” or something similar (*Blenkinnsop, Watts, NET*). Delitzsch translates it “days to a year” and understands it to mean “inside of a year.”¹² Both Young and Oswalt settle for the very literal translation, “days upon a year.”¹³ Irwin makes a very strong case that יָמִים in this

¹⁰ *IBHS*, 104.

¹¹ Harry M. Orlinsky, “Studies in St. Mark’s Isaiah Scroll.” *JBL* 69 (1950): 152–155; Cf. Irwin, *Isaiah* 28–33, 125; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 578 n5.

¹² Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 51.

¹³ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 393; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 282.

idiom simply means “year.” Among other things he bases his argument on 2 Chron. 21:15, 19 where Elijah tells Jehoram that his bowels will come out because of disease **עַל־יָמִים**.¹⁴ This prophecy is then fulfilled at the end of two years (v. 19). The verbal parallel between **יָמִים** **עַל־יָמִים** and **עַל־שָׁנָה** is striking to say the least, and we are convinced that Irwin is very likely correct in his assessment.

v. 11a–d **וְחָגוּרָה...וְעָרָה...פְּשֻׁטָה...רְגֵזָה...חָרְדוּ**. *BHS* suggests reading **חָרְדוּ** as an Aramaic form of the 2fp imperative (**חָרְדָה**). However Davidson offers examples of the use of the masculine plural for the feminine plural elsewhere.¹⁵ Examples in the imperative are also found (cf. Hos. 10:8; Zeph. 3:16). The other four imperatives in this verse are also explained as Aramaisms, but Irwin suggests that the existence of such imperative forms in Hebrew may have support from evidence of similar forms in Ugaritic.¹⁶

v. 12a **עַל־שָׁרְיִים סָפְרִים**—“On mourning breasts.” *BHS* and *BHK* suggest reading **סָפְרָה**. This is unnecessary however when the parallelism between **עַל־חֲלָצִים** (11d) and **עַל־שָׁרְיִים סָפְרִים** (12a) is recognized.

v. 14c **עֲפֹל וְבַחַן הָיָה בְּעַד מְעָרוֹת**—“Hill and watchtower will become barren places forever.” Here we follow Irwin’s lineation and revocalize **בְּעַד** (preposition) as **בְּעַד** (forever’).¹⁷ When read in this way 14c is parallel to lines 14d and 14e.

v. 19a **וְיָרַד בְּרֵדַת הַיָּעַר**—“And it will hail when the forest comes down.” MT **וְיָרַד** (wcp, 3ms) is a *hapax legomenon*. The versions read the noun **בָּרַד** “hail.” Both *BHS* and *BHK*, citing the evidence of a single Hebrew MS, S and T, strongly recommend reading **וְיָרַד** “it will go

¹⁴ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 127–128.

¹⁵ Dav. §113.

¹⁶ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 129.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 130–131.

down.” It appears a majority of scholars have followed this suggestion and translate “And the forest will utterly go down.” However de Waard has shown that such a reading is improbable since it necessitates reading יָרֵד for בְּרָרָה.¹⁸ Driver and Irwin both propose complex rereadings of the text based upon somewhat convoluted linguistic reasoning. In our opinion the very complexity of these textual solutions renders them improbable.¹⁹

Structure

Syllable and Stress Counts

Syllable Counts. According our lineation chs. 31–32 have 103 cola and 793 syllables. Cola range from 3 to 15 syllables in length. Mean colon length for this speech is 7.7 (7.699) syllables. Median colon length is 8 syllables as is the mode. Hence, syllable counts in this section of Isaiah 28–33 are in line with the theoretical norm. There are 38 bicola in this poem ranging from 9 to 26 syllables in length. Mean bicolon length is 15 syllables, the median is 15 and the mode is 17.

Stress Counts. By our count there are 314 stresses and 103 cola in chapters 31–32 of Isaiah. This results in an average line length of exactly 3 (3.04) accents per line. Lines range from 2 to 6 stresses in length. There are 46 cola with 3 stress lines (or 44 percent of the total), thus making the 3 stress colon the dominant pattern. The next most frequent colon length is 2 stresses. There are 32 cola with 2 stresses—30.4 percent of the total. Four stress lines are also well represented. Of the 105 cola in this speech, 23 have 4 stresses. This represents 22 percent of the total. Together 2, 3 and 4 stress lines represent 96 percent of the total lines in the unit. Thirty eight of the 49 verses in this speech are bicola (77.55 percent), clearly making the bicolon the dominant verse pattern. Mean bicolon length is 6 (5.92) stresses, the median is also 6 as is the

¹⁸ Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, 132.

¹⁹ G. R. Driver, “‘Another Little Drink’: Isaiah 28:1–22,” in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas*. (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 52–53; Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 133–134.

mode. It seems clear then that colon length in chs. 31–32 conform to the theoretical norm of 3 stresses.

Prose Particle Counts

Of the 359 words in this speech 18 are prose particles; an average of just 5 %. This is within the range of texts which are considered “almost certainly” poetic.²⁰ Of the prose particles found in chapters 31 and 32 of Isaiah, the majority are located in chapter 31 (11). Still the percentage for chapter 31 is well within the range for poetry (7%). The percentage for chapter 32 is even lower (3.448%).

Verses and Subsections

Section 1, Subsection A: (Verses 1–3). The boundaries of Section 1 (31:1–3) are marked by the introductory *הוֹי* in 31:1 and the prophetic messenger formula which marks the beginning of the next section. In this section we see the woe oracle proper. The limits of the unit are also marked by inclusion with the repetition of the root *עזר* in vv. 1a and 3d. Also present at the beginning and end of this unit are references to *מְצַרִים* (v. 1a, 3a) and *סוֹסִים* (v. 1b, 3b). The theme of “help” is prominent as some form of the root *עזר* occurs 4 times in the unit, prominently at the beginning and end, but also in the middle (v. 2d). The subsection has an ABA' pattern.

- A Egyptians and their Horses (v.1)
- B YHWH's Wisdom (v. 2)
- A' Egyptians and their Horses (v. 3)

Section 1, Subsection B: (Verses 4–9). This unit opens with the prophetic messenger formula introduced by *כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי* and closes with the oracular formula (*נְאֻם יְהוָה*). The speaker in this unit is clearly Isaiah as the modified form of the messenger formula demonstrates. This is also demonstrated by the description of YHWH's intervention on behalf of

²⁰ D. N. Freedman, “Another look at Biblical Poetry,” 17.

Zion in the third person (v. 4b–g), and by the call to repentance in v. 6 which also speaks of YHWH in the third person. At first glance it would appear that vv. 6–7 are extraneous to this pericope (see below), but we have made the decision to include it here on the understanding that the prophets often used a type of argumentation that was not always linear or dialogic, but rather analogic.

The prophecy indicates that YHWH’s plan for Zion includes both trial and deliverance, and that, while the instrument of Zion’s chastisement may be human, the true agent of judgment would be YHWH himself. This strange sequence of events is graphically depicted using two images. The first, depicts YHWH as a lion who refuses to give up its prey; the second, compares Him to birds flying overhead to protect their young. The first image is an ambiguous one. In most contexts the phrase לְצַבֵּא עַל signifies “to fight against.” Indeed, this is what it signifies in 29:7. Yet in its present context it appears to depict an act of deliverance on YHWH’s part. Taken in isolation such an interpretation might not be plausible, but with the addition of a second image in v. 5 it becomes clear that this is indeed the meaning. Exum suggests that this juxtaposition of two images is an example of “diaphor” or “the creation of new meaning by juxtaposition and synthesis.” She writes, “it is through diaphor that we must read the total poem as a promise...The multiple meanings of *ʿal* (“over,” as in the lion growling over its prey; “against”; “upon”) in v. 4 contribute to its plurisignificance. It is only juxtaposition with the second which secures its meaning.”²¹

The depiction of YHWH’s intervention on Zion’s behalf is followed up by the announcement of Asshur’s fall in vv. 8–9. The language of this prophecy echoes that of Isa. 30:27–33 where Asshur meets its fate on Mt. Zion where it is consumed by YHWH’s breath as if

²¹Exum, “Broken Pots,” 338.

by a stream of burning sulfur (30:33). Verse 9 concludes by solemnly intoning that Asshur's sentence has been pronounced by YHWH, "Whose flame is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." Such language inevitably calls to mind Isa. 29:1–8 where Jerusalem is addressed as "Ariel," or "Altar Hearth," before announcing that at the moment Ariel's deepest distress YHWH will come with... "flame of devouring fire" to drive off the *עַל-אַרְיֵאל הַצִּבְּאִים כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם הַמְּזֻבְּחִים* (vv. 6–7). Barthel notes this connection and writes, "weil Jes 31 neben 29:1–8 entscheidend zu der Auffassung beigetragen hat, Jesaja habe die Ankündigung des Gerichts über Jerusalem zumindest zeitweise mit der Erwartung verbunden, Jahwe werde Gottestadt in letzter Sekunde dennoch erretten."²²

Oddly, the oracle in vv. 4–9 is unexpectedly interrupted by a call to repentance featuring a plural imperative verb *שׁוּבוּ* (v. 6). The abruptness of this aside has caused many critics to conclude that verses 6–7 constitute a later editorial expansion.²³ Yet the employment of *שׁוּבוּ* here echoes Isaiah's earlier exhortation to seek salvation in *שׁוּבוּ* (30:15).²⁴ Like 31:6, this earlier admonition to "return" was given as part of an exhortation to Judah to abandon its current policy of looking to Egypt for help against Assyria. Therefore its insertion here, while unexpected, certainly need not be seen as evidence of secondary editing. Rather, it may be seen as a feature of the author's rhetorical strategy to use this prophecy of disaster and deliverance as an occasion for motivating his countrymen to turn from their self-destructive policies and turn to their only true helper (cf. Isa. 2:5). Care must be taken when reading the prophets not to impose a western preference for linear dialogical ways of thinking on an ancient text that employs a style of

²² Barthels, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte*, 432.

²³ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 258; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 248; Childs, *Isaiah*, 231; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 219.

²⁴ Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 349.

writing which relies more on analogy and contiguity than on discursive logic. Mary Douglas’ comments regarding Leviticus are apropos here, “Bible students have to choose between accepting the muddle made by imposing a Western linear reading upon an archaic text, or trying to read the book through its own literary conventions.”²⁵ In this case the bicolon containing the call to repentance sits dead center of the unit, bisecting it exactly with 94 syllables in vv. 4–5, and 97 syllables in vv. 7–9. This symmetry is also evident from the stress count 42+39—a difference of only 3 stresses.

A	Zion delivered from attackers (vv. 4–5),	94 syllables, 42 stresses
B	Repentance urged (v. 6),	14 syllables, 6 stresses
A’	Assyrian destruction completed (vv. 7–9),	97 syllables, 39 stresses.

Thus the call to repentance is linked via juxtaposition to the promise of deliverance from Assyrian oppression, and given prominence due to its position in the center.

Section 2, Subsection A: (32:1–5). The discourse marker הֵן signals the beginning of this unit.²⁶ It speaks of the coming of righteous rulers who will replace the current unrighteous regime, and it describes the salutary effects of their righteous policies. The first of these effects is outlined in v. 2, namely relief from oppression. This verse takes up language from earlier passages in 28–33. The phrase סִתֵּר זָרָם (v. 2b) echoes the wording 28:2 where זָרָם appears as part of the storm imagery depicting the distress threatened against Ephraim. It also echoes the language of 28:17 where Judah’s false “refuge” is threatened with inundation (וְסִתֵּר מַיִם יִשְׁטְפוּ). The use of צֹל hearkens back to 30:2 and its condemnation of Judah’s determination to seek refuge in the מְצֻרִים צֹל. While מְחַבֵּא “hiding place” does not occur elsewhere in 28–33 (indeed, it

²⁵ Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 51.

²⁶ *BHRG*, §44.3 classifies הֵן as a discourse marker. The point is made that the classification of הֵן and הִנֵּה has been problematic for grammarians. It is neither properly an adverb nor an interjection. Rather “it points to the content of the clause that follows it... In this way that content acquires a particular prominence within a larger context. In this respect הִנֵּה has the same function as focus particles.”

appears to be a *hapax legomenon*), it also reflects the variety of terms employed for places of refuge in this section. However, a crucial difference in the use of these terms here and their earlier usages in 28–33 lies in the contrast they present. In contrast to Isaiah’s earlier condemnations of Judah’s leaders’ quest for false security, the new king promised in 32:1, along with his ministers, will provide the true security of just rulers. Instead of bringing disappointment to the weary souls seeking refuge, they will refresh the weary (עִיִּפָּה, cf. 28:12) like channels of water (פְּלִיגֵי־מַיִם) in a dry land (cf. 30:25).

Another effect of the advent righteous rule will be the reversal of judicial hardening which had led to the disastrous policies in the first place (cf. ch. 6:10). Here Isaiah lists the same three organs of perception found in the call narrative, “eyes” (עֵינַי), “ears” (אָזְנַי), “heart” (לֵבָב), and adds to them an organ of speech, “the tongue of stammerers” (לְשׁוֹן עֲלָגִים). This last links up with the pronouncement of judgment in ch. 28:11. The promise that these “stammerers” will “make haste (תִּמְהָר) to speak clearly” appears to identify them with those who believe and therefore do not “make haste” (ch. 28:16). Apparently those who at one time were impatient for God to make his plan manifest (ch. 5:19), and who therefore hastily cobbled together plans of their own, will at this future time think and speak more clearly. Finally, in consequence of this restoration of clarity, fools and knaves will no longer be treated with respect or offered deference (v. 5).

Section 2, Subsection B: (Verses 6–8). Verse 6 takes the mention of fools in v. 5 as an occasion to expound on the nature of fools and their behavior. The beginning of this subsection is marked by an explicative כִּי. This subsection explains why the fool will no longer be regarded as נָבִיד or “noble.” Namely, because of his speech which misrepresents YHWH and is calculated to deprive the people of true nourishment (v. 6), and his plans which are wicked and false and designed to deprive the poor of justice (v. 7). By way of contrast, the truly noble man plans noble

things and takes his stand thereupon (v. 8). The beginning and end of the unit are marked by matching descriptions of the fool and the noble (v. 6a, 8a).

נָבֵל נִבְלָה יִדְבֵר NP₁, NP₂, V

וְנָדִיב נְדִיבוֹת יַעֲזֵז NP₁, NP₂, V

Section 3, Subsection A: (Verses 9–14). A new unit is indicated by the introduction of a vocative form of address, a change of addressee, and a switch to imperative verb forms. Verses 9–11 contain a total of 8 imperative verbs (3 in v. 9 and 4 in v. 11). The first 3 imperatives (קִמְנָה, שְׁמַעְנָה, הִאֲזַנְהָ) comprise a summon to attention (v. 9), the last 5 imperatives (פְּשֻׁטָה, רְגַנָּה, חֲרְדוּ, עֲרָה, תִּגְוְרָה) call the hearers to acts of mourning (v. 11). The addressees of these imperatives are the women of Jerusalem, described in v. 9 as “carefree women” (נָשִׁים שְׂאֲנָנוֹת) and “confident daughters (בָּנוֹת בְּטַחוֹת). Blenkinsopp observes that the summons to lament is addressed to both “married (*nāšîm*) and unmarried women (*bānôṭ*)”²⁷ in which case it may be intended to function as a merism including all women of whatever age or status.

The call to mourning in v. 11 is followed by a series of 6 instances of the preposition על. In vv. 11d and 12a על carries its basic spatial meaning “upon”—“upon loins,” “upon breasts.” In v. 12 c–d the metaphorical usage of על is in evidence as it is used to designate an “object of interest,”²⁸ in this case the “delightful fields” (v. 12b) and the “fruitful vine” (v. 12c). Then, in v. 13 על returns to its spatial usage—“upon the soil of my people” (v. 13b) and “upon every joyous house” (v. 13). The result is an ABA', or 2+2+2 pattern. The repetition of על at or near the beginning of each clause in this series constitutes an example of the rhetorical technique known as “anaphora.” When the words תַּעֲלֶה (v. 13b) and עֲלִיזָה (v. 13d) are taken into account the

²⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 433.

²⁸ *IBHS*, §11.2.13c.

consonantal combination על appears 8 successive cola, thus contributing to the alliterative effect which gives cohesion to vv. 11–13. Verse 14 gives the reason why thorns and briars have overtaken the land, namely because the palace and bustling city have been deserted/forsaken. The unit ends with a description of the “hill and watchtower” (presumably prominent locations within Jerusalem which is, most likely, the “exultant city” mentioned in v.13b), which have also reverted to wilderness.

Section 3, Subsection B: (Verses 15–20). This subsection marks a departure from the call to mourning in vv. 9–14. The period of mourning will be brought to an end by the effusion of the Spirit from on high (v. 15a). Two transformations will accompany the outpouring of the Spirit. Both are announced by יהיה. The first transformation involves a new regime of justice (משפט) and righteousness (צדקה). The infusion of justice into human society is here depicted metaphorically as a transformation in nature, a favorite device of Isaiah (cf. 29:17–24: 30:23–26). The second transformation follows from the first—namely a new reign of *šālôm* (v. 17a; v. 18a). The Hebrew noun שלום “designates well-being, prosperity or bodily health.”²⁹ Politically, it indicates a state of affairs which obtains when rulers reign in accordance with principles of justice and righteousness (cf. 9:6). Thus, in this pericope שלום is linked to the צדקה which will characterize the reign of the king promised in 32:1.

The unit concludes with a summary blessing (v. 20) which also echoes the language of 30:18–26, specifically, v. 18 with its blessing on those who “wait” YHWH, vv. 23–24 which promise abundant fodder for Judah’s cattle, and v. 25 which foresees a time when streams of water will flow down from Judah’s mountains.,

Sections:

²⁹ Philip J. Nel, “שלום,” *NIDOTTE* 4:131.

Section 1: (Verses 31:1–9). The first major section of this speech begins with the particle הוֹי and ends with the oracular formula יְהוָה נֹאֵם (v. 9). It is divided into 2 subsections, vv. 1–3 which emphasizes the fact that Judah’s alliance with Egypt will not spare it from the coming time of trial, and vv. 4–9 which shows that, in the coming distress, YHWH will play the role of both attacker and deliverer. The call to repentance in v. 6 seems awkward at first, but on closer inspection, the juxtaposition of the threat of divine discipline, coupled with the hope of divine healing, conditioned upon repentance, has parallels elsewhere in the prophets. This combination of ideas is found for instance in Hosea 6:1 where the prophet exhorts, “Come, let us return (נָשׁוּבָה), cf. v. 6 (שׁוּבוּ) to YHWH, for he has torn (טָרַף, cf. 31: 4 (טָרַפוּ)), and he will heal us, he has smitten, and he will bind us up.” The rhetorical unity of this section is also supported by strong verbal connections which link its sections together. Barthel observes, “Terminologische Klammern verbinden v. 4 mit v. 1 (יָרַד), v. 8a (לֹא-אָדָם, לֹא-אִישׁ) mit v. 3a (אָדָם וְלֹא-אֵל) und 3b (נָפַל), v. 9a mit v. 4 (חָתָה) und v. 9b mit v. 4.5 (Zion/Jerusalem).”³⁰

Section 2: (Verses 32:1–8). The beginning of this section is marked by הִנֵּן. Its ending is indicated by a break in syntax between vv. 8 and 9. The focus of this section is a restoration of wise leadership in to Judah. It has two subsections (vv. 1–5; 6–8) which are equivalent in length (12 cola each) and joined to one another by כִּי (v. 6a). The first section announces the replacement of Judah’s current feckless leaders with a coming king and his ministers who will usher in an era of righteous (לְצַדִּיק) and just (לְמִשְׁפָּט) rule. The promise of transformation constitutes a reversal of the judicial hardening pronounced upon Judah in Isa. 6:10. The “eyes” that were “smeared over” will be opened, the ears that were “made heavy” will hear, and the heart that was made insensate will understand knowledge. This transformation answers to the

³⁰ Barthels, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte*, 432.

condition of spiritual blindness which typifies Judah's leaders in the first half of chs. 28–33 (28:7–11; 29:9–14; 30:8–11).

The second subsection contains a description of the fool and his character. According to this description the fool uses speech to accomplish his impious goals. The reader is informed that the fool “speaks foolishness” (v. 6a), “speaks error concerning YHWH” (v. 6d), and ruins “the needy with false words” (v. 7c). The fool “devises iniquity” (v. 6b), “acts profanely” (v. 6c), causes the hungry and thirsty to lack sustenance (v. 6e, f), and “plans stratagems” (v. 7b). The unit ends with a contrasting statement concerning the “noble man” (נָדִיב) and his character. Presumably the “noble man” represents the godly and wise leaders mentioned in v. 1 as opposed to Judah's currently foolish leaders.

Section 3 (Verses 32:9–20). The last section of this speech is divided into 2 subsections. It anticipates a time of mourning which serves as a prelude to a new age of transformation. Subsection A (vv. 9–14) is a call to mourn. Verses 9–12a are dominated by imperative verbs (a total of 7). In verses 12b–14 there is a switch to indicative verbs which focus upon the reason for mourning. Verses 12b–13 contain a series of prepositional phrases governed by a main clause (13b, תַּעֲלֶה קִוִּץ שָׁמַיר). The three bicola in this unit are arranged in an ABA' pattern with the “land of my people” as the middle member. Verse 14 gives the reason why thorns and briars have overtaken the land, namely because the palace and bustling city have been deserted/forsaken. The unit ends with a description of the “hill and watchtower” (presumably prominent locations within Jerusalem which is, most likely, the “exultant city” mentioned in 13b), which have also reverted to wilderness.

Subsection B (32:15–20) begins with a temporal clause which marks the *terminus ad quem* of the mourning described in the preceding section. It describes the complete reversal of the

circumstances which obtained in verses 1–14. Each of the following verses begins with a *waw* consecutive perfect verb. The section ends with a summary macarism.

Thought Progression

In our view chs. 31 and 32, rather than presenting separate individual speeches, constitute a single speech within Isaiah 28–33. Others who support this view include Delitzsch, Watts, Beuken, Motyer and Goldingay. Delitzsch groups chs. 31 and 32:1–8 into a single unit which he titles “The Fourth Woe—The False Help; The Despised One Pitied; And the New Era.” Chapter 32:9–20 he calls an “Appendix to the Fourth Woe” and compares these verses to the agricultural parable in 28:23–29.³¹ Watts also combines chs. 31–32 into one unit which he entitles, “Scene 4: Disaster from False Faith in Egypt.”³² He then divides this “scene” into three episodes, 31:1–9, “Woe to Those Who Depend on Egypt!” 32:1–8, “Suppose a King,” and 32:9–20, “Palace Forsaken-Spirit Poured Out.”³³ Beuken sees 32:1–8 as a 7th century expansion of ch. 31 and thus groups these units together. He sees a “strong caesura” between 32:1–8 and 9–14 which he treats separately and regards as an “epilogue to the five woe cries” of chapters 28–31.³⁴

Motyer also treats 31–32 as a single speech with a chiastic structure. He titles it, “deliverance and renewal” and divides it into three main sections: 31:1–5 (Prologue: Disaster and Deliverance), 31:6–32:18 (The Work of Transformation) and 32:19–20 (Epilogue: Humiliation and Blessedness).³⁵ Finally, Goldingay argues for the unity of chs. 31–32 based upon the fact that “chapter 31 is much shorter than the units on either side, chapter 32 has no opening ‘Oh’ like the rest of chapters 28–33, and taken together chapters 31–32 better fit into

³¹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 50.

³² Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 406.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 193, 222.

³⁵ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 253–254.

the pattern whereby chapters 28–33 give increasing prominence to reassuring promise on the other side of threat.”³⁶

The boundaries of this speech are marked by the הוִי oracles in 31:1 and 33:1, and also by the concluding macarism in 32:20. We have identified two major “panels” in this speech, Panel I = 31:1–9; Panel II = 32:1–20.³⁷ Panel I is introduced by הוִי, while Panel II is introduced by הִן. Panel I contains one section (31:1–9), while Panel II contains two sections (32:1–8; 9–20). Section 1 is introduced by הוִי, while Section 2 is introduced by הִן. Section 3 begins with a series of imperative verbs.

Section 1 is divided into two subsections. Subsection A (31:1–3) includes the woe oracle proper, while Subsection B (31:4–9) is demarcated by the introductory messenger formula in v. 4a and the concluding oracular formula in v. 9c. As noted above, a call to repentance (v. 6a–b) is positioned in the very center of vv. 4–9. The central location of this mp imperative verb may indicate that the call to repentance is the main focus of this subsection.

Section 2 (32:1–8) announces the bestowal of wise leadership to replace the current leaders of Judah who are foolish, and blind to YHWH’s plan. Section 3 (32:9–20) unfolds in two parts. Section 3:A (vv. 9–14) is marked by imperative verbs calling upon the women of Zion to mourn over the coming devastation of the land, while 3:B (vv. 15–20) announces the reversal of this situation which will commence with the outpouring of the Spirit from on high. That these two pericopes form a single section is indicated by the fact that verse 15 begins mid-sentence. It is a subordinate, temporal clause marking the end of the conditions described in verses 9–14. The two subsections are also linked verbally by the repetition of עַר in vv. 14d (עַר-עוֹלָם) and 15a

³⁶ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 176.

³⁷ Here we adopt the term “panel” as an arbitrary designation for units higher than the “section.” See ch. 3 n70.

(עֲרִיעָרָה עֲלֵינוּ). The parallel phrasing in these two cola appears to be designed to highlight the role which the coming effusion of the divine spirit will play in reversing the mourning described in vv. 9–14. Also, the use of the preposition עַל (עֲלֵינוּ) in v. 15a links it to the series of occurrences of this word in vv. 11–13. It would appear then, that the mourning described by Isaiah in vv. 9–14 is merely a prelude to the outpouring of the spirit in vv. 15–20 and the renewal which will accompany it.

The speech concludes with a macarism which serves as a kind of coda. It pronounces a blessing on those who sow seed by the water, and who lead out the ox and the donkey to graze (cf. 30:23–25). The interjection אֲשֶׁרִי (v. 20a) may serve as a counterpoint to הִי (v. 1a), thus bringing the argument of the speech full circle from warning to benediction. Subsection 2:A (32:1–5) is the central unit of the speech with 333 syllables preceding it and 355 syllables following. This unit contains the central focus of the chapter. Replacement of foolish leaders (cf. 31:1–3) with wise/just leadership in 32:1–5 is both the outcome of the fiery trial and miraculous deliverance depicted in ch. 31, and the precursor and harbinger of the time of blessing and restoration described in 32:15–20.

The movement of this speech from threat to promise mirrors the movement of ch. 29. We note a strong parallel between chs. 29 and 31–32.

Distress and Deliverance	29:1–8	31:1–9
Spiritual Assessment of Leaders	29:9–14	32:1–8
Spiritual Renewal and Restoration	29:15–24	32:9–20

In addition to parallel movement we note also several motifs which the two speeches have in common. Both speak of the Yahweh's "furnace" (29:1–2; 31:9). In both, Zion is the scene of warfare. In 29:7 the nations fight (*ṣābāʾ*) against Ariel, and in 31:4 Yahweh comes down to fight (*ṣābāʾ*) the nations on Zion. Both sections emphasize the superiority of God's wisdom over

human planning (29:15; 31:2). Both speak of the effusion of *rûah* “spirit.” In 29:10 we are told that a “spirit of deep sleep” has been “poured out” on Judah’s leaders, while in 32:15 it is announced that the Spirit (of God) will be “poured out” from on high in the age of renewal.³⁶ Finally, chapter 29 underscores the blind eyes and distant hearts of Judah’s leaders (vv. 10, 13), while in ch. 32 we read of the seeing eyes and understanding hearts in the leader(s) promised for the future (32:3–4). Both chapters 29 and 31–32 contain three sections

Based on the analysis above we suggest the following structure for chs. 31–32.

Panel I	Section 1:	Zion’s True Savior Revealed—31:1–9 (הוֹי)
	Subsection A:	Woe to Those Who Go down to Egypt—vv. 1–3
	Subsection B:	Zion Saved by YHWH’s Intervention—vv. 4–8
Panel II	Section 2:	New Leaders, True Shelter—32:1–8 (הָן)
	Subsection A:	Righteous and Just Rule established—vv. 1–5
	Subsection B:	Noble and Ignoble Rulers Contrasted—vv. 6–8
	Section 3:	Renewal after Mourning—32:14–20 (קִמְנָה)
	Subsection A:	Zion’s Women Called to Mourning—vv. 9–14
	Subsection B:	Mourning Ended by the Effusion of the Spirit—vv. 15–20

Thematic Coherence

An examination of the themes developed in chs. 31–32 reveals the connection and continuity within the message of chs. 28–30. First, 31:1–3 expresses an idea which we have already encountered in chs. 28–30—Isaiah’s condemnation of Judah’s alliance in Egypt. In chs. 28–29, the identity of the Judah’s coconspirator is obscured. But in ch. 30 the veil is pulled aside and the identity of the covenant partner is stated plainly—(30:2, לְרֵדֹת מִצְרַיִם). Chapter 31 reiterates this in language that is very similar to that of ch. 30 (31:1c, הַיִּרְדִּים מִצְרַיִם). Not only does ch. 31 follow ch. 30 in identifying Egypt by name, it also echoes its emphasis on Egypt as a

³⁶ These two verses are the only places in Isaiah which employ the image of spirit being “poured out.” Usually when רוּחַ is said to be “poured out” (Joel 3:1 = 2:28; Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10), the verb used is נָסַף. In 32:15, however, the verb is עָרַה (ni.). Most likely this variation is used for the sake of alliteration with יָעַר, i.e. לְיַעַר עָרַה + יַעְרָה (32:15).

helper (31:1a, 3d, לְעֵזְרָה; 30:5c, 7a, לֹא לְעֵזֶר), relying on horses (31:1b–d, עַל-סוּסִים יִשְׁעֶנּוּ; 30:16b, עַל-סוּסִים נָנוּס), and forming an alliance without seeking YHWH’s will (31:1f, לֹא דָרָשׁוּ; 30:2, שְׂאֵלֹוּ וּפִי לֹא).

Judah’s feckless foreign policy is closely associated the Isaiah’s denunciation of the spiritual blindness and stubbornness of the Judah’s leaders. The spiritual cluelessness of the leaders is highlighted in 31:2a where Isaiah reminds his audience that YHWH “too is wise,” thus insinuating that they have either forgotten this or never really believed it. The accusation that the leaders consider themselves wiser than God appears first in 28:9–13 where the prophets and priests lampoon God’s messenger; and in 28:22 where Jerusalem’s rulers are warned not to mock lest their bonds be made stronger. It also appears in 29:16 where Isaiah compares the rulers to clay which thinks the potter ignorant and regards itself as wiser than him. It is also found in 30:11 where the rulers exhort the prophets to “cause to cease from before us the Holy One of Israel.” As always, the rejection of divine guidance results, not only in the withholding of divine assistance, but in making God your adversary. Thus Isaiah intones that God will “rise up against the house of evil doers” (וְקָם עַל-בֵּית מְרַעִים), causing both the helper and the one helped to “stumble” (כָּשַׁל) and “fall” (נָפַל), and thus be brought to an end (cf. 28:13).

Chapters 31–32 also add further detail to Isaiah’s announcement of the spiritual conversion which will overtake the people of Judah in the aftermath of their trial and deliverance. This trial and deliverance is depicted graphically in vv. 4–5 where YHWH descends upon Mt. Zion to fight of its attackers like a lion jealously guarding its prey and like birds hovering over their nests to protect their young from predators. Verse six exhorts YHWH’s rebellious people (31:6a–b, הַעֲמִיקוּ הַעֲמִיקוּ; 30:1a, סוּרְרִים) to return to him; thus recalling the words of 30:15, “in returning and rest will be your strength” (31:6a, שׁוּבוּ; 30:15c, שׁוּבָה). Verse 7 echoes the words of

30:22 to the effect that Judah's conversion will result in casting aside its idols (31:7a–c, אֱלִילִי; פְּסִילֵי כֶסֶף אֲפֹדֹת מִסֶּכֶת זָהָבָה, כֶּסֶף וְאֱלִילֵי זָהָב; 30:22).

A further result of returning to YHWH will be the destruction of the Assyrian oppressor. This in itself is one of the major themes of chs. 28–33. This was hinted at in 28:1–8 where the identity of Judah's human oppressor was still veiled. But in 30:27–33 Assyria is clearly identified and its destruction declared. Thus chs. 30 and 31 are the only two sections of chs. 28–33 in which both Judah's helper (Egypt) and attacker are identified by name (31:8a–b, וְנַפְלֵ אַשּׁוּר; 30:31b, אַשּׁוּר בְּשִׁבְטֵ יָכָה). Also in both of these chapters the fire motif is present in connection with Assyria's defeat (31:9c–d, וְתִגּוּר לֹא בִירוּשָׁלַם; 30:33, בָּהּ בַּעֲרָה בָּהּ, נִשְׁמַת יְהוָה פְּנַחֵל גְּפָרִית בַּעֲרָה בָּהּ).

Section two (32:1–8) announces the coming of a king and his officials who will replace the foolish leaders currently guiding Judah. Isaiah foresees a day when the spiritually dull leaders who oppose YHWH with their faithless policies are replaced by leaders who “reign in righteousness” and “rule with justice” (32:1). Unlike Egypt, whose help is unreliable, these godly rulers provide true security and refuge for the people (32:2d, כִּצִּיל סֶלַע־כֶּבֶד; 30:2d, 3b, בָּצֵל; 32:2c, כְּפִלְגֵי־מַיִם בְּצִיּוֹן; 30:25c, יִבְלִי־מַיִם). In contrast to the prophets and seers in 29:10 whose eyes were covered, and those in 30:10 who were forbidden to see and urged to prophesy delusions, these leaders will have open eyes and hearing ears. Like the inhabitants of Zion in 30:20 their “eyes will see their teacher” and he will guide them on the right path.

Finally, the third section of this speech (32:9–20) also reflects the theme of transformation after a period of trial. We have already encountered this theme in 29:17–24 and 30:23–26. Here we encounter once again the interchangeability of cultivated land and scrubland (v. 15c, וְכָרְמָל; 29:17c, וְהַכְרָמָל לִיעָר יִחְשַׁב; 29:17c, לִיעָר יִחְשַׁב). The declaration in v. 17b that “the deed (מַעֲשֵׂה) of

righteousness,” and “the work (וְעִבְרֹתַי) of righteousness” will be “quietness and trust forever” echoes Isaiah’s earlier offer of salvation through trusting and resting (32:17b, הַשְׁקֵט וְבִטָּח; 30:15d, הַשְׁקֵט וּבִבְטָחָה, cf. 28:12). The use of the terms מַעֲשֵׂה and עִבְרָה in this context of salvation indicate a reversal of the threat issued by YHWH in 28:21 where he spoke of his “strange deed” (זֶר מַעֲשֵׂהוֹ) and of his “alien work” (נִכְרִיָּה עִבְרָתוֹ). The same one who attacked them in the past now comforts and protects them. The ideal future which Isaiah foresees for Zion is also reflected in echoes from the second half of ch. 30 which indicate abundant water and abundant crops (32:20a, זֶרְעִי עַל-כָּל-יָמִים; 30:23a, מָטַר זֶרְעֶךָ, וְנָתַן מִטָּר זֶרְעֶךָ) as well as abundant provender for domestic animals (32:20b, וְהִחְמוֹר וְהַגֵּל-הַשּׂוֹר וְהַחֲמוֹר; 30:24a, וְהָאֵלֶפִים וְהָעִירִים). And the blessing pronounced in v. 20 hints that God’s people have finally learned the to wait on him as they were encouraged to do in 30:18 (32:20a, אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם; 30:18d, אֲשֶׁרֵי כָּל). The preceding survey show that chs. 31–32 develop several key themes and motifs which appear in chs. 28–30. This leaves our analysis of ch.33 to which we turn in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

ISAIAH 33

Text and Translation

Section 1: vv. 1–6

Vs	Text	S	A	Translation
1a	הוּי שׁוֹרֵד וְאַתָּה לֹא שָׂרֹד	9	4	Alas, destroyer and you are not destroyed,
1b	וּבֹגֵד וְלֹא־בָגְדוּ בּוֹ	9	3	Betrayer and they have not betrayed him.
1c	כִּתְּמָךְ שׁוֹרֵד תּוֹשֵׁד	8	3	When you have finished destroying you will be destroyed.
1d	כִּנְלִתְךָ לְבָגֵד יִבְגְּדוּ־בְךָ:	10	3	When you have ceased betraying they will betray you.*
2a	יְהוָה חַנּוּן לָךְ קוֹיֵנוּ	10	4	O YHWH be gracious to us, we wait for you.
2b	הִיָּה זִרְעָם לְבִקְרִים	9	3	Be our strength every morning.*
2c	אִף־יִשׁוּעֵתָנוּ בְּעַת צָרָה:	10	3	Indeed our salvation in time of distress.
3a	מִקוֹל הַמּוֹן נָדְדוּ עַמּוּם	9	4	At a sound of tumult peoples fled,
3b	מִרוֹמְמֹתֶיךָ נִפְצוּ גוֹיִם:	11	3	At your exaltation nations scattered.*
4a	וְאַסְףָּ שְׁלֵלְכֶם אֲסָף הַחֲסִיל	10	4	And your plunder was gathered, like locusts gather,

4b	כַּמְשַׁק גְּבוּיִם שׁוֹקֵק בּוֹ:	8	4	Like grasshoppers swarm, swarming on it.*
5a	נִשְׁבַּח יְהוָה כִּי שָׁכַן מְרוֹם	9	4	YHWH is exalted for he dwells on high,*
5b	מִלֵּא צִיּוֹן מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה:	10	4	He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.
6a	וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עֲתִיד	9	3	He will be the steadfastness of your time,*
6b	חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעַת חֲכָמַת וְדַעַת	8	4	A wealth of help, of wisdom and knowledge.
6c	יִרְאַת יְהוָה הִיא אוֹצְרוֹ:	8	4	The fear of YHWH, this will be his treasure.

Totals: cola = 16 147 57

Section 2: vv. 7–13

7a	הֵן אֲרָאֵלֶם צָעֲקוּ חֲצָה	9	4	Behold, I see them, they cry out in the street,*
7b	מִלְאֲכֵי שְׁלוֹם מַר וּבְכִיּוֹן:	9	4	Envoys of peace weep bitterly.
8a	נִשְׁמוּ מִסְלֹת	6	2	Highways are deserted,
8b	שָׁבַת עֶבֶר אֲרַח	5	3	The traveler has abandoned the road.
8c	הִפְרַ בְּרִית	4	2	He has broken covenant,
8d	מֵאֵס עֲרִים	4	2	He has rejected witnesses,*
8e	לֹא חָשַׁב אָנוּשׁ	5	3	He has not regarded mankind.
9a	אֲבַל אִמְלָלָה אֶרֶץ	6	3	The land has dried up, it has wilted,*
9b	הַחֲפִיר לְבָנוֹן קָמַל	7	3	Lebanon is abashed, it has moldered.

9c	הָיָה הַשָּׂרֹן כְּעַרְבָּה	9	3	Sharon is like the Arabah
9d	וְנָעַר בָּשָׁן וְכַרְמֵל:	8	3	Bashan and Carmel shake off their foliage.
10a	עַתָּה אֶקוּם יְהוָה יֹאמֶר יְהוָה	8	4	Now I will arise says YHWH,
10b	עַתָּה אֲרוּמָם עַתָּה אֲנִישָׂא:	10	4	Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.
11a	תִּהְרֶוּ חֶשֶׁשׁ תִּלְדוּ קֶשׁ	8	4	You conceive hay, you give birth to straw,
11b	רוּחְכֶם אֵשׁ תֹּאכְלֶכֶם:	6	3	Your breath is a fire, it devours you.*
12a	וְהָיוּ עַמִּים מְשַׂרְפוֹת שִׂיד	9	4	And the nations shall become burnings of lime,
12b	קוֹצִים כְּסוּחִים בְּאֵשׁ יִצְתּוּ:	10	4	Thorn bushes cut down, they shall burn in the fire.
13a	שְׁמַעוּ רְחוֹקִים אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי	10	4	Hear, O distant ones, what I have done,*
13b	וְדַעוּ קְרוֹבִים גְּבַרְתִּי	10	3	And know, O near ones, my might.
Totals:	cola = 16	143	62	

Section 3: vv. 14–16

14a	פָּחַדוּ בְּצִיּוֹן חַטָּאִים	9	3	Sinners in Zion tremble,
14b	אֲחֻזָּה רָעָה תִּנְפִים	9	3	Quaking seizes the godless.
14c	מִי יִגּוּר לָנוּ אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה	9	4	“Who shall sojourn for us with devouring fire,”
14d	מִי־יִגּוּר לָנוּ מוֹקְדֵי עוֹלָם:	10	4	“Who shall sojourn for us with eternal flames?”

15a	הִלֵּךְ צְדָקוֹת וְדָבַר מִיִּשְׁרָיִם	11	4	He who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly,
15b	מֵאֵס בְּבָצֵעַ מֵעֲשָׂקוֹת	7	3	He who rejects gain from extortion.
15c	נִעַר כַּפָּיו מִתְּמוֹךְ בְּשֹׁחַד	9	4	He who prevents his hand from receiving bribes,
15d	אָטַם אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמֹעַ דָּמִים	9	4	He who prevents his ears from hearing bloody plots,
15e	וְעָצַם עֵינָיו מִרְאוֹת בָּרָע:	10	4	He who prevents his eyes from seeing evil.
16a	הוּא מְרוֹמִים יִשְׁכֵּן	6	3	This one shall dwell on high,
16b	מְצֻדוֹת סֻלְעִים מְשֻׁנְבוּ	9	3	Stone strongholds will be his fortress.
16c	לְחֻמוֹ נִתֵּן	4	2	His food will be provided,
16d	מִיָּמָיו נֶאֱמָנִים:	5	2	His water assured.

Totals: cola = 13 107 43

Section 3: vv. 17–24

17a	מֶלֶךְ בְּיָפְיוֹ תַחְזִינָה עֵינֶיךָ	10	4	A King in his beauty your eyes shall behold,
17b	תִּרְאִינָה אֶרֶץ מְרֻחָקִים:	7	3	They shall view a far distant land.*
18a	לְבָבְךָ יַהַגֵּה אִימָה	7	3	Your mind will ponder something awesome,
18b	אֵיךְ סֹפֵר אֵיךְ שֹׁקֵל	8	4	Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs?
18c	אֵיךְ סֹפֵר אֶת־הַמִּגְדָּלִים:	9	4	Where is he who counts the towers?

19a	את־עם נועז לא תִּרְאֶה	7	4	The arrogant people you will not see,*
19b	עם עמקי שְׂפָה מְשֻׁמֵּעַ	8	4	The people of a language too difficult to understand,
19c	גִּלְעָג לְשׁוֹן אֵין בִּינָה:	7	4	A foreign tongue, there is no comprehending.
20a	חֲזֵה צִיּוֹן קְרִית מוֹעֲדֵינוּ	9	4	See Zion, the city of our appointed feasts,*
20b	עֵינֶיךָ תִּרְאֶינָה יְרוּשָׁלַם	10	3	Let your eyes behold Jerusalem.
20c	נִוָּה שְׂאֵנָן אֶהְל בְּלִי־צֵעַן	8	4	A secure habitation, a tent that will not move,
20d	בְּלִי־סַע יִתְדֹתָיו לְנֶצַח	9	4	Its pegs will not be pulled up forever,
20e	וְכָל־חֲבָלָיו בְּלִי־יִתְקַוּ:	10	4	And none of its ropes will be severed.
21a	כִּי אִם־שָׁם אֲדִיר יִהְיֶה לָנוּ	9	4	But rather there YHWH will be mighty for us,
21b	מְקוֹם־נְהָרִים	5	2	A place of rivers—
21c	יְאָרִים רְחֵבֵי יָדַיִם	7	3	Canals broad of width.
21d	בְּלִי־תֵלֶךְ בּוֹ אֲנִי־שֵׁיט	7	3	No warship will sail on it,*
21e	וְצִי אֲדִיר לֹא יַעֲבֹרֵנוּ:	9	4	No stately vessel will ply it.
22a	כִּי יִהְיֶה שֹׁפֵטֵנוּ	7	2	For YHWH is our ruler,
22b	יִהְיֶה מְחַקְקֵנוּ	7	2	YHWH is our lawgiver.

22c	יְהוָה מֶלֶכְנוּ	5	2	YHWH is our king,
22d	הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ:	5	2	He shall save us.
23a	נִמְשׂוּ חֲבָלֶיךָ	6	2	Your cords shall be loosed,
23b	בְּלִי-חֲזָקוֹ כִּן-תִּתְרַנְּם	8	2	They will not then support their staff.
23c	בְּלִי-פָרְשׁוֹ נִס	5	2	They will not display a banner.*
23d	אִז חֶלֶק עַד-שָׁלַל מְרֵבָה	8	4	Then will be divided abundant spoil,
23e	פְּסָחִים בְּזוּז בּוּז:	6	3	Lame ones will take plunder.
24a	וּבִלִי-אֶמַר שָׁכֵן חֲלִיתִי	9	3	And no inhabitant will say, “I am sick.”
24b	הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּהּ נִשְׂא עוֹן:	10	5	The people which dwells in her will be forgiven iniquity.
Totals:	cola = 29	222	94	
Totals Speech	cola = 77	619	256	

Translation Notes

v. 1d $\text{בְּנִלְתֶּךָ לְבָגֵד וּבְגֵדוֹ-בְּךָ}$: “When you have ceased betraying they will betray you.” The form בְּנִלְתֶּךָ is an *hapax legomenon* in the Old Testament. 1QIs^a reads כְּכִלְוִתְךָ “when you have ceased,” from the root כלה . This reading commends itself since it provides perfect parallelism with the כְּהִתְמַדְךָ (1c), and, as Irwin notes, “The MT form *kann³lōtkā* remains unexplained.”¹

v. 2b $\text{הִיְהִי זִרְעָם לְבִקְרִים}$ —“Be our strength every morning.” Hummel suggests that the suffix of זִרְעָם should be read as enclitic *mem*, זרע-ם. He cites Driver to the effect that, “in the *parallelismus membrorum* of ancient Hebrew poetry (like that of Ugaritic), one colon will often

¹ Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33*, 138.

have a pronominal suffix and the other will not, and earlier emendations to the contrary were usually arbitrary.”²

לְבַקְרִים has the “article of totality.” *J–M* notes, “When a plural noun is thought to comprise all the individuals of the class or species, it takes the article.”³

v. 3b מְרוֹמְמֶתֶךָ נִפְצוּ גוֹיִם:—“At your exaltation nations scattered.” IQIsa^a has מְרוֹמְמֶתֶךָ “at your roaring/silence” for MT מְרוֹמְמֶתֶךָ. It would appear that graphic confusion accounts for this variant. Scholars are divided on the merits of each reading. On the one hand, מְרוֹמְמֶתֶךָ “at your roaring” provides a suitable parallel for מְקוֹל הַמּוֹן “the sound of roaring” in 3a. Also, the verb רוֹמֵם occurs elsewhere in conjunction with מְקוֹל.⁴ On the other hand, as Beuken notes, מְרוֹמְמֶתֶךָ is a *lectio facilior* which may result from an attempt of IQIsa^a to resolve difficulties raised by the presence of a *hapax legomenon*.⁵ The UBS Old Testament Text Project Committee divided evenly between the DSS and MT readings, with one half of the committee accepting the DSS reading with a C evaluation, and the other half accepting the MT reading with a C evaluation. We lean toward the MT reading as it makes tolerable sense and is the more difficult reading.

v. 4a וְאַסְףָּ שְׁלֵלְכֶם אֲסָף הַחֲסִיל—“And your plunder was gathered, like locusts gather.” Since it is difficult to identify an antecedent, many scholars regard the 2mp suffix in this line as the result of a textual error. *BHS* emends שְׁלֵלְכֶם “your plunder” to read כְּמוֹ שֵׁלֵל, indicating that the MT reading is the result of improper word division. It cites three versions in support of this (Targum, Syriac and Vulgate). However, while the Targum does appear to support such a reading (כְּמוֹ), the support of the Vulgate is ambiguous. For though the Vulgate does read *sicut*

² Hummel, “Enclitic *Mem*,” 95.

³ *J–M* §137i.; cf. *IBHS*, 245.

⁴ J. Lust, “A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?” *VT* 25 (1975): 110–115.

⁵ Beuken, 241.

colligitur brucus in this line, it also shows evidence of the presence of the 2mp pronoun in its exemplar with the words *spolia vestra*. One should also note that the oldest and most important sources, LXX (τὰ σκῦλα ὑμῶν) and IQIsa^a, support MT at this point.

v. 5a כִּי שָׁכַן בְּרָמָה—“for he dwells on high.” “The *personal pronoun* which would be expected as the subject of a participial clause is frequently omitted, or at least ...the pronoun of the 3rd pers. הוּא.”⁶

v. 6a וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עֲתִידָךְ—“He will be the steadfastness of your time.” A plethora of emendations have been proposed for this line, but none of them carries much conviction.⁷

v. 7a הֵן אֲרֵאֶלֶם צָעֲקוּ חֲצָה—“Behold, I see them, they cry out in the street.” אֲרֵאֶלֶם is difficult to make sense of in this context. Translations include, “Arielites” (*JPSV*), “people of Ariel,” (Wildberger, Fohrer, Blenkinsopp), “heroes” (Delitzsch, Oswalt), “valiant one” (Watts), “valiant ones” (Young), “brave men” (Childs), “warriors” (Kaiser), “messengers”(Qimhi, Ibn Ezra, *NET*). LXX apparently derives it from יֵרֵא (ἐν τῷ φόβῳ ὑμῶν). Perhaps the majority of ancient sources derive אֲרֵאֶלֶם from the verb רָאָה “to see.” IQIs^a reads, אֲרֵאֶלֶם. This reading also seems to have been present in the exemplars of several ancient versions, including, Aq, Sym, Th, Syr, Tg and Vlg. Considering its antiquity, along with its geographical distribution, DSS probably offers the most credible reading.

v. 8d מָאֵס עֲדִים—“He has rejected witnesses.” IQIs^a has עֲדִים for עֲדִים. We adopt this reading here.

v. 9a אֶבֶל אֲמַלְלָהּ אֶרֶץ—“The earth has dried up, it has wilted.” The suggestion of Bredenkamp, adopted by Wildberger, of moving the *he* at the end of אֲמַלְלָהּ to אֶרֶץ and treating

⁶ *GKC* §116s.

⁷ See Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 268.

it as the article, makes sense here.⁸ As for the lack of concordance between verb and subject in this line, *J–M* explain, “The verbal form quite often remains uninflected (masc. sing.) when it comes before the noun, especially if separated from it by one or more words.”⁹

v. 11b **רוּחְךָ כַּאֵשׁ תֹאכַלְכֶם**—“Your breath is like a fire; it devours you.” *BHS* recommends reading **רוּחַ כְּמוֹ** or **רוּחִי כְמוֹ** with very little justification. We must agree with Wildberger’s comment, “it is questionable whether one should alter the text merely to arrive at the thoughts one expects to find.”¹⁰

v. 13b **וְדַעוּ קְרוֹבִים גְּבֻרָתִי**—“And know, O near ones, my might.” Instead of the imperative **וְדַעוּ**, 1QIsa^a reads **יִדְעוּ**. *BHS* urges the adoption of this reading on the supposition that it agrees with LXX, **γνώσονται**. However, **י** with **וְדַעוּ** may simply be due to graphic confusion with **ו**, or to dittography from the preceding word **עָשִׂיתִי**. Wildberger is correct to insist “it makes no sense that the summons to hear and to know are not in order as imperatives.”¹¹

v. 17b **תִּרְאֶינָה אֶרֶץ מְרֹחֲקִים**—“They shall view a far distant land.” Literally, “a land of distances.” Here the plural expresses “the idea of a whole composed of innumerable separate parts or points.”¹²

v. 19a **אֲתֵעֶם נוֹעַז לֹא תִרְאֶה**—“The arrogant people you will not see.” The *niphal* participle **נוֹעַז** is a hapax legomenon. *BHS* suggests emending the text to read **לוֹעַז** “foreign, incomprehensible.” This is a tempting suggestion since it creates a parallelism with **נִלְעַג לְשׁוֹן**. However, as Wildberger notes, *BHS*’s reading is itself a hapax legomenon. Additionally, the

⁸ Ibid, 278.

⁹ *J–M*, 150j.

¹⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 279.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *GKC*, §124b.

need for parallelism between 19a and 19b–c is not nearly as urgent when v. 19 is treated as an ABB´ tricolon.

v. 20a מוֹעֲדֵינוּ מִזִּיּוֹן קָרַיִת —“See Zion, the city of our appointed feasts.” 1QIs^a reads מוֹעֲדֵינוּ for מוֹעֲדֵינוּ. Since MT may be explained as the plural written defectively, DSS is probably correct.

v. 21d בּוֹ אֲנִי־שֵׂיט בַּל־תִּלְךָ —“No warship shall sail on it.” Our translation assumes that a אֲנִי־שֵׂיט “ship of oars” is a warship. Though merchant vessels also used oars, warships were heavily dependent upon oar–power to maneuver in close quarters and to gain ramming speed.

v. 23c בַּל־פָּרְשׁוּ נֵס —“They will not display a banner.” We must agree with Beuken here that נֵס never means sail in other contexts and is only translated that way here under the influence of v. 21. The reference is to a flag staff, or military ensign used to rally troops. The ropes of such an ensign will hang loose in those days because their will be no use for them.¹³

Structure

Syllable and Stress Counts

Syllable Counts. According our lineation ch. 33 has 77 cola and 619 syllables. Cola range from 4–11 syllables in length. Mean colon length is 8 syllables (matching the theoretical norm exactly). Median colon length is 9 syllables, and the mode is also 9. There are 25 bicola in ch. 33. The average length of a bicolon in this chapter is 16.44, or 8.22 syllables per colon. This coincides very closely with a norm of 8 syllables per line.

Stress Counts. The total number of stresses in ch. 33 is 256. This number divided by the line total of 77 yields an average of 3.33 syllables per colon, just slightly longer than the theoretical norm. Lines range from 2 to 5 stresses in length. Median line length is 3 stresses,

¹³ Beuken, 243–244.

while the mode is 4 (36 lines). There are 27 lines with 3 stresses. Lines with 3 or 4 stresses comprise 82 percent of the total. The average bicolon has 6.64 stresses, or 3.32 stresses per line. This is slightly longer than the average per line, but not far off of the theoretical norm.

Prose Particle Counts

The prose particle count for ch. 33 is extremely low. According Anderson and Forbes, of the 275 words in this text, 8 are prose particles or 2.909 percent.¹⁴ According to prose-particle theory this places ch. 33 within the category of texts that are almost certainly poetic.

Verses and Subsections

Section 1, Subsection A: (Verse1). Verse 1 begins with a typical woe oracle formula. The particle הַיְיִ accompanied by the participles שׁוֹרֵד and בּוֹגֵד. This woe utterance serves notice to an unnamed oppressor that as soon as his work is complete he will be on the receiving end of the type of treatment he has been meting out. Most scholars believe that the oppressor in view in this verse is none other than Assyria (cf. 10:24–15). This strophe contains two bicola, both of which are 18 syllables in length. These four cola are united by the two roots שׁוֹרֵד and בּוֹגֵד which occur in alternating cola, thus forming an ABA'B' pattern. The forms שׁוֹרֵד / בּוֹגֵד and שׁוֹרֵד / בּוֹגֵד unite the unit with a sense of assonance.

Section 1, Subsection B: (Verses 2–6). Verse 2 opens with an imperative address to YHWH requesting relief from the predations of the oppressor described in v. 1. This is followed by rehearsal of YHWH's past actions on behalf of the community (vv. 3–4) and an expression of confidence in YHWH's faithfulness (vv. 5–6). All three of these elements may be found in the lament or "prayer for help."¹⁵ Verses 5–6 are arranged chiastically.

¹⁴ Andersen and Forbes, "Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible," 174.

¹⁵ James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 21ff.

- A נשָׁגַב יְהוָה כִּי שָׁכַן מְרוֹם
- B מִלֵּא צִיּוֹן מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה:
- C וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עַתִּיד
- B' חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעַת חֲכִמַת וְדַעַת
- A' יִרְאֵת יְהוָה הִיא אוֹצְרוֹ:

Note that the middle member of this chiasm (וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עַתִּיד) answers to the request in the middle line of the opening tricolon—הִנֵּה זָרְעָם לְבִקְרִים (v. 2b). Thus the facts that YHWH “is exalted” and “dwells on high” (i.e. inhabits Mt. Zion as His sacred dwelling), and that He has “filled Zion with מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה constitute tokens of His willingness to supply assistance “in the morning” or “steadfastness/security” in “your time.”

Section 2, Subsection A: (Verses 7–9). A new section begins in v. 7 marked by the particle הֵן, a common discourse marker in biblical Hebrew. This section describes, in highly metaphorical language, the community’s distress due to the actions of its oppressor. The focus of the unit is the failure of diplomatic efforts evidenced by despairing envoys (v. 7), deserted highways (v. 8a–b), and annulment of treaties previously in force (v. 8c–e). With such language the “treacherous” behavior of the “destroyer” in v. 1 is brought forcefully to the fore. Hence, this subsection constitutes a renewal by the community of its statement of the circumstances behind its request for divine intervention against the oppressor. Verse 9 extends the depiction of the plight of Zion to the realm of nature. Whereas vv. 7–8 are concerned with the human response to Judah’s desperate situation, v. 9 depicts the land itself as mourning.

Section 2, Subsection B: (Verses 10–13). Verse 10 introduces YHWH’s response to Zion’s prayer and plight. It begins with the discourse marker עָתָה which most often functions to

introduce a logical conclusion from what precedes it, and may be translated “therefore.”¹⁶ The threefold iteration of עָתָה along with three different synonyms for rising up (אָנְשָׁא, אָרֻזָּם, אַקוּם) serves to underscore the certainty of YHWH’s intervention. Verses 11–12 contain an announcement to the oppressor. The plan they have hatched (conceived) against Zion is nothing but “hay.” Therefore it will come to nothing, “you give birth to straw.” Indeed, since their plans are made from combustibles—“hay” and “straw”—their actions will rebound upon them, with the result that they themselves will be devoured by them.” Ultimately all the nations that oppress Zion will be consumed like thorns in the fire (v. 12).

The subsection concludes with a summons to attention calling upon the oppressor (“the distant ones” i.e. “nations”) to acknowledge YHWH’s deed (v. 13). Normally such a call to attention could be expected to begin a new unit, but here it appears to serve as a summary of vv. 10–13. Sweeney also takes this position. He writes, “The verse [v. 10] is formulated as a call to attention, which normally introduces the following material. But since v. 13 is formulated as YHWH’s speech and vv. 14ff. are not, v. 13 can serve only as the conclusion to YHWH’s speech in vv. 10–13.”¹⁷ Beuken suggests that YHWH’s summons to those who are near and far to acknowledge His might constitutes a case of merism showing that the call to hear the report of YHWH’s deed and to acknowledge His superior might goes out to the entire world.¹⁸

Section 3 (Verses 14–16). Verse 14 is not connected syntactically to what precedes it. The transition to a new unit is marked by a switch to 3mp perfect verbs and by a change in form. Verse 14 serves as an introduction to the entrance liturgy in vv. 15–16. This entrance liturgy includes three elements, (1) an inquiry as to who may dwell in God’s holy sanctuary (v. 14c–d),

¹⁶ *BHRG*, §44.6.

¹⁷ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 424.

¹⁸ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 266.

(2) a description of ethical qualities the person who may enter the temple precincts (v. 15), (3) a pronouncement of beatitude upon this person (v. 16). Whereas vv. 10–13 were addressed to the nations, v. 14 addresses the “sinners in Zion” who, in response to the awesome display of divine wrath in vv. 13 which manifests itself by means of a “fire” which devours YHWH’s adversaries, tremble with fear and ask, *מִי יָגוּר לָנוּ אֵשׁ אֹכֵלָה* (v. 14c).

Verses 14–16 follow the typical pattern of the entrance liturgy form but with certain distinctive features. First, the opening question “who will sojourn for us?” is addressed by “the sinners in Zion” rather than by a priest as would normally be the case (cf. Ps.15 and 24). Second, rather than simply asking “who may sojourn/dwell in your holy mountain” as in the Psalms, the question in this text is “who may sojourn *for us*” (לָנוּ). Most translations render לָנוּ as “among us,” or “who of us” (*NRSV, NIV, JPSV*) i.e. “who of our number may dwell with consuming fire.” But this is not the normal rendering of לָנוּ. It is more natural to understand this use of the preposition as the “*lamed* of interest” or the “benefactive dative.”¹⁹ In other words, the sinners of Zion, fearful of the attempt, seek someone else, a mediator, to ascend the holy mountain on their behalf (cf. Judg. 1:1, *מִי יַעֲלֶה-לָנוּ*; 20:18, *מִי יַעֲלֶה-לָנוּ*; Deut. *מִי יַעֲלֶה-לָנוּ*). Third, the ethical requirements listed in v. 15 are specifically those required of a just/righteous ruler.²⁰ The liturgy ends with a pronouncement that the person (ruler?) who meets these criteria will dwell securely with in the holy mountain (v. 16). Is it possible that this text envisions a royal figure who, due to his righteous character, qualifies to rule in the city where YHWH’s holiness dwells? Interestingly, the prepositional phrase לָנוּ occurs a few verses down where v. 21a announces, “there YHWH

¹⁹ *IBHS*, §11.2.10d. E. J. Young sees לָנוּ as an ethical dative meaning “for our benefit;” E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 417 n28.

²⁰ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 424. “in contrast to other examples of entrance liturgy in Psalms 15 and 24, the qualities articulated in the response are not general ethical qualities but those of a righteous monarch.”

will be mighty for us” (לָנוּ). Sweeney writes, “Insofar as v. 16 identifies the heavens as the home of the monarch, vv. 14–16 prepare for the announcement of YHWH as the royal savior in vv. 17–24.”²¹ The unit ends with this pronouncement which is then immediately followed up with an introduction of this royal personage in v. 17.

Section 4, Subsection A: (Verses 17–19). Verse 17 is not connected syntactically to v. 16. The inverted word order in 17a serves to give heightened emphasis to the object of the sentence and to introduce the focus of the new section—מֶלֶךְ בְּיָפוֹ. The unit focuses on perception, both the organs of perception, “your eyes” (v. 17a, עֵינַיִךָ) and “your heart” (v. 18a, לִבְךָ), and the act of perception (v. 17a, תִּחְזְיוּנָה; v. 17b, תִּרְאִינָה; v. 18a, נִהְגָה; v. 19a, לֹא תִרְאֶה). The unit also presents a contrast between what is not visible now, but will be seen in the future—v. 17a, מֶלֶךְ בְּיָפוֹ, v. 17b, אֶרֶץ מִרְחֻקִים, and what was visible at the time but will no longer be seen in the future—v. 18a, אֵימָה, v. 19a, עַם נֹעֵז. This passage envisions the advent of a royal savior, on the one hand, and the departure of the foreign oppressor, on the other.

Section 4, Subsection B: (Verses 20–24). Whereas the previous unit directs the attention of the inhabitants of Zion to a royal figure, vv. 20–22 calls upon them to behold a restored and secure Zion. The unit opens with the imperative verb הִזָּה. It is marked by the repeated use of the 1cp suffix נו—v. 20a, מוֹעֲדֵנוּ, v. 21a, לָנוּ, v. 22a, שִׁפְטֵנוּ, v. 22b, מְחַקְקֵנוּ, v. 22c, מְלַכְנוּ, 22d, יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ. Another demarcating feature of this unit is the repeated use of the negative particle בַּל (vv. 20b, 21d, 23b, 23c, 24a). Verse 20 depicts Zion as a tent whose pegs are permanently fastened, and whose ropes cannot be severed and v. 21 as a place protected by wide rivers impassable even to

²¹ Ibid.

ships. Verse 22 introduces the reason for Zion’s security with **כי**. Zion’s safety is guaranteed by the presence and reign of YHWH in her midst. The presence of chiasm defines this subsection.

A	Zion	v. 20a–b
B	Ropes secure	v. 20c–d
C	Yahweh our mighty one	v. 21a–c
C’	Yahweh our king...	v. 22a–d
B’	Ropes slack	v. 23a–e
A’	Zion’s inhabitants	v. 24a–b

Sections

Section 1: (Verses 1–6). The opening section of this speech envisions the discomfiture of Judah’s oppressor. It opens with a standard woe-utterance against an unnamed oppressor (v. 1), followed by an appeal to YHWH for help against the oppressor (v. 2). This is then followed by a depiction of unnamed peoples (**עַמִּים**) and nations (**גוֹיִם**), Judah’s oppressors, being routed at the sound of YHWH’s approach (vv. 3–4). The unit ends with a confession of confidence in YHWH who “dwells on high,” has “filled Zion with justice and righteousness,” and will be “the steadfastness of your time,” and “a wealth of help” (vv. 5–6). In this way the section forms an ABA’B’ pattern.

A	Pronouncement of woe against the oppressor (v. 1)
B	Petition for help to YHWH (v. 2)
A’	Description of the oppressors spoiling (vv. 3–4)
B’	Expression of confidence in YHWH (vv. 5–6)

This unit features a strong emphasis on the exaltation of YHWH (v. 3b; 5a), and the timeliness of his intervention on Zion’s behalf. Timeliness is indicated by such phrases as **לְךָ קָוִינוּ** “we wait for you” (v. 2a), **הָיָה זְרָעַם לְבִקְרִים** “be our strength every morning” (v. 2b), **יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ בְּעֵת צָרָה** “our salvation in the time of trouble” (v. 2c), **וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עֲתִידְךָ** “He will be the steadfastness of your time (v. 6a). This emphasis on the timeliness of YHWH’s intervention hearkens back to 30:18 where the prophet announced, **וְלָכֵן יַחַסֶּה יְהוָה לְחַנּוּכֶם** “therefore YHWH waits to be gracious to

you.” In fact, the wording of v. 2a mirrors this language quite closely. It also anticipates the announcement in v. 10 **יְהוָה יֹאמֵר אֶקוּם עַתָּה** “now I will arise says YHWH.”

Section 2 (Verses 7–13). This section is introduced by **הִנֵּן** which draws the reader’s attention to words expressing distress and anxiety. The description of “messengers of peace” weeping bitterly (v. 7b) seems to indicate that the cause of distress is the rejection, by a belligerent foreign power, of a proposal of peace. This hostile enemy has behaved “treacherously” (cf. v. 1) in that he has “broken a covenant” (v. 8c), “rejected witnesses” (8d), and shown disregard for humanity (v. 8e). The most obvious indicator of the danger of the current circumstance is the cessation of travel along the nation’s roads and highways (v. 8a–b), perhaps due to the presence of foreign armies, or even to a state of siege. Verse 9, moving from the general to the specific, first declares that the “land” (**אֶרֶץ**)²² has “shriveled up,” then proceeds to list the spoilage of the most beautiful and productive regions of Palestine: Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan and Carmel, due to the depredations of an invading army. Taken together these conditions describe a nation at its lowest ebb, truly at the end of its own resources. It is this condition of prostration before the enemy that evokes YHWH’s response in vv. 10–13.

Verses 10–13 present the divine response to this dire circumstance. “Now, I will arise says YHWH.” The verb **קוּם** “arise” often carries the connotation of arising in preparation for action, frequently of a military nature.²³ The phrase **אֶקוּם עַתָּה** occurs at least once in the context of YHWH’s response to oppression, **מִשֹּׁר עֲנִיִּים מֵאֲנַקַּת אֲבִיוֹנִים עַתָּה אֶקוּם** (Ps. 12:5). The purpose of YHWH’s rising up is given in vv. 11–12, namely, to thwart the oppressor in his purpose, “you conceive hay, you give birth to straw,” and to punish him, “all the nations shall become burnings

²² In this context **אֶרֶץ** refers, not to “the earth,” but to the land of Israel.

²³ Raabe, *Obadiah*, 116.

of lime.” The section concludes in v. 13 with YHWH calling upon the entire world to take note of His deeds and acknowledge his might. This language reflects the recognition formula as found in the Exodus narrative (Exod. 14:18) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 12:15) which emphasizes that Israel and the nations are compelled to recognize YHWH’s lordship when they witness his mighty acts of deliverance and judgment.

Section 3: (Verses 14–16). As noted previously, vv. 14–16 follow the pattern of the entrance liturgy as we find it in texts such as Ps. 15 and 25. Like the liturgies in the Psalter, Isa. 14–16 opens with a question regarding what kind of person is fit to dwell in Zion (v. 14c–d). The answer to this inquiry is then given in the form of a list of ethical practices which qualify a person to enter the sanctuary as a worshiper (v. 15a–e), followed by a pronouncement of blessing on the person who meets the stated requirements (v. 16a–d). As suggested above it is very possible that the individual in question is a royal personage. Such a person would rule on behalf of YHWH so that his rule would, in effect, be that of YHWH himself.

Section 4: (Verses 17–24). The two parts of this section (vv. 17–19; 20–24) are united by their emphasis on sight. The twin objects of this vision are “a king in his beauty” (v. 17) on the one hand, and “Zion/Jerusalem” (v. 20) on the other hand. The people of Zion will also see “a far distant land,” i.e. their view of the horizon will not be occluded by besieging armies and engines of war. In v. 21 we are informed that the focus of the unit is the security of Zion which is guaranteed both by the appearance of a new king, and by the presence of YHWH (v. 21a). Many believe that the king mentioned in v. 17 is YHWH himself. This is an acceptable reading of the text, but if this king were YHWH, shouldn’t we expect to find the definite article and read “the King” rather than “a king?” Given the close association between the reign of YHWH, and that of the Davidic monarch, choosing between the two may not be necessary (cf. Ps. 2).

In both parts of this section, after introducing what will be seen in the future, the author directs our attention to what will not be seen. In vv. 17–19 we are told that the “arrogant people” with a language “too difficult to understand” will no longer be seen by the inhabitants of Zion (v. 19). In the second part (v. 21d–e) we are informed that there will no “warship” or “stately vessel” to sail on the “broad” streams that will protect Zion in this new age. The “arrogant people” with a “difficult language” no doubt describes the Assyrians who are the cause of Zion’s current distress, while the ships mentioned in v. 21 may speak of potential future attackers. In the short term Zion will be delivered from the Assyrians, while in the long term she will enjoy security from attack due to the protection of the broad streams.

Thought Progression

Due to its diverse generic elements and abrupt shifts in addressees, Isa. 33 has been difficult for scholars to analyze structurally. Gunkel writes, “Wer einen text wie diesen zum ersten Mal liest, der wird vor ihm als einem undurchdringlichen Rätsel verwundert und ratlos stehen bleiben.”²⁴ Kaiser also underscores the difficulty of making sense of the thought flow of this text, “Even an experienced reader, well acquainted with the Old Testament, will find constant difficulties and will wonder whether he has understood correctly what he has read, whether the received text is reliable and whether the individual themes have been accurately interpreted.”²⁵

According to many redaction critics the reason for this difficulty lies in the fragmentary nature of the text. Wildberger, who dates the redaction of the text to the Persian period, accounts for the disorganized state of the text by suggesting that “various individual pieces that are from different genres have undoubtedly been assembled without concern for the purity of the form and

²⁴ H. Gunkel, “Jesaja 33, eine prophetische Liturgie,” *ZAW* (1924): 177–208.

²⁵ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 339.

without worrying whether one ends up with a smooth flow of text.”²⁶ Childs also emphasizes the composite form of the text when he writes, “redactional critics have correctly seen that chapter 33 is not a cultic libretto, but that conventional forms, once shaped by oral tradition, now are in the background of the present text. These forms have been editorially shaped into a literary composition.”²⁷

Despite the difficulties presented by this text, many scholars are convinced that it is a unified literary work. Significant in this regard is Gunkel himself who, building on the work of S. Mowinkel, identified it as “eine prophetische liturgie.” He explains,

Wir gebrauchen das Wort ‘Liturgie’ in einem besonderen Sinne als einen Kunstausdruck der Gattungsforschung und verstehen darunter ein Gedicht, das von wechselnden Stimmen aufgeführt worden ist, und in dem die einzelnen Teile verschiedenen Gattungen angehören können.²⁸

Others have also argued for the literary integrity of the text including Hayes and Irvine who also regard ch. 33 as a liturgical text and date it to the time leading up to the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC. “We propose that this text is a unity, composed by the prophet as a text for use in some major festival in which Israelites from the north, fleeing the Assyrian devastation of the countryside, were integrated and welcomed into the worshiping community of the Jerusalem temple and into residency into the city.”²⁹ Joining Hayes and Irvine in regarding ch. 33 as a unified text from the pen of Isaiah himself is J. J. M. Roberts. After dismissing the usual arguments against Isaianic authorship he adds, “The composite, liturgical character of Isaiah 33 is an argument against Isaianic authorship only if one persists in fragmenting Isaiah’s speeches into their smallest divisible units. If one recognizes larger liturgical settings, or even speeches

²⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 269.

²⁷ Childs, *Isaiah*, 245.

²⁸ Gunkel, “Jesaja 33, eine prophetische Liturgie,” 182.

²⁹ Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 361.

composed of several genres Isaiah 33 no longer appears so isolated.”³⁰ He goes on to argue that “once one has recognized the temporal priority of the Zion tradition and Isaiah’s dependency on that tradition, there remains no compelling reason to deny the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah 33.”³¹

Each of the above mentioned scholars, while approaching the text from different methodological angles, has in his own way demonstrated that Isa. 33 may be read as a literary whole. Naturally, such an attempt is desirable from the standpoint of rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical critics have argued forcefully that the presence of discontinuity or variety of genre in a literary work should not be viewed as a license to fragment the text, but rather as evidence of the writer’s rhetorical purpose. The rhetorical critic views such elements as the deliberate work of an author in full command of his text, rather than as evidence of the slipshod efforts of an incompetent redactor. It is this perspective which will guide our review of the thought progression of ch. 33.

Structurally ch. 33 consists of four parts or sections (vv. 1–6; 7–13, 14–16; 17–24). In the first section we hear the voice of the community of Zion as it 1) pronounces a woe against an unnamed oppressor, 2) petitions YHWH for relief from oppression, and 3) confesses his past deliverance from attackers and his present exaltation in Zion. Verses 7–9 return to the subject of oppression. Here Isaiah depicts the people of Zion as responding with grief and anxiety as the land is laid waste by the depredations of a foreign power (vv. 7–8). Verse 9 describes Zion’s distress poetically,

- 9a אָבֵל אֲמַלְלָהּ אֶרֶץ The land mourns, it has withered;
9b הַחֲפִיר לְבָנוֹן קָמַל Lebanon is abashed, it has moldered;

³⁰ J. J. M. Roberts, “Isaiah 33: An Isaianic Elaboration of the Zion Tradition,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth* (ed. by C. L. Meyers and M. O’Connor: Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*

9c הַיָּהּ הַשְּׂרֹון כְּעֶרְבָה Sharon is like the Arabah;

9d וְנָעַר בְּשֵׁן וְכַרְמֹל: Bashan and Carmel shake off their foliage.

Verse 10 indicates YHWH's response to Zion's distress—"Now I will arise (עָתָה אֶקּוּם). Here YHWH, speaking in the first person, announces that he will frustrate the plans of Judah's attackers and consume them in his wrath. "And the nations shall become burnings of lime, thorn bushes cut down, they shall burn in the fire" (v. 11). He concludes his announcement by summoning those who are distant and those who are near to take note of his deeds and acknowledge his might (v. 13). The address to the nations in v. 10–13, when coupled with the address to the "Destroyer," brings the woe oracle (v.1) full-circle. Thus sections 1 and 2 are bracketed together in a kind of envelope structure.

v. 1	"Alas destroyer"	A	Oppressor addressed
v. 2	"YHWH be gracious to us"	B	Petition made
v. 7a	"Behold I see them cry out"	C	Zion's distress
v. 10a	"Now I will arise..."	B	Petition granted
v. 13	"Hear O distant ones..."	A	Oppressors addressed

Verses 14–16 open with a cry from the sinners of Zion, "Who shall sojourn for us with a devouring fire" (v. 14c). The reference to a "devouring fire" echoes the language of vv. 11–12 where the nations who attack Zion are threatened with immolation by a "devouring fire" (אֵשׁ הַאֲכָלָתָם). Having witnessed YHWH's wrath against the ungodly, the impious in Zion become concerned about their own fate. As God's dwelling place Zion is holy and this holiness encompasses the city of Jerusalem as well. For those who are impure to approach God's holiness means certain death. This accounts for the dilemma of Zion's inhabitants who, having just witnessed an awesome display of the destructive power of holiness, become acutely aware of

their own uncleanness (as Isaiah did in his inaugural vision in ch. 6). As at Mt. Sinai, YHWH's fiery holiness prevents the impure from approaching His dwelling place on Zion. And, as at Sinai, the people request a go-between who will ascend the mountain and approach God on their behalf (Exod. 20:18–21).

The ethical requirements listed in v. 15 are those expected of a righteous king. Such a king will promote righteousness in Zion by rejecting gain from extortion; refusing bribes, eschewing plots, and turning from evil (cf. 9:6–7; 11:1–6; 32:1). Verse 16 implies that such a king will be forthcoming. He will “dwell on high” (i.e. in the sanctuary) and his rule will guarantee the safety (v. 16b, “Stone strongholds will be his fortress.”), and material supply (v. 16c, “His food will be provided”) of Zion. This royal personage is presented in v. 17a, “a King in his beauty your eyes shall behold.” That the righteous reign of this king and that of YHWH are coextensive is confirmed in v. 22,

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|------------------------|
| 22a | כִּי יְהוָה שֹׁפְטֵנוּ | For YHWH is our ruler, |
| 22b | יְהוָה מְחַקְקֵנוּ | YHWH is our lawgiver. |
| 22c | יְהוָה מֶלֶכְנוּ | YHWH is our king, |
| 22d | הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ: | He shall save us. |

Many interpreters suggest that the identification of YHWH as Zion's king in v. 22 requires us to identify the king of v. 17 as YHWH himself and not a human ruler. However this fails to take account of the relationship of the reign of Judah's Davidic king to that YHWH. The confession, “YHWH is our king” (v. 22c) is analogous to the words *יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ* which are familiar from the enthronement psalms (47, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99). Just as the proclamation “YHWH reigns” did not negate the Davidic dynasty in Isaiah's day, so the confession “YHWH is our king” does not rule out the presence of an ideal Davidic king which will reign in the Zion of the

future.³² Mays' comments in this regard are helpful. Writing concerning the installation of the king of Judah in Psalm 2 he observes,

The person and office of this king are wholly the work of Yhwh. He is identified by Yhwh as 'my son,' an identity that is the result of a divined 'begetting' on the day of his presentation. The implication of the text is that this begetting happens through the divine word, 'You are my son.' This king is located on Zion, the place in the world made holy by the choice of Yhwh. The king belongs to the sphere in worldly space where Yhwh wills to be present as sovereign; he is inseparably related to the presence of the reign of God in the world."³³

Thus vv. 17–24 envisions an ideal future for Zion when a worthy scion will occupy the throne of David and rule it in a manner commensurate with the reign of God himself. God will guarantee the security of Zion through such a divine king.

The unity of ch. 33 is strengthened by a repeated emphasis on YHWH's exaltation and his presence in Zion. Words formed from the verbal root **רום** occur several times in the poem. In v. 3b YHWH's exaltation (**מְרוֹמֵי־מַתְּדָר**) scatters the nations. Verse 5a exults "YHWH dwells on high" (**מְרוֹם**). In v. 10b he announces "I will arise" (**אֶרְוֹמָה**) as a prelude to defeating the nations arrayed against Zion. And, in v. 16a the ruler who conducts himself in a righteous way will "dwell on high" (**מְרוֹמֵי־יָם**), i.e. with YHWH. Roberts points out that the "designation *mrwm* can refer either to heaven (Ps. 102:20) or to an earthly height... and it often refers specifically to the temple mount (Isa. 33:16; Jer. 17:12; 31:12; Ezek. 20:40; 34:14)."³⁴ He goes on to say, "*mrwm* here [33:5] undoubtedly involves the concept of God's abode on the sacred mount (Isa. 8:18)."³⁵ The unity of the text is also strengthened by the repetition of **שָׁכַן** (vv. 5, 16, 24) which is also associated

³² Cf. Ezekiel 34:11–31, where YHWH promises both to rule directly as Israel's shepherd in the coming age (v. 15, "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep"), and to make "David my servant" shepherd over them (v. 23, "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David"). Here the rule of YHWH and that of his divine king are coextensive.

³³ James Luther Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 101.

³⁴ Roberts, "Isaiah 33: An Elaboration of the Zion Tradition," 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

with God’s dwelling in Zion.³⁶ Hence the text is unified by a pervasive emphasis on Zion as YHWH’s habitation, and also on his action on its behalf. This action is described as “exalting” himself to discomfit those who attack her. Unity is also supported by the repetition of שָׁלַל “spoil” (vv. 4a; 23d), the root יָשַׁע (vv. 2c; 22d) at the beginning and end of the unit.

The following outline summarizes the thought progression of ch. 29.

- Section 1: A Prayer for Relief, vv. 1–6 (הוִי)**
 - Subsection A: Woe to the Oppressor, v. 1
 - Subsection B: Be Gracious to Us, vv. 2–6
- Section 2: Assurance of Relief, vv. 7–13 (הֵן)**
 - Subsection A: The Land Mourns, vv. 7–9
 - Subsection B: Now I Will Arise, vv. 10–13
- Section 3: Holy Fire, vv. 14–16 (פָּחַדוּ בְצִיּוֹן חַטָּאִים)**
- Section 4: Beatific Vision, vv. 17–24 ((מִלֶּךְ בְּרָפִיּוֹ תַחֲוִינָה עֵינֶיךָ))**
 - Subsection A: Your Eyes shall See a King, vv. 17–19
 - Subsection B: Behold Zion, vv. 20–24

Thematic Coherence

Chapter 33 opens with a reference to the destruction of Assyria (v. 1). As in 28:2 the destroyer in this passage is unnamed. Yet, by this time the reader is already aware of the destroyer’s identity as this has been revealed in 30:31 and 31:8. The related motif of YHWH’s sudden intervention on Zion’s behalf may also be observed in vv. 2–6 (cf. 29:5–6; 30:27ff; 31:4–5). Here the community of Zion prays for him to “be our strength in the mornings” (v. 2b). These verses emphasize YHWH’s exaltation, his help in time of distress, the scattering of the nations, and the plundering of Zion’s defeated attackers (v. 4). The themes of this pericope are arranged in a ring composition.

- A YHWH our help in time of distress (v. 2c, יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ בְּעֵת צָרָה)
- B YHWH’s exaltation (v. 3b, מְרוֹמְמֹתָיִךְ)
- C YHWH scatters the nations (v. 3b, נִפְצְצוּ גוֹיִם)
- B’ YHWH’s exaltation (v. 5a, מְרוֹם, שָׁכַן)

³⁶ Ibid.

A' YHWH the steadfastness of your time (v. 6b, עֲמִידַת עֲתִידְךָ)

Verses 10–13 also depict a sudden intervention on Zion’s behalf. In v. 10 YHWH announces, “Now I will arise.” The purpose of his rising up is to destroy the nations (Assyria) and to deliver Zion.

A second theme of ch. 33 is salvation by waiting/trusting. In v. 2a the community prays, “O YHWH be gracious to us, we wait for thee.” This clearly echoes 30:18, “blessed are all who wait for you.” That the people are praying in this way indicates that they have come to their senses and abandoned their attempts at self-salvation realizing that their salvation is in YHWH alone. This realization can be detected in the community’s confession in vv. 2–6 (see above), and also in v. 22, “for YHWH is our ruler, YHWH is our lawgiver, YHWH is our king, he will save us.”

In vv. 7–9 we find two related themes which have already been prominently featured in chs. 28–32, Zion’s distress and its failed treaty with Egypt. In this passage, we see the inhabitants of Zion mourning over what appears to be the failure of their messengers of peace. This is sometimes taken as a reference to the failure of negotiations aimed at convincing the Assyrian invaders to call off their attack on Jerusalem.³⁷ However, there is reason to think that the background for this scene is the failure of Egypt to live up to its treaty commitments. Several indicators support this. First, the mention of “messengers of peace” (v. 7b, מְלִאֲכֵי שְׁלוֹם) calls to mind the language of Isaiah’s oracle condemning Judah’s embassy to Egypt in 30:1–5. In both passages “messengers” are mentioned (v. 7b, מְלִאֲכֵי שְׁלוֹם; 30:4, וּמְלִאֲכָיו). Second, the reference to deserted “highways” and abandoned “roads” (v. 6) could reflect the halt of the travel between Jerusalem and Egypt which is described so graphically in 30:6. Third, the “broken covenant” in v. 8c could be an allusion to the same treaty which Isaiah predicted the Egyptians would not

³⁷ See, for example, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 595f.

honor in 30:7, and which Isaiah described as a “covenant with death” in ch. 28. The discovery that help from Egypt would not be forthcoming in the face of Assyrian aggression could account very nicely for the distress seen in 33:7–9.

Chapter 33 also emphasizes the reversal of the blindness of Judah’s leaders and populace which we have seen in chs. 28–32. The community’s expression of confidence in YHWH as its savior and of its willingness to wait upon him (v. 2) indicates that it has learned its lesson and is willing to take to heart the admonition of 30:18, “blessed are all who wait for him.” Also, v. 14 depicts of the “sinners” and “godless” (the rulers?) in Zion as no longer smug and confident, but as trembling in the face of the awesome display of his might which was displayed when he destroyed the nations attacking Zion (vv. 10–13). And vv. 14c–24 indicate that these leaders will be replaced by a ruler who possesses the character qualities listed in v. 15. Verse 17 also points to the replacement of the rulers with a godly King whose rule will bring true security (cf. 32:1).

Finally, vv. 17–24 echo descriptions of a transformed Zion which we have encountered in 29:17–24; 30:19–26; 32:15–20. In these verses Zion dwells in absolute security guaranteed by YHWH’s manifest presence. The absence of foreign invaders is noted (vv. 18–19), Zion is described as an immovable tent (cf. 28:16), and a place of rivers (cf. 30:25), where any attacker will be easily repulsed and even the lame will take part in dividing the spoil (v. 23) and where no inhabitant is sick (cf. 30:26).

Chapter 33, coming at the end of chs. 28–33, envisions a new day when the current deficiencies of Zion will be remedied and reversed. For this reason the themes of chs. 28–32, with the exception of the theme of Zion’s transformation, are mirror images of their depiction in the earlier chapters. That is, we see their counterparts. Where there was blindness, we find sight; where there was unbelief we hear confessions of faith. Where there were threats we hear words

of assurance. Where there was misplaced confidence in man and therefore misguided plotting by Judah's leaders, we hear confession's confidence in YHWH's power to save. In this way ch. 33 forms a fitting conclusion to chs. 28–33 and to the entire first half of Isaiah (chs. 1–33).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEME AND STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 28–33: THE CENTRALITY OF CHAPTER 30

The Structure of Isaiah 28–33

The Centrality of Chapter 30

In the introduction of this dissertation we set forth the hypothesis that Isa. 30 is center of chs. 28–33 both structurally and thematically. To our knowledge we are the first to assert the centrality of ch. 30 in this way. While others have made suggestions concerning the structure of Isaiah 28–33, to date, none has recognized the pivotal role which ch. 30 plays in this structure. The closest that anyone has come to acknowledging the central role of ch. 30 is F. Delitzsch. He writes, “The climax of these prophecies of woe [28–33] is ch. xxx. Up to this point the exclamation of woe gradually ascends, but in ch. xxxi.–xxxii. it begins to fall; and in ch. xxxiii...it has changed into its very opposite.”¹ Stansell also comes very close to recognizing the centrality of ch. 30 in his discussion of the theme of Yahweh’s exaltation. He writes,

These three texts, 28:1–6, 30:18; and 33:2–24, occurring at the beginning, middle and end of the section, exhibit close thematic and linguistic ties which further suggest a thematic unity to the section. The motifs of exaltation, and honouring Yahweh, the humbling of his opponents, and the waiting to give or receive divine grace are like threads which, in their linking together of the three passages, suggest to the reader a coherent arrangement which presents a sense of the section’s unity.²

Exum also, while not associating the transition specifically with ch. 30 (as Delitzsch does), recognizes that a transition from judgment to promise occurs in chs. 28–33; she writes, “Though

¹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 2.

² Stansell, “Isaiah 28–33,” 74.

judgment and promise alternate in 28–32, the essential development both within the collection and of the collection as a whole is from judgment to promise.”³ She also comes tantalizingly close to touching upon the pivotal role of ch. 30 when she notes, “With 30:1 YHWH’s wisdom begins to receive less emphasis. This section does not, like the previous ones, end with a focus on instruction. It does however, like 29:15 before it, begin with the idea of human counsel (*‘ētsah*).”⁴ The above quotes show that these writers detect a change in tone and emphasis within Isa. 28–33 and recognize that this change takes place in the vicinity of ch. 30. However, they stop short of identifying ch. 30 as the key to the structure of the section. Based upon our detailed analysis of chs. 28–33 we are convinced that this is indeed the case. In the pages that follow we will summarize the evidence which our study has provided.

Structural Evidence

Most interpreters acknowledge that the six woe oracles in Isa. 28–33 serve as a basic framework for these chapters. However, scholars configure these chapters in a variety of ways. Most subsume the second woe oracle in ch. 29:15 under the speech which begins in 29:1. We have offered arguments in support of this approach in ch. 3. Some group chs. 32 and 33 together. Sweeney falls into this category. He writes, “The structure of chs. 28–33 is relatively simple. It is determined by the introductory *hōy* forms that appear in 28:1; 29:1; 30:1, and by the introductory *hēn* form that appears in 32:1.”⁵ Sweeney subsumes the woe oracle in 29:15 under the preceding material and the one in 33:1 under the *hēn* which appears in 32:1. He writes, “Insofar as ch. 32 introduces ch. 33, the two chapters form a single unit within the larger structure of 28–33. The introductory *hēn* of 32:1 thereby provides an appropriate introduction to this climactic unit in

³ Exum, “Isaiah 28–32,” 145.

⁴ Ibid, 134.

⁵ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 354.

that it disrupts the preceding *hōy* forms and points to the positive outcome of YHWH’s actions....”⁶ In this way Sweeney divides chs. 28–33 into five sections, four of which begin with *hōy*, and one with *hēn*. Oswalt also groups chs. 32–33. He divides chs. 28–33 into three sections: 28–29 which focus on foolish leaders, enemies, and false counsel which, despairing of hope in God, seeks solutions in human strength; 30–31 which condemn dependence on Egypt; and 32–33 which provide the true solution, the revelation of the King.⁷

Other scholars group chs. 31–32 and see five sections, each of which begins with a woe-oracle (Goldingay, Beuken, Delitzsch, Childs). In our opinion this solution commends itself as more plausible than the one adopted by Sweeney et al. First, it acknowledges the fact that ch. 32, unlike the other chapters in this unit, does not begin with *hōy*. Second, ch. 31 is much shorter than the other speeches in this section; grouping it with ch. 32 results in a section more comparable in length. Third, joining chs. 31–32 results in a pattern in which each of the major sections in this division of Isaiah commence with *hōy*. Fourth, Delitzsch and others have offered a convincing case that ch. 32 “forms a last dependent part of the long address commencing with ch. xxxi.1.”⁸

The following represents our understanding of the basic structure of Isa. 28–33.

- I. Ch. 28, A Strong and Mighty One Threatens Ephraim/Judah (854 syllables)
- II. Ch. 29, Ariel’s/Zion’s Distress and Deliverance (780 syllables)
- III. Ch. 30, Zion’s Deliverance Delayed (1069 syllables)
- IV. Ch. 31–32, Zion’s Distress and Deliverance (793 syllables)
- V. Ch. 33, Zion’s Destroyer Destroyed, Zion Dwells Safely (610 syllables)

It is clear from the above outline that ch. 30 is at the center of this section. Even when we treat each of the *hōys* in 28–33 as the signal of a new section, and include the particle *hēn* in 32:1 as a

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 505.

⁸ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 2.

stylistic variant introducing a separate section, we arrive at a five part structure that still has ch. 30 at its center. In fact, taking the six *hōys* and adding *hēn* as a stylistic variant produces a 1+ 2 + 1 + 2 + 1 pattern with the *hōy* which begins ch. 30 in the middle.

I.	28:1	<i>hōy</i>
II.	29:1,15	<i>hōy + hōy</i>
III.	30:1	<i>hōy</i>
IV.	31:1; 32:1	<i>hōy + hēn</i>
V.	33:1	<i>hōy</i>

Based upon this evidence, it can hardly be debated that ch. 30 is the center section of chs. 28–33. Using syllable counts we may make the following observations regarding chs. 28–33. 1) Units II and IV are very nearly the same length with 780 and 793 syllables respectively. 2) Chapter 30 (Unit III) is easily the longest unit. With 1069 syllables it is 20 percent longer than ch. 28 which is the second longest unit with 854 syllables. 3) Chapters 28 (Unit I) and 33 (Unit V) do not match each other in length. It might appear from this data that chs. 28–33 do not possess a symmetrical structure determined by lengths based upon syllable counts. But when the total number of syllables in chs. 28–33 is taken into account we find that the pericope found in 30:15–18 is the *absolute center* of these chapters. Below we will attempt to demonstrate that this pericope is also the *thematic center* of these chapters. If we can demonstrate that 30:15–18 is both the absolute and thematic center of chs. 28–33, then our case for the literary and compositional unity of these chapters will be strengthened. Therefore, in the next section, we will attempt to show the centrality of ch. 30 based upon thematic connections. We will then return to the structural evidence provided by syllable counts.

Thematic Connections

Not only is ch. 30 the structural center of Isa. 28–33, it is also the thematic center. Stansell touched upon the central tendency of chs. 28–33 when he identified the theme of YHWH's

exaltation as one which “occurring at the beginning, middle and end of the section, exhibits close thematic and linguistic ties which further suggest a thematic unity to the section.”⁹ We would also argue that the occurrence of two key concepts at the beginning, middle and end of Isa. 28–33 suggests a close literary unity. Both of these concepts appear in strikingly parallel sentences in chs 28 and 33 and also in 30:18. The first theme, “the announcement of divine action” appears as follows,

Ch. 28:21—YHWH’s action against Zion, his strange work (יָקוּם יְהוָה)

Ch. 30:18—YHWH’s action on Zion’s behalf delayed (יָרוּם)

Ch. 33:10—YHWH’s action on Zion’s behalf assured (עֲתָה אֶקוּם)

Each of these texts contains an imperfect verb announcing YHWH’s rising to action. The first and third texts use the same verb (קוּם) while 30:18 uses a synonym (רוּם) which also carries connotations of exaltation or glorification.¹⁰ The first two texts speak of YHWH’s action in the third person, while in the last instance YHWH announces his action in the first person. Finally, the first text announces YHWH’s action as future, the second as passage is in the present tense and depicts YHWH’s action as in a state of delay, and the third text announces that the time to act has come (עֲתָה).

A second concept which is repeated at the beginning, middle and end of chs. 28–33 is “the virtue of waiting.” This is a theme which is found throughout the book of Isaiah and constitutes an important theme in this section. It occurs in the following texts.

Ch. 28:16—He who believes will not make haste (הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יַחֲיֵשׁ)

Ch. 30:18—Blessed are all who wait for him (אַשְׁרֵי כָּל-חֹכֵי לוֹ)

Ch. 33:2—Be gracious to us, we wait for you (יְהוָה תַּנְנוּ לָךְ קִיּוּנוֹ)

⁹ Stansell, “Isaiah 28–33,” 74.

¹⁰ עֲתָה אֶקוּם יְהוָה יֹאמֵר יְהוָה עֲתָה אֶרְוֹמֶם עֲתָה אֶנְשֵׂא נֶשְׂא, thus עֲתָה אֶקוּם יְהוָה occurs in 30:18 along with קוּם, and נֶשְׂא.

Each of these texts reflects Isaiah's insistence that the appropriate posture for the people of Zion in their current distress is that of waiting and trust. Chapter 28:13 insists that, in light of YHWH's stated purpose to establish Zion and to reform it with justice and righteousness, the one who believes will not act in haste, but will wait in faith for the divine purpose to be realized in God's time and fashion. Chapter 30:18 pronounces a blessing on the person who waits for YHWH while his salvation is being delayed due to the misguided policies of Judah's leaders. The last text, ch. 33:2 reflects the prayer of a people which has learned its lesson (the hard way) and now make its appeal to YHWH from a posture of patient waiting.

In addition to the connections noted above, ch. 30 appears to recapitulate the major themes of chs. 28–33. Indeed, we would suggest that ch. 30 functions as a *mise-en abyme* or *spiegeltext*¹¹ for chs 28–33 in much the same way that Beuken has argued with respect to ch.33 and the book of Isaiah as a whole.¹² That is, ch. 30 represents a microcosm of the larger structure which contains it. When this chapter is read in tandem with the rest of 28–33 its links to these other chapters becomes apparent. The main themes of chs. 28–33 include the following,

- I. Condemnation of Jerusalem's mutual defense treaty with Egypt.
- II. Condemnation of Jerusalem's leaders for their lack of faith and spiritual obtuseness.
- III. Announcement of disaster upon Jerusalem in consequence of the foolish policies of its leaders.
- IV. Condemnation of Jerusalem's leaders for their refusal of YHWH's offer of salvation through resting/trusting/waiting.
- V. Prediction of a return of spiritual understanding to Jerusalem's leaders following a period of trial.
- VI. Depiction of a transformed Jerusalem and an ideal future for its inhabitants.
- VII Prediction of Assyria's destruction.

Each of these seven themes appears in one of the seven divisions of ch. 30 as we have delineated its structure (cf. ch. 4). These themes occur throughout chs. 28–33, in chs. 28–29 and in chs. 31–

¹¹ See our discussion of *mise-en abyme* in ch. 1 of this dissertation.

¹² Beuken, "Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch."

33, as well as in ch. 30. Like threads of fabric they are woven together to form the warp and woof of this text. Sometimes one of the themes dominates a pericope or section of text, but because they are interdependent and mutually supporting, two or more of them may appear in the same passage. In the discussion that follows we will take each of these sections of ch. 30 in turn and attempt to show 1) which of these major themes it presents and how it is presented, and 2) how this theme links ch. 30 to other parts of chs. 28–33. Our analysis of ch. 30 identified a concentric structure with seven parts—vv. 1–7, 8–11, 12–14, 15–18, 19–22, 23–26, 27–33.¹³

30:1–7: Isaiah’s condemnation of Jerusalem’s mutual defense treaty with Egypt. This pericope condemns the rulers of Jerusalem for their policy of pursuing a mutual defense pact with Egypt. Isaiah’s condemnation of this policy focuses on two aspects, 1) the sinfulness of it, and 2) the foolishness of it. The policy was sinful in the first instance because it was an act of disloyalty (a breach of covenant loyalty) to YHWH. This course of action had been undertaken without seeking a prophetic oracle (פִּי לֹא שָׁאַלָהּ), i.e. a word from YHWH, a practice which was routine among the rulers of ancient Israel and Judah (1 Kings 22). It was also in clear violation of Moses’ admonition to the kings of Israel not to “cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses” (Deut. 17:16). Very possibly the Egyptians demanded more for their support than merely “mutual” defense or nonaggression. As the dominant party Egypt may have insisted that the smaller and weaker nation become its vassal in exchange for military support. If this was the case, then the diplomatic mission depicted in these verses could be seen as a reenactment of Ahaz’ overtures to Assyria in 734. At that time Isaiah had condemned the king’s actions as evidence of a lack of faith in YHWH (ch. 7). Now, for the current leaders to repeat this error with Egypt would indeed be “adding sin to sin” (v. 1d). Finally, Isaiah considers Jerusalem’s Egypt

¹³ See our discussion of this in ch. 4.

policy sinful because it constitutes a rejection of YHWH as their true refuge in favor of the false refuge of Egypt. In addition of rejecting YHWH's plan (v. 1b), they have rejected his help, thus lodging a vote of no-confidence in him as their savior and deliverer. They believed that YHWH either would not, or could not save them and therefore sought refuge in the shadow of Egypt. They did not realize that, in rejecting YHWH as their savior, they were also rejecting him as their God (cf. ch. 7:10–14).

In addition to being sinful, Jerusalem's policies were foolish because they exchanged their true security, YHWH, for the false security of Egypt. By going down to Egypt, the leaders of Judah were hoping to find a refuge or place of safety (מְעוֹז פְּרִיעָה) and security (צֶל מִצְרַיִם). They sought to enter into a mutually beneficial (לְהוֹעִיל) relationship with a partner (עֵזֶר) that could help them. Isaiah warns that instead they would get “shame” (לְבֹשֶׁת), “reproach (לְכִלְמוֹת) and disgrace (לְחִרְפָּה) from a partner who will offer “no help” (לֹא לְעֵזֶר) and be of “no profit” (לֹא לְהוֹעִיל). While they expected to procure the protection of the mighty chaos monster (רֶהַב), what they got instead was a sluggish lizard which could not, or would not rouse itself (רֶהַב הֵם שֹׁבֵת). When push came to shove, the arduous trek through the desert (vv. 6–7), the libations to Egyptian deities (v. 1c, מִסְכָּה וּלְנִסְךְ מִסְכָּה), the diplomacy of envoys (מְלֹאכֵי), and the tribute payments (וּמִצְרַיִם הֶבֶל נְרִיק יַעֲזֹרוּ) would all be for nothing (אִי־צֹרֶתֶם, חִילָהֶם).

The opening pericope of ch. 30 links the chapter to a prominent theme of Isa. 28–33—Jerusalem's unwise and faithless decision to place its hopes for security in a pact with Egypt. This theme first appears in 28:14–19 where Isaiah excoriates Jerusalem's leaders for entering into a “covenant with death” (v. 15), and making a “lie” their “refuge” (v. 17). Many scholars, perhaps a majority, believe that this is Isaiah's way of describing a secret alliance between Judah and Egypt against Assyria (Delitzsch, Oswalt, Clements, Leupold, Childs, Motyer, Watts,

Stacey). As in ch. 30, Isaiah here condemns this alliance and predicts that it will be ineffective in staving off Assyrian attack—“your covenant with death will be wiped away, and your consultation with Sheol will not stand” (28:18a–b). While the imagery in 30:1–7 and 28:14–19 is different, the two passages have common elements. While the terminology is different, both passages depict Jerusalem’s leaders as attempting to guarantee their security by seeking refuge in something/someone other than YHWH. Both passages also emphasize the futility and ultimate failure of these efforts. In 30:2d Isaiah uses the verb *סָתַר* “to take refuge,” while 28:15, 17 employ the noun *מְחִסָּה* “refuge, place of refuge” which is from the same root (*HALOT*). Both texts describe Judah’s covenant partner in terms of mythological figures associated with chaos, death and destruction (*מוֹת, נְהָב*).

29:15–16 counts as yet another text within chs 28–33 in which the theme of plans formed in opposition to YHWH is found. Wildberger writes concerning 29:15–16,

one cannot fail to see a definite relationship with 30:1–5, a text that everyone agrees is to be attributed to this very same historical time period. In that passage, Isaiah scolds the politicians for carrying out a plan that does not come from Yahweh; they make their way down to Egypt “without asking my mouth.”¹⁴

This passage is one of three in chs. 28–33 in which the noun *עֲצָה* occurs. The other two include 28:29 and 30:1. The former affirms the wonderful nature of YHWH’s counsel, while the latter condemns Judah’s desire to make plans without consulting YHWH. In this passage not only do the leaders refuse to consult YHWH, they actively seek to hide their plan (*עֲצָה*) from him and perform their deeds in a dark place (*בְּמַחְשֶׁת*). The motive for this behavior is found in v. 16 where these planners are compared to clay which regards itself as wiser than the potter. The participle *הַמַּעֲמִיקִים* “to make deep” used in conjunction with the infinitive *לְסַתֵּר* “to hide” casts the

¹⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–35*, 96–97.

activities of the planners in a conspiratorial light. They desire to burrow deep in order to conceal their activities from YHWH and his messenger. Ironically, while they seek a refuge *in* Egypt, they simultaneously seek a hiding place *from* YHWH. The verb עמק occurs again in 31:6 where Isaiah urges his hearer to שׁוּבוּ לְאִשֶּׁר הָעַמְיָקוּ סָרָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This verse, using the language of 29:15 characterizes the activities of Judah’s leaders as rebellion, thus linking verbally 30:1 (בְּנִים) and 29:15.

Isaiah 31:1–3 is another passage in which Judah’s policy of relying on Egyptian military aid rather than YHWH features prominently. The connections between these verses and 30:1–5 are well-known and striking. Wildberger draws attention to the parallel between 30:2 and 31:1.¹⁵

31:1	הוּי הַיְרָדִים מִצָּרִים לְעִזְרָה... וְאֶת־יְהוָה לֹא דָרְשׁוּ
30:2	הַהֲלָכִים לְרֵדֶת מִצָּרִים וּפִי לֹא שָׁאֵל

Here we find three elements of Isaiah’s critique of Judean policy. First, whereas in chs. 28 and 29 Judah’s partners in conspiracy are not named, here, as in ch. 30 Judah’s coconspirator is identified as Egypt. Second, as in ch. 30, here we are informed that this course of action was undertaken without consulting YHWH. Third, the prepositional phrase לְעִזְרָה in 31:1 echoes the emphasis in 30:1–5 on Judah’s perception of Egypt as a more reliable source of protection than YHWH.¹⁶ The idea of Egypt as “helper” is also expressed in ch. 30 in references to the מְעוֹז פְּרָעָה and the צֵל מִצָּרִים (v.2). 31:1–3 also echoes ch. 30’s condemnation of relying on horses, עַל־סוּסִים (v. 1). This theme does not occur in 30:1–5, but is found in vv. 15–16. Here the verbal links are quite striking, ישַׁע, בטח, סוּסִים. These verses, along with 30:12 characterize Judah’s

¹⁵ Ibid, 208.

¹⁶ The verb עָזַר frequently occurs in the OT with God as its subject, and the noun עֲזָרָה is predominantly used in reference to Israel’s God. See A. Harman, “עזר” *EDOTTE*, 3:378–79.

plans as evidence of misplaced faith and trust, and as an act of rebellion in that this course of action was pursued after trust in YHWH had been rejected.

Isaiah 30:8–11: Isaiah’s condemnation of Jerusalem’s leaders for their lack of faith and spiritual obtuseness. In 30:8–11 we encounter the second major theme of chs. 28–33, the spiritual obtuseness of Jerusalem’s rulers and their rejection of the prophetic word. Isaiah 30:8–11 focuses on the refusal of Judah’s leaders to hear his message. In this passage the people of Judah are described as “a rebellious people” (v. 9a, עַם מְרִי). This epithet is then qualified by the descriptor “false sons” (בְּנֵי־כֶזֶב). The adjective כֶּזֶב (v. 9a) is defined by BDB as “deceptive, false.” It is a hapax legomenon within the book of Isaiah. The verb denotes “to act deceptively,” or to “feign obedience” or to “fawn” in the *niphal* and *hithpael* stems (*HALOT*). Therefore Wildberger suggests that כֶּזֶב in this passage may be understood as “hypocritical submitting.”¹⁷ Isaiah’s hearers feigned piety outwardly, but inwardly they rebelled against God and his prophet. Isaiah goes on to depict their rebellion as unwillingness to “hear YHWH’s instruction” (יְהִיָּה תִּוְרָתוֹ). The term תִּוְרָתוֹ refers not to the law of Moses, but rather to prophetic instruction, most likely to the preaching of Isaiah himself.

What is depicted in this passage then is an inner predisposition on the part of Isaiah’s hearers to reject YHWH’s message delivered by the prophet. Outwardly they feign respect and even obedience, but in their hearts and with their actions they rebel against the prophet’s teaching. Wildberger relates Judah’s leaders’ refusal to listen to Pharaoh’s refusal (אַבְרָהָם) to let the people of Israel go. Pharaoh’s rejection of Moses’ word was a direct result of divine hardening. This is also the case with the rejection of Isaiah’s preaching by the Judean leaders (cf. ch. 6).

¹⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–35*, 144.

Verses 10–11 portray Judah’s leaders as forbidding the “seers” to envision “right things” (נְכוֹחֹת).¹⁸ The “right things” of which they forbid the prophets to speak are, no doubt, identical to the תּוֹרַת יְהוָה which they refuse to listen to. It seems safe to assume that Isaiah numbered himself among the seers in question. The opening verse of Isaiah (1:1) describes the book as a חִזְיוֹן “vision,” and Isaiah, by implication, as a חוֹזֵה “visionary.” Nevertheless while Isaiah refused to be cowed by the disapprobation of the ruling class, other “seers” proved more than happy to accommodate them. Isaiah identifies the motive for silencing the prophets as a desire not to be confronted with “The Holy One of Israel.” The rulers had chosen the path they wanted and did not appreciate being reminded that this was diametrically opposed to the will of God. They wanted someone to prophesy “smooth things,” words that did not prick the conscience.

While in 30:8 Isaiah described the rulers of Judah as an עַם מְרִי (“a rebellious people”), in ch. 28 they are described as הָעָם הַזֶּה (“this people,” vv. 11; 14), a pejorative term which Isaiah sometimes uses when speaking derisively of the people of Judah and their leaders (8:6, 11, 12; 9:15; 29:13, 14). Another strong verbal link between this passage and 30:8–11 is the phrase וְלֹא שָׁמוּעַ (28:12e) which is virtually identical to (30:9b) לֹא-אָבוּ שָׁמוּעַ. This common emphasis on hearing in turn taps into theme of hearing and seeing, eyes and ears that runs throughout chs. 28–33.¹⁹

Isaiah 29:9–14 is another passage which emphasizes the blindness and obduracy of Judah’s spiritual leaders. As such it displays several strong links to 30:8–11. These include the command

¹⁸ The use of לֹא with the 2d person imperfect can indicate a strong prohibition. See A. Bartelt, *Fundamental Biblical Hebrew*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 130.

¹⁹ שָׁמוּעַ 28:12, 14, 22, 23; 29:18; 30:9, 19, 21, 30; 32:3, 9; 33:13, 15, 19; רָאה 28:4, 7; 29:15, 18, 23; 30:10, 20, 30; 32:3; 33:15, 17, 19, 20; עֵין 29:10, 18; 30:20; 32:3; 33:15, 17, 20; אֲזִינִים 28:23; 30:21; 32:3, 9; 33:15) Other vocabulary emphasizing perception also contribute to the overall prominence of the notion of spiritual blindness/sight in Isa. 28–33 . These include words like בִּינָה/בִּין (29:9, 19; 29:14, 16, 24; 32:4), יִדְעָ/דַעַת (28:9; 29:11, 12, 15, 24; 32:4; 33:13), לֵב (29:13; 32:6; 33:18).

to “blind yourselves and be blind” (v. 9b, cf. 30:10), the emphasis on הַנְּבִיאִים “the prophets” and הַחֹזִיִּים “seers” (v. 10, cf. 30:10a–b), the reference to a סֵפֶר “book” (v. 11, cf. 30:8) and the charge of false worship (v. 13, cf. 30:9a—בְּחֻשִׁים כְּחֻשִׁים). In addition to its links to ch. 30, this chapter also connects to the themes of “drunkenness” (v. 9—שָׁכְרוּ, cf. 28:7–8) and the wonderful/impenetrable nature of YHWH’s counsel (v. 14, cf. 28:29).

The verb used in 29:9b (הִשְׁתַּעֲשְׂעוּ וְשַׁעוּ) echoes the command in 6:10—וְעֵינַי הִשַׁע פְּנֵי־רֹאֵהָ— and possibly also the wording of 32:3a—וְלֹא תִשְׁעֶינָה עֵינַי רְאִים— which we have translated, “And the eyes of those who see shall not be smeared over” on the assumption that תִּשְׁעֶינָה is derived from שָׁעַע “to smear over.” In 30:10 the rulers command the seers, “Do not see.” This passage is also linked to 30:8–11 (and to 28:7–13) by its emphasis on the inability of Judah’s prophets and seers either to receive or to deliver divine revelation properly. In both chs. 29 and 28 this is due to a divinely imposed state of drunkenness (28:7–8; 29:9), whereas in ch. 30 it is the result of pressure from the rulers who command them not to prophesy rightly. In both instances the outcome is the same, an inability to receive the divine word resulting in disastrous decision making.

Chapter 29:11a–b also links to 30:8c in that both texts speak of a book (cf. 8:16). In ch. 29 Isaiah’s message is compared to a “sealed book,” i.e. a book that cannot be read for the present. Often, in the Old Testament, a book is sealed until the appropriate time or until after the prophecies contained in it have come to pass (cf. Dan. 12:4). Though the “book” mentioned in 30:8c is not said to be “sealed,” the revelation written in it is said to be “for a later time.” Hence the book’s message would have been sealed from the standpoint of Isaiah’s contemporaries. In this way both 29:11 and 30:8 may reflect the ideas of 8:16 where Isaiah is commanded to “bind up the testimony, seal up the teaching” for the duration of the period during which YHWH is

hiding his face from his people” (8:17). Finally, chs. 29 and 30 are connected by a common reference to false worship. In 29:13 YHWH accuses the people of Judah of pretending to seek him, “drawing near” with their mouths, “honoring” with their lips, while their hearts are far from God. This charge is echoed in 30:9 where YHWH charges the leaders with being “false sons,” i.e. hypocritical worshippers (see above).

Isaiah 30:12–14: Isaiah’s announcement of disaster upon Jerusalem in consequence of the foolish policies of its leaders. 30:12–14 uses two images to depict the disaster destined to come upon Judah because of its rejection of YHWH’s word. In the first image, Judah’s sin is compared to a wall with a protruding breach in it which is ready to collapse (v. 13b–c). The second image is that of a clay vessel which has been shattered to the point that even its shards are useless (v. 14). Within this pericope is language which echoes the threats of disaster which occur elsewhere in chs. 28–33. The word פָּרֵץ (v. 13b) is reminiscent of Isaiah’s warning that the coming judgment will be כְּהַר-פְּרָצִים “like Mt. Perazim” (28:21) when YHWH broke forth upon the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:20). The use of the term שִׁבְרָה (vv. 13–14) is reminiscent of 28:13 where Isaiah announced that because Judah had rejected YHWH’s offer of salvation through resting, the word of YHWH would eventuate in their being “broken” or “shattered” (וּנְשָׁבְרוּ). The phrase פְּתָאֵם לְפִתְעָה contains a very definite echo of 29:5c where in response to the attack on Ariel visitation will come from YHWH “suddenly, in an instant” (לְפִתְעָה פְּתָאֵם). The description of Judah’s breach as “falling” (v. 13b, נָפַל) also accords with similar terms which also occur in parts of chs. 28–33 which describe the disaster which will soon befall Jerusalem; וּכְשָׁלוּ (28:13), and וְשָׁפְלָה (29:4a).

The disaster which is to befall Judah is a ubiquitous theme in chs 28–33, appearing in some form in each of these chapters. In ch. 28 Isaiah identifies an unnamed “strong and mighty one” who will trample the “proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim” underfoot (v. 2). But the same

foreign power that decimates Ephraim will do the same to Judah. For this reason Isaiah announces near the end of ch. 28, “a destructive decree I have heard from Adonay YHWH of Hosts concerning all the land”—i.e. both Ephraim and Judah. The destruction which Isaiah foresees for Judah will be visited upon them by people speaking a foreign tongue (v. 11). It will cause them to “fall backward and be shattered, ensnared and captured” (v. 13). It will come like a hail storm (v. 17c), it will overflow like a flood (v. 17d), it will trample them (v. 18d) and will be “pure terror (19d).

In ch. 29 the coming disaster is described in vv. 1–8. In this pericope Isaiah announces that YHWH will lay siege to Ariel (v. 2), and that he will “encamp against it” and “encircle it” (v. 3). Due to YHWH’s actions Ariel will be brought into a condition of extreme distress which will cause it to “mourn and lament” (v. 2). The trial will be so severe that Ariel will be brought to the brink of death, and will “speak low from the dust” like a ghost (v. 4). Then, when doom seems certain, YHWH will intervene suddenly (v. 5c **לְפַתַּע פְּתָאִים**, cf. 30:13 **לְפַתַּע פְּתָאִים**). This imagery of Zion’s distress and sudden deliverance also appears in 31:4–5. This text depicts YHWH descending upon Mt. Zion as a lion (v. 4) or flying over it like birds (v. 5), thus “shielding (**גָּנִי**), “delivering” (**הִצִּיל**), “protecting” (**פָּסַח**), and “rescuing” it (**הִמְלִיט**). This sudden deliverance of Zion from its distress may also be in view in 33:3–4 where the nations (which afflict Zion) are depicted as being “scattered” by YHWH’s approach and the people of Zion plundering their abandoned camps like locusts devouring a field of grain (v. 4).²⁰

Two passages focus take up the theme of mourning (29:2) and lament which is occasioned by Zion’s distress. These are 32:9–14 and 33:7–9. The first calls upon the women of Zion to mourn, first for the failure of the vintage (v. 10), then for the **עֲמֵי אֶרְצָהּ** land of my people (v.

²⁰ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 593f.

31a), then for כל־בְּתֵי מְשׁוֹשׁ “every joyous house” (v. 13c), for קְרִיָּה עֲלִיזָה “the exultant city” (v. 13d), the אֶרְמוֹן “palace” (v. 14a), and the הַמְּזוֹן עִיר “busy city” (v. 14b). The picture is one of desolation and depredation, not only upon the agricultural produce of the land, but on village and urban life. The second passage (33:7–9) envisions a state of mourning and weeping precipitated by the failure of diplomatic efforts (v. 7) apparently aimed at ending the aggression of a foreign power.²¹ In consequence of this the highways lack travelers (v. 8), and the land “dries up” (אָבַל). Verses 18–19 of this chapter also ponder in retrospect a difficult time, now long passed, when the land was occupied by עַם נוֹעֵז “an arrogant people,” (v. 19a), who spoke מוֹשְׁמוּעַ שְׂפָה “a language too difficult to understand” (v. 19b). That these people are no longer visible in the land is a testament to YHWH’s saving power.

Isaiah 30:15–18 : Isaiah’s condemnation of Jerusalem’s leaders for their refusal of YHWH’s offer of salvation through resting/trusting/waiting. Watts writes concerning this pericope,

This episode in vv. 15 and 18 contains two of the clearest expressions of the Vision’s message: Yahweh has been calling upon Israel/Judah since the days of Uzziah to accept a passive role in international politics in order to assume a new part as God’s spiritual representative, his servant, to the world....He called for a willingness on the nation’s part to turn inward to its faith and to rest on God’s grace and promises.²²

Indeed, this pericope makes explicit the content of “this word” which was rejected by Judah’s leaders in v. 12. It was an offer of salvation through “returning and rest,” and through “quietness and trust.” This path is diametrically opposed to the frenetic scheming and shuttle diplomacy which had characterized Judah’s foreign policy. The word שׁוּבָה could imply repentance, or, as Beuken suggests, it could literally mean, “returning.” That is abort your journey to Egypt and

²¹ Roberts, “Isaiah 33: An Isaianic Elaboration of the Zion Tradition,” 21.

²² Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 397.

return to the land (he also points out that נִיחָה “rest” often has the occupation of the land as its background).²³ “Quietness” and “trust” both imply inaction on Judah’s part as it waits for YHWH’s plan to be realized. Instead, because they lacked faith that YHWH either could or would act on their behalf, they continued to work feverishly to save themselves.

In consequence of their decision not to trust, two things would follow. First, they would experience military disaster of the first order. Not only would they be defeated, they would be utterly routed until Zion was left abandoned like a lone flagstaff on a hill (v. 17). Second, the salvation which YHWH planned for them would be delayed until their plans had proven futile and they discovered that their salvation could only come through waiting on Him.

The message of this pericope is, in a real sense, the heart of Isaiah’s message, both in chs. 28–33 and in the book as a whole. This message is clearly in evidence in ch. 28 where we find a verbal link between נִיחָה “rest” (v. 15c) and the phrase זֹאת הַמְנוּחָה הַנִּיחָה לְעַיִף “this is the resting place, give the weary rest” (28:12c), and also between the phrase וְלֹא אָבוּא שְׁמוֹעַ “but you were not willing to hear” (28:12e), and וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם “but you were not willing” (v. 15e). In both of these passages God, through his prophet, offers the leaders of Judah a way out of their dilemma that involves quiet trust and resting, and in both instances this is rejected. This is in many ways reminiscent of Ahaz who, after being told “if you do not stand by faith, you will not stand at all” (7:9), rejected Isaiah’s offer of a sign. The sign was given anyway because God had plans for Judah which he was not going to allow the faithless Ahaz to spoil (7:14). Nevertheless Ahaz’ rejection of this sign meant that Judah must follow a difficult and hard path before those plans could be realized.

²³ Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 166.

Again in 28:16, in the midst of a judgment oracle against Judah’s rulers, YHWH announces his intention to establish Zion on a new foundation, one laid down on the line of justice and righteousness (v. 17). However this newly founded Zion could only be realized after hail had swept away “lie’s refuge,” and their covenant with death had been annulled (vv. 17–18). Only by severe trial would the “this people” ever discover that “the bed is too short for stretching out, and the covering is too narrow for wrapping oneself” (v. 20).

This message of waiting and trusting is also found in 32:17, where Isaiah echoes the language of 30:15 in his depiction of the coming age of salvation. Here he states, “then the deed of righteousness will be peace (שָׁלוֹם), and the work of righteousness will be quietness (הַשְׁקֵט) and trust (בְּטַח) forever.” In this verse we find two terms from 30:15 “quietness” (הַשְׁקֵט) and “trust” (בְּטַח/בבְּטָחָה).²⁴

The theme of salvation through waiting/ trusting also appears very prominently in 33:2 which echoes the wording of 30:18 very clearly. In 30:18d a blessing is pronounced on all who wait for YHWH, אֲשֶׁר יִכְלִיחוּ לֹ, לֹ. This is very close to the sentiment expressed in 33:2 where the believing remnant of Judah prays, יְהוָה חָנְנֵנוּ לְךָ קוּיֵנוּ. While this text uses קוּה for חִכָּה, the two words are synonyms and function as parallel terms in texts like Isa. 8:17 where Isaiah expresses his commitment to wait for YHWH—וְקוּיֵתִי לֹ. The use of the verb חָנַן in 33:2 also echoes 30:18a which declares יְחַכֵּה יְהוָה לְחַנְנֵכֶם. Hence this prayer expresses the desire of those who, having abandoned all hope of self-salvation, surrender in faith to YHWH and appeal to him to save them on his terms rather than theirs.

²⁴ Actually, the feminine noun בבְּטָחָה is a hapax legomenon in the Old Testament, but it comes from the same root and means the same thing as the masculine בְּטַח.

Isaiah 30:19–22: Isaiah’s prediction of a return of spiritual understanding to

Jerusalem’s leaders following a period of trial. Verses 19ff. are joined to the previous verse by means of the conjunction **כִּי**. In v. 18 Isaiah tells his audience that, after a period of waiting, YHWH will bestow grace and mercy on those who are willing to wait for him. This pericope shows what that grace will look like. First, he announces that “a people will dwell in Jerusalem” (v. 19a). This is apparently a reversal of v. 17 which depicts Zion as deserted and abandoned (cf. 32:14). Also, the appearance of **עַם** in this verse with a positive connotation echoes and, indeed, reverses its earlier use in a pejorative way (**הָעַם הַזֶּה**, 8:11–12; 9:16; 28:11, 14; 29:13–14; **עַם מְרִי**, 30:9a). Those who inhabit the Jerusalem of the future will be a transformed people with a renewed spiritual understanding. This is indicated by the promise that “your teacher will no longer be hidden” (“hide himself”? **יִכְתֹּם** *niphal* reflexive).

Wildberger suggests that the teacher (**מוֹדֵר**) spoken of in this text is YHWH himself. He writes, “Isaiah himself also uses the verb **יָרָה** (teach) in the *hiphil* when he speaks of teaching imparted by YHWH” (see 2:3; 28:26)²⁵ This is a reversal of YHWH’s former policy of hiding himself from the people of Judah (cf. 8:17; 45:15). The reference to “your eyes” seeing your teacher (**עֵינַיִךָ**) and “your ears” hearing a voice (**אָזְנוֹיִךָ**) constitutes a reversal of YHWH’s decree in 6:10, “Make the mind (**לֵב**) of this people dull, and its ears (**אָזְנוֹיִךָ**) make heavy, and its eyes (**עֵינַיִךָ**) smear over, lest it see with its eyes, and hear with its ears, and its mind (**לֵב**) understand, and turn and be healed.” It is this spiritual condition which was on display earlier in ch. 30:9–10 when the people were unwilling to “hear” YHWH’s teaching, and commanded to prophets not to “see.” A positive result of the people’s renewed ability to hear their teacher’s voice is that, under his guidance, they will return to the right path—“your ears will hear a word (**דְּבָר**) from behind

²⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–35*, 174.

you saying, this is *the way* (הַדֶּרֶךְ), walk in it.” Once again, this contrast with their earlier attitude which “rejected this word” (v. 12b, בִּדְבַר הַזֶּה מָאַסְתֶּם), and exhorted the prophets to “turn aside from the way (v. 11a, סִירוּ מִנִּי־דֶרֶךְ). The outpouring of divine grace upon the people also precipitates a conversion from false worship. Verse 22 indicates that the people, having their sight and hearing restored, and being in communication with their teacher will discover the true nature of the idols they have cherished and, declaring them “unclean” will divest themselves of them.

The theme of spiritual renewal and transformation for Israel which is so clearly expressed in 30:19–22 is also in key texts throughout chs. 28–33. In ch. 28 Isaiah announces that, after judgment has swept away the drunkards of Ephraim YHWH would become a “crown of glory” to a renewed remnant of his people (v. 5f.). Also in ch. 28, in the *mashal* of the farmer (vv. 23–29), Isaiah calls upon his audience to learn from the example of the farmer who taught by God (v. 26b). Thus Isaiah implies that the pious student can grasp God’s ways even though “his plan is wonderful” (v. 29b). This attitude of attentive listening and humbling learning from God stands in stark contrast to the haughty rejection of God’s teaching by the prophets and priests of Jerusalem. When confronted with Isaiah’s message their response was to lampoon him and to mock his message. They asked “whom does he presume to teach knowledge (אֵת־מִי יוֹרֶה דַעַת), and whom will he cause to perceive a message” (v. 9).

Chapter 29 also foresees a time when the spiritual sight of God’s people will be restored. In ch. 3 of this dissertation we demonstrated how ch. 29 moves from obduracy to clarity, from spiritual blindness and lack of perception to the restoration of sight and, hence, spiritual understanding. First, vv. 1–8 picture Ariel as complacent and completely unaware of the danger she is in. When the attack finally does arrive, it has an unreal, dreamlike quality. Second, vv. 9–

14 explain that a spirit of deep sleep has been poured out upon Judah's prophets and seers. This is an act of divine judgment and accounts for their inability to perceive the approaching disaster.

Third, vv. 16–24 show Judah's planners plotting in secret and engaged in “upside-down” (v. 16a, **הִפְכְּכֶם**) thinking. This circumstance is reversed in vv. 17–24 where **וְשָׁב** (v. 17b) indicates an about face from the current situation, i.e. a return to spiritual sanity.²⁶ In vv. 17–24 in the aftermath of the humbling of the proud and arrogant (i.e. the planners in vv. 15–16), comes a renewal of spiritual understanding. This renewal entails the restoration of hearing to the deaf (v. 18a) so that they can “hear the words of a book” (cf. vv. 11–12), and of sight to blind eyes (v. 18b). Verses 20–24 anticipate a day, after the proud have been humbled, when Jacob will “see...the work of my hands” and “sanctify my name” (v. 23). At that time “the wayward in spirit will know understanding, and the rebellious ones will learn doctrine” (v. 24). The terms **תַּעֲי** “wayward ones” and **בִּינָה** “understanding” in v. 24 echo the conflict between Isaiah and Jerusalem's drunken prophets and priests in 28:7–9. The reference to “rebellious ones,” also links this passage to ch. 30 (specifically vv. 1, 9).

Chapter 32 also foresees a time in the future when the impious and spiritually obtuse leaders of the Jerusalem of Isaiah's day will be replaced by a new king and his officials who will bring stability and safety to the city by their righteous and just rule (vv. 1–3). At that time, the spiritual blindness which has formerly characterized Judah's rulers will be removed. Here, once again, the language of sight and hearing is used—**וְלֹא תִשְׁעֶינָה עֵינֵי רְאִים וְאָזְנֵי שְׁמָעִים תִּקְשַׁבְנָה** (“the eyes of those who see will not be smeared over, and the ears of those who hear will listen”). Verse 4 envisions the transformations of those who were formerly “rash” (**נִמְהָרִים**, cf. 28:16; 5:19), a character trait of Judah's current leaders. In the new age these individuals will

²⁶ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 118.

“understand knowledge,” and therefore be capable of making sound policy. In v. 4 Isaiah also echoes the language of ch. 28 and its theme of “stammering lip” (v. 11). One difference is that whereas in ch. 28 those who spoke with “stammering lip” and “another tongue” were foreign invaders, in 32:4 those with a “stammering tongue” (note the conflation of terms) are Judah’s leaders. In the past they gave unintelligible counsel because of their lack of spiritual insight. In the age to come this will be rectified.

Finally, the theme of the restoration of sight/insight is in evidence in 33:17–20. This text proclaims that after their deliverance (vv. 1–13) and purification (vv. 14–16), the eyes of the people of Zion will “see a king in his raiment” (v. 17a). This passage emphasizes sight, both what the people will see, “a king,” and what they won’t see any longer, “the arrogant people...of a language too difficult to understand” (v. 19). The verbs for sight, and, appear multiple times in these four verses (ראה, 3x; חזה, 2x). “Eyes” עֵינַיִךְ are also mentioned twice (vv. 17, 20). This emphasis on sight is not simply physical; the wonders described in these verses are available only to the transformed eyes of the redeemed remnant. They come to a people purified by the fires of adversity and prepared for life in the New Jerusalem.

Isaiah 30:23–26: Isaiah’s depiction of a transformed Jerusalem and an ideal future for its inhabitants. This passage envisions an ideal future for Zion after judgment is past. Here “the blessing which the prophet depicts is the reverse of the day of judgment.”²⁷ Whereas the preceding pericope focused its attention on the spiritual transformation of the people of Zion, vv. 23–26 focus on the healing of the land and the superabundance which will accompany it. Indeed the picture which these verses paint depicts something beyond healing; it is transformation. The

²⁷ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 36.

fantastic proportions of nature's productivity in this text indicate that the author is employing rhetorical hyperbole. Oswalt writes,

“The passage must not be restricted to either a wholly literal or a wholly symbolic meaning. The former would suggest that the OT restricts blessing to the material and the physical, that it knows nothing of the spiritual... The latter would succumb to the false dichotomy between fact and value and suggest that God's realm is only the spiritual. In fact the whole earth is the Lord's and is full of his glory (6:3).²⁸

The natural abundance foreseen in this passage falls into two categories, water (vv. 23–25) and light (v. 26). As a result of increased rainfall the land will produce abundantly (v. 23). This will, in turn, benefit the livestock which will enjoy a greater range of pastureland, and be fed with seasoned fodder (v. 23) Another effect of plentiful rain is that streams of water will appear on the hills and mountains (v. 25). This is remarkable in that watercourses are usually found in valleys and low-lying areas. Watercourses are running on the hills and mountains are indicative of an overabundance of precipitation. We should also consider the possibility that Isaiah's depiction of Zion as a place of streams ties into a motif expressed elsewhere in the Old Testament in places like Ps. 46:5[4], נָהָר פְּלִינִי יִשְׁמְחוּ עִיר-אֱלֹהֵי. Since there is no physical “river” in Jerusalem it seems appropriate to assume that the river in question is a supra-historical reality. This same river is described in Ezek. 47:1–12 in connection with the restored sanctuary and the new Jerusalem (cf. Zech. 14:8; Joel 4:18[3:18]; John 7:37–39; Rev. 22:1–2). This motif also ties into ch. 33:21 where glorified Zion is depicted as a place of “a place of rivers” (מְקוֹם-נְהָרִים).²⁹

The sevenfold intensification of the light of the sun and the moon is indicative of the renewal of not only the earth but also the cosmos. Beuken suggests that “like the light of seven

²⁸ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 562.

²⁹ Steven Tuell, “The Rivers of Paradise: Ezekiel 47:1–12 and Genesis 2:10–14,” in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 171–189.

days' clearly points to the seven days of creation in which God created the world."³⁰ Hence, what is in view is a new cosmos, a new heaven and new earth. He writes,

Such intensity of light means that the sun, moon and stars, the lights created on the fourth day (Gen. 1:14–18) will have ceased to exist. Similarly the continuous interchange of day and night (Gen. 1:3, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31: 'and the evening and the morning, a...day') which so determines our existence will come to an end.³¹

Delitzsch writes concerning the sevenfold multiplication of the light of the sun and moon, "This also is not meant figuratively, any more than Paul means if figuratively, when he says, that with the manifestation of the 'glory' of the children of God, the 'corruption' of universal nature will come to an end."³² The increase of light depicted here indicates the onset of the eschaton, the age of consummation and glory. In some ways this prediction seems to anticipate John's description of the New Jerusalem, "there will be no night there (Rev. 21:25).

The theme of Zion's ideal future is also featured very prominently in two other passages in chs. 28–33: 32:15–17 and 33:17–24. In 32:15–20 Isaiah portrays a time when, after a period of mourning, the divine Spirit is poured out on Zion. The result of this outpouring is a reversal of the desolation depicted in vv. 9–14. In consequence of the Spirit's outpouring what used to be desert (מִדְבָּר) will be transformed into farmland (פְּרִמָּה), and what used to be considered valuable farmland will be so abundant that it will be indistinguishable from common scrubland (יַעַר).³³

This increased productivity mirrors that described in ch. 30, though it differs in detail, and, as in ch. 30, this transformation has a spiritual as well as a physical dimension. Verse 16 seems to indicate that the transformation of the land is emblematic of a transformation in human society. "Righteousness" and "justice" dwell in the "desert" and "farmland" because these

³⁰ W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah II*, 174.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2: 39.

³³ Recall how Solomon made silver as plentiful as stones in Jerusalem (1 Kings 10:27).

represent humanity which is being transformed by the divine presence. The “deed” (מעשה) of righteousness, and the “work” (עבודה) of righteousness (v. 17), echo 28:21 with its enigmatic reference to YHWH’s “strange” deed (מעשה), and “alien” work (עבודה). Indeed they appear to be their exact opposite. Whereas in ch. 28 YHWH exchanged his role as Zion’s protector and became its attacker, here his righteous work will guarantee Zion’s peace and safety. In vv. 17–18 Isaiah employs a number of terms to describe the blessedness of the coming age which also occur elsewhere in 28–33 in connection with the theme of salvation through resting/trusting. These include, שָׁאֲנָנוּת, מְנוּחָה, מְבֹטְחִים, בְּטַח, שְׁקֵט, שְׁלוֹם (2x), צְדָקָה (2x). The concluding verse of this unit, with its reference to “the ox” (השור), “the donkey” (החמור) and “those who sow on many waters” (זרעי על-כל-מים), although using different terms, is strongly evocative of 30:23–24.

The closing passage of Isaiah 33, vv. 17–24, is another passage in which the future blessedness and transformation of Zion is clearly presented. This pericope depicts a time after the time of distress is past and Zion dwells in safety. At that time the inhabitants of Zion will survey the horizon and ask, “Where is he that counted towers?” While this question is somewhat enigmatic, it seems clear that it speaks of some threatening aspect of the former situation which is now gone.³⁴ Interestingly 30:25 also associates the coming day of salvation with “towers” when he describes that time as “the day of great slaughter when towers fall.” In a similarly enigmatic comment ch.32 identifies this time of security and safety as a time when “in humiliation the city will be laid low” (v. 19b). While the historical referent of these statements is not clear or consistent, the common element seems to be that something which had represented a physical threat to Zion has been taken away.

³⁴ Delitzsch suggests that this refers to the individual charged with surveying the city’s defenses in preparation for an assault (*Isaiah*, 2: 63). Beuken also guesses that it has something to do with military reconnaissance (*Isaiah II*, 272).

Verse 20 describes Zion as a “secure habitation” (נִיְהָ שְׂאֲנָן) and a “tent” (אֹהֶל) that cannot be moved. These terms echo the language of 32:18 where Zion is described synonymous terms such as מִבְּטָחִים מִשְׁכָּנוֹת and מְנוּחָת שְׂאֲנָנוֹת. Another aspect of Zion’s security is that it is a “place of rivers” and “broad canals” (v. 21). This motif of Zion as a place of abundant waters is also present in 30:25 which predicts that, in the coming age, the hills of Judah will be covered with פְּלִיגִים יִבְלִי-מַיִם, and in 32:20 which pronounces a blessing on those who sow “upon all waters” (עַל-כָּל-מַיִם). This pericope concludes with a promise that, in the transformed Zion, “none will say, ‘I am sick’” (v. 24). This idea links to 30:26 where Isaiah foresees that YHWH will “heal the wound caused by his blow.” These two passages are also connected by the promise of forgiven sin. In 33:24b the prophets says, “The people who dwell in her will be forgiven iniquity.” While ch. 30 does not mention the forgiveness of sin explicitly, it is clear that “the wound caused by his blow” is punishment for sin, and its healing implies forgiveness. The use of the term עֲוֹן in 33:24 also appears to echo 30:13, “this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall.... We have already seen above how 30:26a links to this passage.

Finally, we would suggest that theme of Zion’s ideal future appears primarily in the second half of chs. 28–33, after 30:18. This supports observations made earlier in this chapter by Delitzsch and others that the message of these chapters moves from judgment to salvation, from disaster to deliverance. The list below illustrates the dominance of this theme from 30:18–33–33:24.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 30:18a: YHWH waits to be gracious | 33:2: Be gracious to us O YHWH |
| 30:18: YHWH is a God of justice | 33:5: He has filled Zion with justice |
| 30:18d: Blessed! (אַשְׁרֵי) | 32:20b: Blessed! (אַשְׁרֵי) |
| 30:18d: Blessed are all who wait for him | 33:2a: We wait for you |

30:23: Seed and rain	32:20a: Sowing on waters
30:23f: Broad pastures	33:17b: A land that stretches far
30:24a: Ox and donkey	32:20b: Ox and donkey
30:25c: Streams of water on Mt. Zion	33:21b–c: Zion a place of rivers and streams
30:25e: When the towers fall	33:18c: Where is he that counted towers?
31:9: YHWH’s fire in Jerusalem	33:14c: Who can dwell with consuming fire?
30:33: YHWH’s breath consumes the wicked	33:12: Like thorns...the peoples will be burned

Isaiah 30:27–33: Isaiah’s prediction of destruction for Assyria. The last pericope in ch. 30 depicts YHWH’s coming to drive the foreign nations from Mt. Zion. The imagery of fire and burning is a prominent feature of this prophecy. YHWH comes with “nose burning” (v. 27b, אפו בוער), “liver raging” (v. 27b, כבד מִשָּׂאָה), and “his tongue devouring like fire” v. (27d, גִּלְשׁוֹנוֹ וְלִשְׁוֹנוֹ), “vehement anger” and אש אוכלת אדם and “a flame of fire devouring” (v. 30c). He has prepared Tophet for a sacrifice and made its pyre deep. It is well supplied with wood and fire (v. 33d, אֵשׁ וְעֵצִים הִרְבָּה). The fire is kindle by YHWH’s breath which is like a stream of brimstone (v. 33e–g).³⁵

The objects of divine wrath in this passage are “the nations” (v. 28c) and Assyria (v. 31b). Up to this point in chs. 28–33 Assyria had not been mentioned by name. But, with this reference it becomes clear that Assyria is the attacker which is depicted in 28:1–6, 14–22, 29:1–8, and most likely in 33:1. Assyria is mentioned by name again in 31:8, and, as in ch. 30, his downfall is associated with YHWH’s fire which is in Jerusalem. The destruction of Assyria is mentioned again in 33:1 where is described as a “destroyer” and “betrayed” but is not called by name. As in

³⁵ This description of YHWH destroying Assyria with a consuming fire echoes Isaiah’s earlier prophecy in ch. 10. וְהָיָה אֲרִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֵשׁ וּקְדוּשׁוֹ לְלִהְבָּה וּבְעֵרָה וְאָכְלָה שִׁתּוֹ וּשְׁמִירוֹ בְּיוֹם אָחָד: (Isa. 10:17).

30:27 Zion's attacker is dispersed by YHWH's approach (v. 3). Also, as in chs. 30 and 31, Zion's attacker(s) will be consumed by fire (v. 12). The destruction of Assyria, which is mentioned explicitly in 30:27–33, 31:8–9 and 33:1, 3–4, 10–13, is good news for Zion. That it is mentioned only in the second half of chs. 28–33 supports the observation that the message of these chapters moves from judgment to salvation.

This section has shown that ch. 30 is the thematic center of the chs. 28–33. In this chapter all the major themes of this section of Isaiah are present. Many of these themes may be found elsewhere in Isaiah, but within chs. 28–33 they have a unique tenor that is conditioned by their special literary and rhetorical context. Chapter 30 represents a complete survey of the overall message of these chapters. This may not be said of any other chapter within this section of Isaiah. Chapter 28, as the introduction to the section adumbrates many of its themes, but with an emphasis on those themes related to condemnation and judgment. Chapter 33 as the concluding section is also well represented, but is weighted toward the special emphasis on redemption. The chart below summarizes the seven themes which form the core of Isa. 28–33 and their distribution.

	Ch. 28	Ch. 29	Ch. 30	Ch. 31–32	Ch. 33
Theme I	vv. 16–19	vv. 15–16	vv. 1–7	31:1–4	
Theme II	vv. 7–13	vv. 9–14	vv. 8–11	31: 2–3; 32	
Theme III	vv. 1–4; 14–22	vv. 1–5	vv. 12–14	31: 4–5; 32:9–14	vv. 7–13
Theme IV	vv. 11–13, 16		vv. 15–18	32:17	v. 2
Theme V	vv. 23–29	vv. 17–24	vv. 19–22	31: 6–7; 32:1–8	v. 17–20
Theme VI	v. 5, vv. 16–17	v. 17	vv. 23–26	32:15–20	v. 21–24
Theme VII		v. 6–8	vv. 27–33	31:8–9	vv. 1, 10–13

The Role of Verses 15–18

In the preceding section of this chapter we have attempted to show that ch. 30 is the structural and thematic center of chs. 28–33. Now we will argue that ch. 30 itself has a concentric structure centered upon the pericope found in verses 15–18 . We will also attempt to show, using syllable counts that this pericope is the center not only of ch. 30, but of chs. 28–33 as a whole. As the center around which these chapters are arranged, these verses enunciate the central focus and controlling theme of chs. 28–33.

In ch. 4 of this dissertation we showed that ch. 30 has a parallel structure based upon key-word correspondences. The center section of this parallel structure is vv. 15–18 . If our analysis is correct then this pericope serves as the hinge not only of chapter 30, but also for the entire section. According to David Dorsey, “In nonnarrative compositions with a symmetrical structure, the central unit often represents the highlight, centerpiece or most important point, much like the center of symmetrically arranged work of art.”³⁶ The parallel structure of ch. 30 is presented below.³⁷

A vv. 1–7	Going down to Egypt	הַהֲלֹכִים לְרֵדַת מִצְרַיִם
B vv. 8–11	Departing from the path	סוּרוּ מִנִּי־דֶרֶךְ הַטּוֹ מִנִּי־אֶרֶץ
C vv. 12–14	Breaking	פְתָאם לְפַתַע יָבֹא שְׁבָרָה
D vv. 15–18	Admonition	אֲשֶׁרִי כָל־חֹכֵי לֹ
B' vv. 19–22	Walking on the path	זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ לָכֹו בֹו
C' vv. 23–26	Healing	בְּיוֹם חָבַשׁ יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁבְרֵ עַמּוֹ
A' vv. 27–33	Going up to Zion	בְּהוֹלֵךְ בְּחִלָּיל לָבֹא בְּהַר־יְהוָה

As the central unit of ch. 30, vv. 15–18 , encapsulates its dominant concerns. Verse 15a–16a condemns the leaders of Zion for rejecting YHWH’s offer of salvation through “returning and rest...quietness and trust.” Verses 16b–17e announce that the consequences for this will be

³⁶ David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 41.

³⁷ For the convenience of the reader we reproduce our diagram from ch. 4.

military disaster, and the ultimate abandonment. Implicit in the threat of disaster is a condemnation of Judah’s pact with Egypt, represented in this text by the reference to the “horses” on which the Judeans wish to flee. Verse 18 announces that, because of Judah’s rejection of YHWH’s offer of salvation through resting, etc., YHWH is waiting to redeem them.

This pericope then, has a three part structure.

A	vv. 15a–16a	Salvation rejected	36 syllables, 13 stresses, 4 cola
B	vv. 16b–17e	Disaster announced	73 syllables, 29 stresses, 11 cola
A	v. 18	Deliverance delayed	34, syllables, 13 stresses, 4 cola

But beyond the internal and thematic structure of these verses themselves, the centrality of vv. 15–18 can be demonstrated by the more mechanical structural features. When we probe the center of both ch 30 and the whole of ch. 28–33, we discover a remarkable symmetry. First, within ch 30, our syllable counts show the following structure built around v. 18.

Ch. 30:1–17	Jerusalem’s devastation	524 syllables, 66 cola
Ch. 30:18	YHWH’s explanation	34 syllables
Ch. 30:19–33	Jerusalem’s restoration	511 syllables, 66 cola

As it turns out, v. 18 lies at the center of this chapter. And, as we noted in our ch. 4, this same v. 18 provides a pivot to what follows in v. 19. It looks backward to the judgment theme which dominates vv. 1–17 and forward to the message of salvation which dominates vv. 19–33. In this way it serves as a hinge for the chapter, and contains the very crucial announcement that, while YHWH desires to be gracious and compassionate, he must wait to manifest his salvation until Judah’s faithless plans have failed. It also pronounces the faithful who patiently and obediently wait on YHWH to be blessed.³⁸

However, while v. 18 lies at the center of ch. 30, the syllable counts for the whole chs. 28–33 do not build a pure symmetry around this verse. Chapters 28–29 are 230 syllables longer than

³⁸ Oswalt writes concerning 30:18, “In some ways this verse sums up the message of the book: those who exalt themselves in an effort to meet their won needs are doomed to failure, because only God is exalted in the universe (2:12–17) and because only he can meet their needs (40:27–31), Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 557.

chs. 31–33. Thus the center of the whole corpus falls earlier than 30:18. By our syllable counts the center of chs. 28–33 is located at 30:15, and, as it turns out, this verse is also a key verse not only in its positioning, but especially in its articulation of the central theme: “Thus said Lord Yhwh, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest you will be saved; in quietness and trust will be your strength. But you refused.” In the end then, the slight asymmetry around chapter 30, resulting in a focus on v. 15, combined with the centrality of chapter 30, with its center at v. 18, combine to highlight the short pericope of 30:15–18 as the key both to the chapter and to the whole of chs. 28–33. When all the themes of Isaiah 28–33 are taken into account a convincing case can be made that the theme of salvation through resting/trusting/waiting is the central message.

Based upon syllable counts, we can also locate this message at the absolute center of these chapters. The total number of syllables from 28:1 to the end of 30:14 is 2049, while the total number of syllables between 30:16 and 33:24 is 2026 (a difference of a mere 23 syllables. More precisely, we can locate the exact center of the entire corpus at v. 15c, with 2049 syllables from 28:1 to 30:14 and 2049 syllables from 30:15d to the end of chapter 33. This reveals the placement of a single line of poetry at the structural and thematic heart and center of Isa. 28–33. Indeed, this single line of poetry captures the heart of God’s message to his people in Zion, that,

בְּשׁוּבָה וְנַחַת תִּוְשָׁעוּן.

In addition to syllable counts, our identification of the center of Isaiah 28–33 is also supported by line counts. By our count chs. 28–33 contain a total of 523 lines. The total number of lines leading up to 30:15–18 is 258, while the total number of lines from 30:19–33:24 is 246. Thus the difference between the first half and second half of Isa. 28–33 is only 12 lines. If we narrow it down further, taking only v. 15 as the center of these chapters, then we count 258 lines

before and 260 after. This narrows the difference considerably, leaving a difference of only 2 lines in the sections of coming before and after 30:15. Once again, if we narrow our focus even further, taking 30:15c as the center line of chs. 28–33 we get 260 lines before and 262 after this line—a difference of 2 lines. Therefore we conclude based on both syllable and line counts that 30:15–18 is the center unit of chs. 28–33, while 30:15 is the central verse, and 30:15c is the central line. Remarkably the absolute center of this portion of Isaiah coincides with its thematic center. This phenomenon is not likely to be an accident, but rather suggests a deliberate literary arrangement.

Thus, God’s message in this section of Isaiah is a statement of the simple truth that Zion will not be delivered until it ceases trying to be its own savior, until it stops making plans of its own and trusts God’s plan by waiting in faith for its consummation—“He who believes will not be in haste” (28:16).

Reading of Isaiah 28–33 as a Whole

Having built the case for the unity and integrity of Isa 28–33 on both structural and thematic features which appear to have been built into the very design of these chapters as a unified literary composition, we will now, at the last, turn our attention to a reading of the whole that should demonstrate this comprehensive coherence in structure and in message. When viewed as a whole this corpus displays a chiasmic structure with ch. 30 at its center.

- A The unnamed destroyer threatens Zion (ch. 28)
- B The devastation and transformation of Zion (ch. 29)
- C YHWH waits to be gracious to Zion (ch. 30)
- B’ The devastation and transformation of Zion (chs. 31–32)
- A’ The unnamed destroyer no longer threatens Zion (ch. 33)

This overall structure shows linear progression as we read to the center and then out again. But there is another dimension of coherence within these chapters which suggests yet another way of

reading and understand them. That is to see it as a “ring composition.” In her discussion of the need to understand the distinctive literary forms of the Hebrew Bible, Mary Douglas describes the ring composition thus,

Ring form is the basis for a consciously contrived literary form, ring composition, used in antiquity to construct longer pieces. In ring composition the conclusion matches the start and so encloses the piece as in a ring. The opening unit, thus matched by the conclusion, is repeated in the mid-term. This puts the main idea, the central thesis, at the turning point or centre of the literary work, splitting it into two halves which frame the middle: ‘all we have to do is open the book to the middle and read. This reveals the book’s focal concepts.’³⁹

As we review the overall structure and message of chs. 28 to 33, we will operate upon the assumption that, in addition to reading the text in a linear fashion, attention must be given to how the corresponding sections of the ring relate to one another.

The Role of 28:1–6

Before examining the movement of chs. 28–33 as a whole some observations on the role of 28:1–6 are in order. One of the most puzzling issues related to the overall unity and structure of Isa. 28–33 is the fact that the first of its six woe oracles is directed to Ephraim rather than Judah. This raises the obvious question of why a division of Isaiah which most scholars agree is addressed to Judah should begin with an oracle against Ephraim. Various explanations have been offered. Some redaction critics solve the problem by arguing that this passage is a displaced section of the oracles against the nations in chs. 13–23 (27). It was moved to this location secondarily because of its use of the woe oracle form which is characteristic of chs. 28–33.⁴⁰ Others, such as Hayes and Irvine, have argued that the section begins with an oracle against Ephraim because chs. 28–33 date from the period just prior to the fall of Samaria (727–722 BC),

³⁹ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 50.

⁴⁰ Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 186.

and that its message is not addressed primarily to Judah, but to Ephraim and Judah.⁴¹ Beuken explains the presence of an oracle against Ephraim at this location by hypothesizing that a later tradent has reworked an oracle against Ephraim using a literary technique called the “blurring of the actants,” so that the prophecy could be applied to Judah and Jerusalem.⁴² Oswalt probably represents the majority of scholars when he suggests that this prophecy has been placed here as a warning to the leaders of Judah, that they “are just like their counterparts in Samaria and thus may expect the same fate.”⁴³

We would suggest that the function of 28:1–6 is to preview the progression of chs. 28–33 as they move from threat to promise, from judgment to salvation. Exum has also suggested that this passage plays such a role. She writes, “The abrupt transition which sets 28:1–6 apart from vv. 7ff. calls attention to the introductory function of the judgment against Ephraim with its promise of a remnant. Though judgment and promise alternate in 28–32, the essential movement of the collection as a whole is from judgment to promise.”⁴⁴ The passage opens with a pronouncement of woe against the rulers Ephraim who are characterized as “drunkards” (v. 1a) and “those struck down by wine” (v. 1d). Verse 2 introduces a “strong and mighty one” who will cast down the “proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim” and trample it with his feet (vv. 2–3). Verse 4 indicates that Ephraim will be swallowed up by its attacker as easily a first ripe fig.

While vv. 1–4 contain a clear threat and judgment, vv. 5–6 foresee, just as clearly, a time of restoration which will follow judgment. Verse 5 envisions a day when a remnant of Ephraim will embrace YHWH as their “crown of glory and a diadem of beauty.” When that day comes YHWH

⁴¹ Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah the Eight Century Prophet*, 321.

⁴² Beuken, “Women and the Spirit, the Ox and the Ass,” 7.

⁴³ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 505.

⁴⁴ Exum, “Isaiah 28–32” 145.

will also act as a guarantor of just government (“a spirit of judgment to the one who sits on the seat of judgment”), and of strength to those who defend the nation from attack (“strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate”).

The remainder of ch. 28 (vv. 7–29) is addressed to Judah. Nevertheless it seems certain that the author intends to draw a connection between the destiny of Ephraim and Judah. The analogy between the two kingdoms is made explicit in v. 7a, “these also err with wine.” This description is clearly intended to draw an analogy between the two parties, and to suggest that the fate of Judah mirrors that which Isaiah foresees for Ephraim in 28:1–6. Like Ephraim, Judah’s leaders are drunk with wine, i.e. incapable of exercising sound judgment. Like Ephraim, Judah will be attacked by a foreign power which will have the destructive power of a flood (vv. 2, 15, 17), or a hail storm (vv. 2, 17). Like Ephraim, Judah will be trampled (vv. 3, 18) and swallowed up (v. 4, 7). But also like Ephraim, after being subjected to the fires of judgment, Judah will experience conversion and transformation (vv. 5–6). Thus, vv. 1–6 are paradigmatic. They lay out the pattern of judgment followed by transformation which characterizes chs. 28–33 as a whole.

Chapters 28 and 33

We previously quoted Douglas to the effect that “in ring composition the conclusion matches the start and so encloses the piece as in a ring.” Therefore, if chs. 28–33 are a ring composition as we have suggested then chs. 28–33 should mirror one another. However, since chs. 28–33 move from threat to promise we should expect that the correspondence of these two chapters will be by way of contrast, with ch. 28 emphasizing the element of threat, and ch. 33 the element of promise. A comparison of the two chapters shows that this is precisely the case.

First of all, both chapters open with a reference to an unnamed attacker. In ch. 28 this attacker is described as a “strong and mighty one” (v. 2a) who will devastate Ephraim like a

“hail-storm” or a mighty overflowing storm of waters (v.2b–c). That this is the same invader who will devastate Judah is shown by the fact that the same kind of language is used in ch. 28 to depict the attack on Jerusalem (vv. 15–19). Chapter 33 also opens with a reference to an unnamed destroyer (v. 1). However, in contrast to ch. 28, the emphasis is not on the destructive power of the attacker, but on the limitations of his power. After he has finished destroying, he himself will be destroyed. This implies that the destroyer exercises his power within limits set by YHWH. He is an instrument to accomplish YHWH’s purpose and will be discarded when he no longer suits that purpose. In ch. 28 the attacker is also clearly YHWH’s instrument (cf. 10:6ff.). Verse 2 indicates that the “strong and mighty one” belongs to YHWH, while v. 11 declares that it is YHWH who will speak to his people with the “stammering lip” of the foreign invader. In v. 21 Isaiah describes the coming attack on Jerusalem as YHWH’s “strange deed,” and his “foreign work.”

Second, both chapters emphasize the importance of waiting. In ch. 33, the community prays for relief from oppression, but couches its prayer in the language of patient waiting—“YHWH be gracious to us, we wait for you” (v. 2). This is the prayer of a chastised people who have learned their lesson. Conversely, in ch. 28 the community has not yet learned this lesson. YHWH’s offer of rest had been rejected; therefore the community must endure chastisement (v. 11). Yet even as Isaiah threatens destruction he renews his counsel to wait when he writes, “He who believes will not be in haste” (v. 16).

A third point of contact between chs. 28 and 33 is YHWH’s promise to establish Zion on a permanent foundation, built upon the principles of justice and righteousness. In ch. 28 this promise is found in vv. 16–17 where YHWH’s promises to establish Zion on a secure foundation using “justice as a line and righteousness as plumb line.” Chapter 33 echoes this promise using

the image of a “tent that will never be moved,” whose “stakes will never be pulled up,” nor its “ropes broken” (v. 20). And, as in ch. 28, ch. 33 emphasizes the role of justice (מִשְׁפָּט) and righteousness (צְדָקָה) in the New Jerusalem (v. 5). In ch. 28 this promise to establish Zion is located in the midst of a judgment oracle. This would seem to indicate that Zion can only be established on a firm foundation after the refuge of lies and falsehood which its rulers had erected had been demolished. Chapter 33 indicates the same thing; the only difference is that it sees this process from the perspective of those who have survived the destruction, while ch. 28 sees it from the perspective of those destined to endure it.

Finally, chs. 28 and 33 mirror each other in their employment of the water imagery to depict YHWH’s activity relative to Zion. Whereas, in ch. 28 Jerusalem will suffer under the destructive waters of a flood, in ch. 33 Zion becomes a “place of broad rivers and streams” which serve to protect it from attack (v. 21). Such imagery invites comparison with Isa. 8:6–8,

Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah which go gently... Therefore, behold, *Adonay* will bring upon them the waters of the River (Euphrates) mighty and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; and it will go up beyond all its channels, and go over all its banks; and it will sweep into Judah; overflowing and passing on, it will reach the neck; and the spreading of its wings will fill the breadth of your land O Immanuel.

The flood waters of ch. 28 appear to correspond to the “waters of the River,” while the protective streams of ch. 33 correspond to the “waters of Shiloah.” In his discussion of Isa. 7–8 Levinson suggests that Shiloah, one of the conduits which carried water from the Gihon spring into Jerusalem corresponds to “the sacred stream so prominent in the myth of the cosmic mountain, the river whose channels ‘gladden the city of God (Ps. 46:5), the ‘Fountain of Life’ (36:10).”⁴⁵ Conversely, in this context, the waters of the Euphrates correspond to the “violent waters of

⁴⁵ Jon D. Levinson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 159.

chaos” which will sweep into Judah with destructive power. Thus, chs. 28 and 33 depict Zion at a time when it is in danger of being destroyed by the waters of chaos, in the form of the Assyrian army, and afterward, when, having been delivered by divine intervention, it dwells securely under the protection of the river of paradise. In light of these strong correspondences we suggest that chs. 28 and 33 of Isaiah represent obverse sides of the same coin. Chapter 28 depicts Zion under threat of Assyrian invasion, while ch. 33 represents a Zion which dwells securely having been delivered from the Assyrian threat.

Chapters 29 and 31–32

Moving inward from the outer ring, chs. 28 and 33, we come to the next layer of the ring composition, chs. 29 and 31–32 . These two divisions of Isa. 28–33 present a remarkable degree of correspondence. First, the two texts are very nearly the same length with 780 syllables in ch. 29 and 793 syllables in chs. 31–32 . More importantly, they each have three sections which parallel one another in terms of subject matter and theme. This correspondence in structure and theme is illustrated below.

	Ch. 29	Ch. 31–32
Distress and Deliverance	29:1–8	31:1–9
Spiritual Assessment of Leaders	29:9–14	32:1–8
Spiritual Renewal and Restoration	29:15–24	32:9–20

As the above outline shows, both of these texts move from distress to promise. This is in keeping with the overall movement of chs. 28–33 as we have seen with respect of 28:1–6 and also in chs. 28 and 33. The movement from threat to promise is not only evident *within* each respective panel, but also *between* chs. 29 and. 31–32 . We also discern a movement from obscurity to clarity between these two panels. Things that were spoken of cryptically in chs. 28–29 become clear in ch. 31–32. For instance, in ch. 29 we still do not know the identity of Zion’s human assailant, but in ch. 31 it becomes clear that this assailant is Assyria (v. 8). Also, whereas in ch.

29 we are still in the dark as to the identity of the parties to Judah's covenant with death (28: 15), and the subject of the plans Judah's leaders are hiding from God (v. 15), in ch. 31 it becomes clear that these plans have to do with forming a mutual defense pact with Egypt (vv. 1–3). With these factors in mind we will now turn our attention to the three parallel sections in chs. 29 and 31–32 .

29:1–8; 31:1–9. Both of these chapters open with an account of the distress and sudden deliverance of Zion (29:1–8; 31:1–9). In both chapters YHWH acts as both assailant and savior. In 29:2–3 YHWH announces in the first person, “I will distress Ariel,” and “I will encamp...against you.” Chapter 31 affirms that it is YHWH who “has brought disaster,” and that he “will rise up against the house of evil doers” (vv. 2–3). Verse. 3 states that “YHWH will stretch out his hand so that the helper (Egypt) will stumble, and the one helped will fall.” So we see that in both of these prophecies, as in chs. 28 and 33, YHWH is the primary assailant, while the human attackers are merely his instruments.

Also both prophecies state that Zion will be saved by YHWH in the eleventh hour. In ch. 29 Isaiah describes YHWH's intervention using the language of theophany. It will happen “suddenly, in an instant” (v. 5c), with “thunder,” “earthquake,” “loud noise,” and “devouring flame of fire” (v. 6). In ch. 31 Isaiah compares YHWH's intervention on Zion's behalf to a lion defending its prey, or birds hovering overhead to defend their nest (vv. 4–5). The language of warfare predominates in both passages. In ch. 29 the emphasis is upon the nations who war against Zion (vv. 7–8, *עַל־אֲרִיאֵל הַצְּבָאִים כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם*), while ch. 31 emphasizes YHWH's action in coming down to make war on Mt. Zion (v. 4, *כִּן יֵרֵד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְצַבָּא עַל־הַר־צִיּוֹן*). Thus each one confirms that Zion is both inviolable and subject to attack. When it is attacked, the real attacker is YHWH. Though human agents are involved, their role is limited to testing and purifying Zion,

and when they have played their role to YHWH's satisfaction, then they become the objects of his wrath and anger.

29:9–14; 32:1–8. The second section of both speeches draws attention to Jerusalem's spiritual and political leaders (29:9–14; 32:1–8). Chapter 29 emphasizes the fact that the rulers of Jerusalem have been deprived of understanding due to an act of divine judgment. YHWH has poured out upon them a “spirit of slumber” which inhibits their ability to understand his ways and respond properly. Here God's word is compared to a “sealed-book” which the leaders of Zion are unable to read. In ch. 32 this situation has been reversed. Whereas in ch. 29 the leaders' eyes were smeared over and their heads covered, in ch. 32 their eyes see, their ears hear, their heart understands and their tongue speaks clearly. The juxtaposition of these two sections suggests that in the future YHWH will replace Judah's current leaders from who he is hiding his plans (cf. 8:17) with godly and wise rulers who will provide spiritually competent leadership.

29:15–24; 32:9–20. The third section of chs. 29 and 31–32 envisions an ideal future for Israel. This future is depicted as a transformation of nature, which adumbrates a similar transformation within God's redeemed people. Both pericopes describe this transformation as an exchange of status between the “fruitful field” and the “brush land” (29:17, וְהַכְרַמִּים לְיַעַר יִהְיֶה; 32:15, וְכַרְמֵי לְיַעַר יִהְיֶה). Both also emphasize that this transformation will occur after a limited duration of time. This is evident from the use of temporal clauses in each case. In 29:17 the change is to be expected “in but a little while” (הֲלוֹא-עוֹד מְעַט מְזַעַר), while 32:15 announces that the current state of mourning only last “until the Spirit is poured out from on high” (עַד-יִפְרֹחַ). Additionally, both passages emphasize that the coming transformation is

YHWH's work (29:23, מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָי; 32:17, מַעֲשֵׂה), and that this work will be characterized by social justice (מַעֲשֵׂה הַצְּדָקָה).

In addition to parallel movement we note also several motifs which the two speeches have in common. Both speak of the Yahweh's "furnace" (29:1–2; 31:9). In both, Zion is the scene of warfare. In 29:7 the nations fight (צָבָא) against Ariel, and in 31:4 Yahweh comes down to fight (צָבָא) the nations on Zion. Both sections emphasize the superiority of God's wisdom over human planning (29:15; 31:2). Both speak of the effusion of רוּחַ "spirit." In 29:10 we are told that a "spirit of deep sleep" has been "poured out" on Judah's leaders, while in 32:15 it is announced that the Spirit (of God) will be "poured out" from on high in the age of renewal.⁴⁶ Finally, chapter 29 underscores the blind eyes and distant hearts of Judah's leaders (vv. 10, 13), while in ch. 32 we read of the seeing eyes and understanding hearts in the leader(s) promised for the future (32:3–4).

Chapter 30

We now to ch. 30 which, we have argued, is the middle-member of the ring composition in chs. 28–33. If we are correct in this assessment, then, according to Douglas' theory (see above) the following should be true of ch. 30, 1) it should be the turning point or center of the composition, and, 2) it should contain the main idea or central thesis of composition.

Is ch. 30 the turning point or center of chs. 28–33? We have already demonstrated that ch. 30 is indeed the center of chs. 28–33 both thematically and structurally. All of the major themes of the section are recapitulated in ch. 30 and it contains extensive links to the chapter

⁴⁶ These two verses are the only places in Isaiah which employ the image of spirit being "poured out." Usually when רוּחַ is said to be "poured out" (Joel 3:1 = 2:28; Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10), the verb used is נָסַךְ. In 32:15, however, the verb is עָרַה (ni.). Most likely this variation is used for the sake of alliteration with יָעַר (32:15).

which precede and follow it. To quote Douglas, “all we have to do is open to the middle and read,” and in doing so we will encounter the “focal concepts” of the composition.⁴⁷

We have argued that the middle section of ch. 30, vv. 15–18, embody the central theme of chs. 28–33, namely that salvation comes through resting/trusting/waiting. This message is reiterated at the beginning (28:16), in the middle (30:18) and at the end (33:2) of this composition. This section also emphasizes that, while Zion cannot be delivered by human effort, human effort, rooted in unbelief can have the effect of delaying divine intervention until the futility of such effort is fully demonstrated. Underlying all of this is the fact of the ultimate inviolability of Zion. Zion, like the Davidic dynasty to which it is inextricably linked, may be chastised with the rod of men (2 Sam. 7), but can never be permanently destroyed. Hence, Zion’s trials, while severe, do not lead to destruction but to transformation.

Lying as it does at the center of chs. 28–33, ch. 30 is also the turning point. We have suggested, along with others, that a movement from threat to promise is discernable in chs. 28–33. This movement is readily detected within ch. 30 itself. Many commentators have noted the transition from judgment to salvation which takes place in the middle of ch. 30, specifically at v. 18. This verse is the climax of vv. 1–17 which focus exclusively on the rejection of divine guidance by the leaders of Judah which results in the withdrawal of divine assistance, resulting in military disaster. Verse 18 announces that because of the leaders’ rejection of YHWH’s offer of salvation by resting/trusting/waiting, YHWH is waiting to deliver Zion. It then pronounces a blessing on all who are willing to wait on him. The rest of the chapter subsequent to v. 18 depicts a time of restoration which will follow Zion’s trial.

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 50.

The transition from judgment to salvation which characterizes ch. 30 may also be seen in the composition as a whole. This can be seen by comparing chs. 28 and 33, the first and last sections of the composition. While both chapters mention Zion's distress and future security, it is clear that the theme of judgment dominates ch. 28 while salvation is the dominant note of ch. 33. In ch. 28 the destroyer is depicted as unstoppable and unrelenting, but in ch. 33 the first thing we hear about the destroyer is that he himself will be destroyed. After this Zion's distress is only mentioned as a foil or prelude to YHWH's glorious intervention on her behalf. In ch. 28 Zion's firm foundation is mentioned in passing, and then only in the context of a judgment oracle, but in ch. 33 its security and permanency is described in glorious detail. The same is true for chs. 29 and 31–32. While both sections depict Zion's distress and deliverance, only ch. 31 clearly announces the destruction of the invader, and only here is the invader condemned by name. Chapters 31–32 also give prominence to the theme of salvation by announcing the replacement of Judah's blind and ungodly leaders by new leaders who will rule in righteousness and wisdom (vv. 11–8). The announcement of the outpouring of the Spirit from on high in 32:15 appears to be a reversal of the outpouring of the spirit of slumber on Judah's prophets and seers (29:10).

Finally, it appears that the message chs 28–33 is heavily weighted toward the center. The front and back ends of this composition are heavy on metaphor and imagery but light on details. For example, neither Assyria nor Egypt is mentioned by name in ch. 28 or 33. The reader does not discover the identity of the other party to Judah's covenant with death (29:15) until 30:1, and does not discover the identity of Judah's assailant until 30:31. Egypt is mentioned again just after the end of ch. 30 in 31:1, and Assyria a few verses later in 31:8, but after this they disappear again into the realm of abstraction and metaphor. The next time we encounter Assyria it has become an unnamed "destroyer" and "betrayers."

In summary, we have argued that Isaiah 30 is the center of chs. 28–33, and that 30:15–18 is the central passage. In support of this we have adduced evidence from structure by showing that ch. 30 is located in the center of the major divisions of 28–33. We have seen that the pattern of the woe oracles in this corpus points to ch. 30 as the center. We have also argued that ch. 30 itself is arranged concentrically with vv. 15–18 at its center. We have also seen that our contention that 30:15–18 is the central unit of chs. 28–33 is supported quantitatively by syllable counts with 15d, “in returning and rest you will be saved” located at the very epicenter of these chapters. The case for the centrality of ch. 30 has also been supported by showing that all of the major themes of chs. 28–33 are found in this chapter and that ch. 30 interacts with all parts of these chapters. Based upon our structural and thematic analysis we have argued that the central message of Isa. 28–33 is salvation by trusting/waiting. This message challenges the people of God to cease their frantic efforts to cobble together plans of their own and to look to YHWH as their true savior. Only when the people Zion trust that his plans are right and wait patiently for their realization, will they experience the blessing for which they are destined.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the confluence of theme and structure in Isaiah 28–33. This process has compelled us to perform a detailed literary and structural examination of each of the major divisions of the corpus. In each division we have provided a lineated text, noting syllable, stress and colon counts, an annotated translation, and an analysis of literary structure. In addition to these “nuts and bolts” analyses, we have also traced the thought progression and thematic coherence of each division.

When we undertook this study we set out to answer several questions. The first of these questions has to do with the literary character of Isa. 28–33. Are these chapters a composite text made up of bits of tradition collected from diverse times and circumstances, or do they constitute a literary unity possessing an overall literary design and structure? The second question has to do with the role of ch. 30 in the literary structure of chs. 28–33. We hypothesized that this chapter played a central unifying role, both literally and figuratively, within this corpus. A third question had to do with the confluence of theme and structure. If ch. 30 is the center of chs. 28–33 in terms of literary architecture, is it the thematic center as well? The fourth question speaks to the issue of length. Are measures of length such as syllable and line counts helpful in determining the structure of literary units in the Hebrew Scriptures? And finally, a fifth question speaks to the issue of boundaries. If chs. 28–33 possess a unified literary structure, does this help to settle the question of the limits of the unit?

With respect to the first question, “is 28–33 a literary unity?” the answer is affirmative. Our data indicate that this corpus is a planned composition with literary and structural integrity. While we cannot claim to have “disproven” the redaction-critical view that this text is a concatenation of disparate texts from different time periods and circumstances, we have supplied literary evidence in support of the view that this text is best read as the product of deliberate literary planning by someone in full control of his literary materials. Thus the text, taken as it stands, may be read as a coherent whole without recourse to discussions of redactors and redactions. Even those elements which seem to suggest discontinuity or incoherence ultimately serve as bits of a larger picture which only comes into view when the reader steps back from the level of micro-structure to view the text as a whole.

Our study has also confirmed the initial hypothesis that ch. 30 is the structural center of chs. 28–33. The structural centrality of ch. 30 is indicated by the pattern of six woe oracles plus one occurrence of *hēn* as a stylistic variant. Beyond simply serving merely as a verbal hook designed to link these chapters together superficially, the woe oracles are arranged in a pattern (1 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 1) which identifies 30:1 as the center woe of the unit. We also saw that chs. 28–33 consists of five main divisions (ch. 28, 29, 30, 31–32, 33), and that chapter 30 stands in the center of this arrangement.

In addition to showing that ch. 30 is the central division of chs. 28–33, we demonstrated that 30:15–18 is the central pericope, v. 15 is the central verse, and v. 15c is the middle line. This is indicated in the first instance by the fact that vv. 15–18 are the middle member of the parallel structure of ch. 30 itself. The fact that these verses form the central unit of the central chapter of 28–33 creates a presumption that this is also the central unit of the entire corpus. This presumption is supported quantitatively by syllable and line counts. We discovered that there is

an equal or nearly equal number of lines and syllables preceding and following these units (vv. 15–18, v. 15, v. 15c). Thus chs. 28–33 contains two symmetrical halves bisected by 30:15–18.

We also demonstrated that ch. 30 is the thematic center of chs. 28–33. We did this by first identifying seven dominant themes which pervade these six chapters of Isaiah. We then tied these seven themes to each of the seven sections of ch. 30, thus showing that this chapter is the thematic hub of the corpus. The fact that ch. 30 serves as the thematic center as well as the structural center shows the confluence of theme and structure in chs. 28–33. The connection between theme and structure is further strengthened by the fact that the central unit (vv. 15–18) and line (v. 15c) of the corpus also express what turns out to be the dominant theme—salvation through trusting/waiting. . This theme emphasizes YHWH’s response to the faithless and foolish planning and scheming of Zion’s leaders. It calls upon them to give up their attempts at self-salvation and accept YHWH’s plan for Zion in lieu of their own. Verse 18, which ends the unit, announces that, while YHWH desires to deliver the people of Zion, his action on its behalf is being delayed by the actions of the leaders. By pronouncing a blessing on those who wait on YHWH, it encourages the leaders to adopt waiting as their policy. Between these two verses the pericope recounts the rejection of the offer of salvation through waiting and trusting, and details the disastrous consequences of this rejection.

Another question to which this dissertation offers an answer is that of boundaries. As we noted in ch. 1, while chs. 28–33 have traditionally been regarded as a distinct unit within Isaiah, based upon redactional and other considerations many scholars had suggested other termini for the unit. Some suggested that ch. 31 or 32 marked the end of the unit, while others wanted to group these chapters with chs. 34–35 or 39. However, if chs. 28–33 form a ring composition as

we have suggested, then the question of boundaries is settled. As the outer ring of this composition, chs. 28 and 33 also form its *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem*.

Finally, since syllable and stress counts played a roll in our lineation of the text of chs. 28–33 in addition to helping determine the central units, it is appropriate at this point to assess the utility of these measures in structural and literary analysis. Since the structural and thematic center of this portion of Isaiah is also the quantitative center, in terms of syllable and line counts, we affirm that there is a very high likelihood that such factors played a role in the composition of this text. While we did not find evidence of a systematic employment of quantitative symmetry on the level of the sections or subsections of Isaiah 28–33 we did find evidence of such symmetry on the macro-level.

As an additional ancillary result we should add that our study confirms D. N. Freedman's hypothesis concerning the standard length of a line of Hebrew poetry. In this study we have provided a lineated text of Isaiah 28–33. Our lineation has been based primarily upon parallelism. However, we have taken into account the syntax and clause structure of the text, and, to a limited extent, the line constraints identified by M. O Connor. Another factor which has been taken into account is line length as determined by syllable and stress counts. In this we have employed Freedman's syllable counting method. Freedman hypothesized that the standard length of a line of Hebrew poetry is 8 syllables and/or 3 stresses.¹ This hypothesis has been sustained in Freedman's own work on Lamentations and in the work of many others who have employed his system.² Freedman's hypothesis is also supported by the present study.

Our data confirm that 8 syllables is the dominant line length for chs. 28–33. This section contains a total of 4116 syllables and 523 lines. Poetic lines/cola range from 2 to 16 syllables in

¹ D. N. Freedman, "Acrostic Poems," 410.

² For documentation see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

length. The number of cola with 8 syllables is 101 which, as 19% of the total, represents the statistical mode. Other common colon lengths include 9 syllables (82 cola, 16%), 6 syllables (74 cola, 14%), 7 syllables (68 cola, 13%), 10 syllables (58 cola, 11%), and 5 syllables (55 cola, 10.4%). Cola with syllable counts between 7 and 9 (252) represent 48% of the total number of cola, while cola with counts between 6 and 10 (383) represent 73% of the total. Mean colon length is 7.869 syllables (within .131 syllables of the theoretical norm), and the median is 8. These data confirm the dominance of the 8 syllable line in our sample. While line lengths vary considerably, the majority of lines fall in the middle range. Thus, while the poet exercises great freedom in line formation, there does appear to be an underlying standard which tends toward an 8 syllable line. Therefore we may assert that in the case of Isa. 28–33 Freedman's hypothesis of a standard 8 syllable line appears to be confirmed.

Our stress counts provide a further opportunity to check on the validity of this hypothesis. The total number of stresses in our sample text is 1642. Lines vary in length from 1 to 6 stresses. A total of 224 cola in chs. 28–33 contain 3 stresses which makes it the statistical mode (224 cola = 43% of the total). The next most frequent line lengths are 4 stresses (142 cola, 27%) and 2 stresses (130 cola, 25%). Together cola with 2–4 stresses represent 94% of the total. The mean for colon length is 3.1 stresses and the median is 3. Thus Freedman's hypothesis, that the 3 stress line is normative for Hebrew poetry appears to be supported in our sample text.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the text of Isaiah 28–33 was composed with great care, skill, and attention to detail. This attention to detail may be observed on the level of colon length, as well as the level of macrostructure. It is seen in the arrangement of the material, in the careful interweaving of theme and structure, and even in quantitative elements such as syllable and line counts. In recent years many scholars have begun to question the form/

redaction critical paradigm which insists that the prophets of Israel spoke only in brief, self-contained oracles. They insist that there is no reason to doubt that the prophets could have composed longer speeches in writing prior to delivering them orally. Thus the gulf between oral and written communication is no longer seen as insurmountable. Our study supports this trend by undertaking a unified and coherent reading of a major section of Isaiah, chs. 28–33.

Finally, this study has supported the relevance of synchronic readings of the book of Isaiah and the Old Testament Scriptures generally. For many years diachronic readings exercised a virtual monopoly on the field of Old Testament studies. The multiplication of synchronic studies and methodologies in recent decades signals uneasiness with the status quo and a desire to let the final form of the text speak with its own voice. Hopefully the current study has made a contribution, however small, to this process. Indeed, the text itself invites such a reading as generations of believers can testify. The voice of the Spirit calls to us today, as it did to Augustine centuries ago, *tolle lege*, “take up and read.”

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STM Thesis, *Universalism and Particularism in Creation and Redemption: An Examination of the Theological Significance of the Call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3.*

I have also written for the following publications:

Radiant Life, Pathways for Young Adults

Radiant Life, Youth Curriculum

Radiant Life, Bible Curriculum for Christian Schools

God's Word for Today

Take Five

Christian Education Counselor

Complete Biblical Library, Hebrew Dictionary

Mēn “stringed instrument”

Mēn “portion”

Menē “mina”

Menā'ôth “numbers”

Mangînāh “mocking song”

Manda' “understanding”

Mānāh “to count”

Menāh “to count” Aramaic

Māneh “minah

Current Memberships in Academic Societies

Evangelical Theological Society
Society of Biblical Liturature