

## ABSTRACT

### **The Relationality of the Holy One of Israel in the Book of Isaiah**

This dissertation explores the ways that “the Holy One of Israel” is used in the book of Isaiah to depict Yahweh, the powerful and unapproachable God, in his personal relationship with Israel. It investigates the actions and character of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel and the nature and purpose of Yahweh’s holiness as reflected in the Holy One of Israel’s treatment of Israel. It considers how Yahweh seeks to manifest his holiness in the midst of rebellion through righteous actions. In particular, it examines how the Holy One of Israel rebukes, redeems, and restores Israel, despite her rebellious disposition and actions. This research affirms that Israel’s relationship with the Holy One is not contrived, but comes out of a genuine experience, as evidenced by Yahweh’s desire to empower Israel to live righteously. When God and his people act righteously, the Holy One has manifested his holiness.

This thesis demonstrates that the Holy One of Israel is a relational God who has the spiritual and sanctifying power to transform unrighteous people to live righteously. Therefore, the prophet Isaiah calls Israel to return to the Holy One of Israel who, though he rebukes his people, does so in order to restore them, and transform them into “oaks of righteousness” (Isa 61:3). Thus the Isaianic use of the special epithet reminds Israel of the immanence of Yahweh who belongs to Israel, and it connotes: “the Holy One of Israel, *the powerful righteous redeemer is with you.*”

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Indeed, we will now “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you” (Isaiah 12:4-6).

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The root קדש (*qds*) is used throughout the Old Testament to describe Yahweh as being “holy.”<sup>1</sup> It is “the most intimately divine word of all” because it describes the very nature of deity.<sup>2</sup> The word קדש meant that which pertained to a deity,<sup>3</sup> and when the term is applied to God it acknowledges the vast gulf between him and humans.<sup>4</sup> However, calling Yahweh holy can sometimes emphasize his separation from this world at the expense of understanding his genuine relationality<sup>5</sup> with humanity. Many Israelites,

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<sup>1</sup> קדש can mean “be hallowed, holy, sanctified; to consecrate, dedicate”; “commanding respect, awesome; removed from profane or common usage” (Thomas E. McComiskey, “קדש,” *TWOT* 2:786; *HALOT* 3:1072-77; Otto Procksch, “ἅγιος,” *TDNT* 1:89-93; BDB, 871-73); “Holiness” is related to the divine. It is the wholly other that surpasses all that is in this world—all human conceptions, moral categories, and metaphors. It is the power that belongs to the very essence of deity (Bernhard W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999], 46).

<sup>2</sup> Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), 21.

<sup>3</sup> People, places and objects are considered holy when they are set apart for the worship of God. Thus holiness refers to the things or people who are separated *from* the common to be consecrated *for* the divine (Donna Orsuto, *Holiness* [New York: Continuum, 2006], 11; O. R. Jones, *The Concept of Holiness* [New York: Macmillan, 1961], 107).

<sup>4</sup> John N. Oswalt, “Holiness and the Character of God,” *Asbury Seminarian* 31 (1976): 13.

<sup>5</sup> This term means God having a close relationship with mankind. God “wants to reveal himself and enter into fellowship with his creatures” and “make man happy by making him share in the richness of [God’s] own being (Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of Faith* [trans. S. Woudstra; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 105, 118). Hence, a communicating Yahweh comes into contact with humans to be involved in a personal relationship with them. Therefore, to relate to Yahweh is to know his character, his point of view, and his disposition.

for example, perceived Yahweh as being hidden or absent.<sup>6</sup> Yet the Old Testament depicts Israel's holy God as seeking communion with his people.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, several Old Testament characters encountered Yahweh personally and experienced his awesome holy presence.<sup>8</sup>

An Israelite's relationship with Yahweh may be impersonal. But Vriezen explains that to know God is not ontological, but existential: it is to relate to the *living* God in true communion.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the knowledge of God is not theorizing about the concept of God nor defining his nature, but is to experience God by living in a close communion with him. Moreover, the appearance of the repeated admonition "you shall be holy for I am holy"<sup>10</sup> in the context of Leviticus 18/19 and of the covenant shows that Yahweh desires to reveal his personal holiness to humanity through relationships. In fact, it is God's intention "to dwell in holiness in what has already been made in God's own image."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the Old Testament bears witness to the repeated abandonment of this holy communion because God's people do not believe God is near, but think of

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<sup>6</sup> Joel S. Burnett argues that divine absence was a common concern for all three socio-religious levels: family, local, and national (*Where is God?: Divine Absence in the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010]).

<sup>7</sup> Georg Fohrer writes about the rule of God and communion/fellowship with God (e.g., Pss 62:10-13; 66:7; 100:3; Amos 3:2; Hos 5:15-6:6; Deut 6; Mic 6:8; Isa 1:2) ("Basic Structures of Biblical Faith" in *Studien zum Alten Testament (1966-1988): Mitsamt Bibliographie Georg Fohrer (1991)* [BZAW 196; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991], 101-31; idem, "Der Mittelpunkt einer des Alten Testaments," *TZ* 24 [1968]: 161-72).

<sup>8</sup> E.g., Moses at the burning bush, Exod 3; Joshua at Jericho, Josh 5:13-6:5; Isaiah in the throne room, Isa 6:3; Job with Yahweh [the Holy One, Job 6:10], 38:1-41:26 [34]; Elijah at Horeb, 1 Kgs 19:8-18. (God also first engages with humanity in the garden, Gen 3:8-13.)

<sup>9</sup> Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Newton, Mass.: Charles T. Branford, 1970), 154-55.

<sup>10</sup> Lev 19:2: cf. 20:26; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:16, 32.

<sup>11</sup> John C. Haughey, *Housing Heaven's Fire: The Challenge of Holiness* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 10.

Yahweh as distant (cf. Exod 32-34). They quickly prefer to replace him with other nearer gods; their worship of Baals (Hos 2), or more visible gods, or star-gods, prevents Yahweh from drawing too close (Jer 23:23).<sup>12</sup> Thus the issue for Israel is how to view Yahweh as a deity who is both transcendentally holy and yet immanently close enough to follow. This emphasis on calling God's people to return to the God who is "holy," yet relational, is uniquely proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah (30:15).

Isaiah can be acknowledged as the prophet of God's holiness. He uses the adjective *holy* (קדוש) to describe God more frequently than all the other Old Testament writers combined.<sup>13</sup> In fact, his favorite appellation for addressing Yahweh is—  
 קדוש ישראל "the Holy One of Israel" (hereafter HOI). This epithet HOI is used twenty-five times in the book of Isaiah.<sup>14</sup> (In the rest of the Hebrew Bible the epithet occurs only six times.<sup>15</sup>) Moreover, seven closely related variants in Isaiah should also be considered: "The Holy One of Jacob" that parallels "the God of Israel" (29:23);<sup>16</sup> "his Holy One" that parallels "the light of Israel" (10:17) and "the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One" (49:7); "your Holy One" that parallels "the Creator of Israel" (43:15); "Holy God" (5:16); "Holy One" (40:25); and "name is Holy" (57:15). Thus no other text in the

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<sup>12</sup> Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 158.

<sup>13</sup> Thirty-three times in Isaiah compared with twenty-six times in the rest of the OT; and if one considers the adjectival use of the noun (only Isa 52:10) in the OT, Isaiah's book still contains thirty-four out of a total of ninety adjectival nouns to ascribe holiness to God (J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 17-18).

<sup>14</sup> 1:4, 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14. In the book of Isaiah, we find twelve instances in chs. 1-39, ten instances in chs. 40-55, and three instances in chs. 56-66.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Kgs 19:22 [a parallel description of Isaiah's incident]; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Pss 71:22; 78:41; 89:19 [18]; and also as "the Holy One in Israel" Ezek 39:7; the "Holy One" in Hos 11:9; Hab 1:12; 3:3; Job 6:10; and קדוש in Prov 9:10; 30:3; Hos 12:1 [11:12].

<sup>16</sup> Found nowhere else in the OT.

Old Testament uses this epithet as frequently as Isaiah, nor has any other character in the Old Testament heard the seraphim describe Yahweh as thrice<sup>17</sup> holy: “not merely holy, or very holy, but utterly holy.”<sup>18</sup> Dennis F. Kinlaw explains that Yahweh’s holiness is not a quality nor an attribute (which are not essential to the being of a thing). He *is* holy; it is his nature, not something he possesses.<sup>19</sup> Therefore *qdš* is not a term reflecting one attribute of Yahweh, but represents his nature—all of him.<sup>20</sup> Thus for Isaiah, this trisagion proclaimed by the seraphim describes the epithet fully—“the Holy One of Israel.” J. J. M. Roberts adds that “if there is any one concept central to the whole book of Isaiah, it is the vision of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>21</sup>

But then what is the significance of calling Yahweh the “Holy One” “of Israel” in Isaiah? How does the account of Isaiah’s throne room vision inform our understanding of this holy God? Does the book’s usage convey a distinctive image of God (i.e., expressing a particular idea(s) of Yahweh’s holiness), or simply represent another “title” for Yahweh?

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<sup>17</sup> N. Walker notes that there was originally only one קדוש (see the Paseq/note-line in MT) and then a twofold קדוש as found and accepted in the DSS of Isaiah (as mostly likely a “pious ‘improvement’” of the single epithet) to emphasize Yahweh as “exceeding holy.” Thus a later scribe was “anxious to preserve both readings, and unwilling to decide between them, placed them side by side, with a Paseq between, thus making a *conflate [sic] reading*” (“The Origin of the ‘Thrice-Holy,’” *NTS* 5 [1959]: 132-33).

<sup>18</sup> John Goldingay, “The Theology of Isaiah,” in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David Firth and H. G. M. Williamson; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 171. Psalm 99 mentions God’s holiness three times, but not as a divine epithet.

<sup>19</sup> *Lectures in Old Testament Theology: Yahweh is God Alone* (ed. John N. Oswalt; Wilmore: Francis Asbury Society, 2010), 220; A. B. Davidson explains that the term “holy” is not simply an epithet for the “gods”; it refers to the gods’ entire being, as their own entity. In reference to Yahweh, there are no other epithets that can adequately capture the essence of his divine being (i.e., his Godhead) as “holy,” including the title “Holy One” [קדוש]; cf. 1 Sam 2:2; Prov 9:10; Job 6:10; Isa 40:25; Hab 3:3; Hos 12:1 (11:12)] (*The Theology of the Old Testament* [ed. S. D. F. Salmond; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904], 145, 151).

<sup>20</sup> Davidson comments, קדוש does not emphasize a particular aspect of Yahweh’s Godhead or any one special attribute. Yahweh is viewed as קדוש whenever he manifests any of the special attributes of his Godhead (*The Theology of the Old Testament*, 145, 155).

<sup>21</sup> “Isaiah in Old Testament Theology,” *Int* 36 (1982): 131.

And why does Isaiah use the genitive “of Israel” in the epithet? How does being related to the Holy One affect Israel’s status or calling? Does the title “Holy One” represent a God of judgment or of hope/salvation? What role does the Holy One play among the future remnant? Moreover, why does this title HOI appear so frequently with the term “Redeemer”? To answer these questions, this study will examine Isaiah’s distinctive usage of this epithet—HOI.

## 1.2 Statement of Research

Hitherto there has not been a full-fledged study that evaluates God’s relatedness with Israel as expressed by Isaiah’s favorite appellative—“the Holy One of Israel.” This epithet appears most frequently in the book of Isaiah, therefore a study of its usage will provide a clearer understanding of Isaiah’s doctrine of holiness as it relates to Yahweh and his people. Although an inquiry into this idea of “relationship” with God in the Old Testament is not novel,<sup>22</sup> what is new, I believe, is providing a characteristic description and amplification of Yahweh’s relationality, as expressed through Isaiah’s peculiar address of Yahweh as HOI;<sup>23</sup> Isaiah understands that Yahweh seeks to personally instill righteousness in rebellious people through his intimate relationship with them.

This thesis, therefore, will explore the ways that “the Holy One of Israel” is used in the book of Isaiah to depict Yahweh, the powerful and unapproachable God, in his personal relationship with Israel. It will investigate the actions and character of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel and the nature and purpose of Yahweh’s holiness as reflected in

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<sup>22</sup> E.g., Walther Eichrodt’s writing on “Man’s Personal Relationship with God” in *Theology of the Old Testament: Volume II* (trans. J. A. Baker; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 2:268-315.

<sup>23</sup> I.e., Yahweh in itself does not fully express the relationality of Yahweh with his people.

HOI's treatment of Israel. It will consider how Yahweh seeks to manifest his holiness in the midst of rebellion through righteous actions. In particular, it will examine how HOI rebukes, redeems, and restores Israel, despite her rebellious disposition and actions. The research will affirm that Israel's relationship with the Holy One is not contrived, but comes out of a genuine experience (attesting to his personal presence),<sup>24</sup> as evidenced by Yahweh's desire to empower Israel to live righteously. When God and his people act righteously, the Holy One has manifested his holiness. This is why Isaiah ardently admonishes Israel to return to her privileged relationship with HOI and to revere him. Thus, the Isaianic use of the epithet reminds Israel of the immanence of the transcendent and powerful God who belongs to Israel and it connotes: "HOI, *the powerful righteous redeemer is with you.*"

The book of Isaiah also uses the title HOI to emphasize that maintaining a faithful relationship with HOI will produce genuine righteousness among God's people because it is God who enables humans to accomplish this righteousness.<sup>25</sup> But this process of manifesting righteousness must first consider the nature of the God who initiates relationships; thus the first step of this investigation is to study the epithet's "*Holy One*" of Israel, which focuses on his character traits. The second step is to evaluate the type of relationship established with HOI; thus a study of the epithet's genitive form—Holy One "*of Israel*"—which focuses on the various roles and bonds HOI shares with Israel, will be profitable. Once this relationship has been properly defined, the third step is to examine

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<sup>24</sup> J. J. Schmitt rightly comments, this epithet HOI is of a religious orientation, not an abstract term. It is not like the God of the Greek philosophers, but relates to the God whom Israel experienced personally in her history ("The God of Israel and the Holy One," *HS* 24 (1983): 28.

<sup>25</sup> See John N. Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah: A Study of the Function of Chapters 55-66 in the Present Structure of the Book," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; 2 vols.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:177-91.

how HOI nurtures it. This is most evident whenever Israel rebels against HOI, he will rightly rebuke his people for their unrighteous attitude and actions. He then executes righteous judgments against all sin, but will also use such punishments as a means to purge the sinfulness out of his people. Following his rebuke against Israel, HOI does not abandon his people, but begins to redeem his people from their judgment. Here the faithful HOI shows his covenantal commitment by making right what had been made wrong, particularly by restoring broken relationships with Israel. Moreover, when Yahweh offers genuine forgiveness to those who repent of their sins, he reveals himself as a relational God who understands the dynamics of reconciliation between the divine that is holy and the human that is profane (when Israel's transgressions are forgiven, and her sins are covered, she is blessed, cf. Ps 32:1; Rom 4:7).

Finally, the research will demonstrate that there is only one true HOI who can truly restore people inwardly; HOI is a relational God who has the spiritual and sanctifying power to transform unrighteous people to live righteously. Therefore, the prophet calls Israel to return to HOI—the only powerful and righteous redeemer who, though he rebukes his people, does so in order to restore them, and transform them into “oaks of righteousness” (Isa 61:3) that display Yahweh's glory. Knowing that this kind of real relationship is made available to all, for anyone to choose to abandon HOI and not to abide in him should be incomprehensible.

### **1.3 Methodology**

As noted earlier, the aim of this thesis is to explicate a comprehensive theological profile of HOI and to affirm his relationship with Israel as being authentic. To accomplish this,



the thesis will: (a) briefly assess the concept of holiness in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament, and discuss the possible origin of the term “Holy One” and its significance in the book of Isaiah; (b) identify and categorize HOI’s attributes, and (c) consider HOI’s relationship with Israel and discuss its significant implications.

For the prophet and Israel to call Yahweh “the Holy One of Israel” highlights the appellation’s unique quality that distinguishes Yahweh from all other Near Eastern gods. In order to demonstrate Israel’s capability to experience a genuine relationship with her God, we will first examine the meaning of *qdš* as it relates to the religious cult in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament.

Second, in order to validate HOI’s treatment of Israel as sincere and personal, we must assess HOI’s nature and relationality as portrayed in the book of Isaiah. Therefore, we will survey the adjectival and substantival usages of the epithet in each respective context, along with significant expressions that occur together with it, to gain a theologically informed summary depicting HOI’s unique attributes and actions.

Third, the comprehensive theological exposition of the various pericopes related to the epithet will be arranged in thematic categories in order to elucidate Yahweh’s nature and relationality. The epithet’s usages will affirm Yahweh’s pursuit of intimate and righteous relationship with his people. For example, when a specific group of people, a remnant returns to HOI (10:21), they will be able to emulate God’s holiness through his influence. Such a *real* transformation is the greatest revelation of the divine-human relationship.<sup>26</sup>

Through this study, the faith community will rediscover how (a) to relate to a transcendent God who is also immanent and personal, (b) to experience his holiness (“be

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1959), 128-29.

holy for I am holy”), and (c) to manifest his promised righteousness. In summary, Isaiah’s declaration of “the Holy One of Israel” affirms Yahweh’s relationality as a genuine living process, which must be experienced through his rebuke, redemption, and restoration (or renewal) because HOI is the only true righteous redeemer. It is these attributes and deeds of HOI that must not escape the attentive reader.

The working assumption applied to this thesis is that the present text is a literary unit. Thus the exegesis of the book will focus on its final form.<sup>27</sup> This thesis investigates the key epithet in the light of the present structure of the text, and studies it grammatically-historically, especially with regard to the surrounding context, while considering the historical and religious dimensions of the text and its overall theological presentation. The relevant context, for each epithet, will be determined by the thought structure of each pericope (e.g., because chs. 7-12 are viewed as a historical unit concerning Assyria, and Yahweh is referred to as the Holy One in Isa 8:13; 10:17; and 12:1, these inclusive chapters would provide the context for analysis).

In addition, prophetic texts, like Isaiah, can exhibit poetic features, whereby repetitive and rhythmic elements, assonance and alliteration, and parallelism are used to create emphatic results.<sup>28</sup> Although these stylistic elements are employed in this book,

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 1-4. The overall structure of the book reflects signs of editorial planning that brings a unified understanding to the book as a whole (R. E. Clements, “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” *Int* 36 [1982]: 117-29, esp. 121). M. A. Sweeney speaks about the coherent literary unity of the whole book [chs. 1-66] and acknowledges that chs. 1-39 is not to be considered as “a self-contained book” (“Reevaluating Isaiah 1-39 in Recent Critical Research,” *CurBS* 4 [1996]: 79-114, esp. 89; idem, “The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research,” *CurBS* 1 [1993]: 141-62). The literary history of the book reveals “how one passage may be dependent in some way upon another” (H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* [ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012], 370: He adds that the idea of editorial unity does not diminish the belief in “the power of predictive prophecy included in all parts of the book” [370]). Although the much debated issue of authorial unity (see note 142) is not a necessary assumption for this thesis, it would provide a logical explanation for literary unity.

<sup>28</sup> J. P. Fokkelman writes that the book of Isaiah was largely written in poetry and the various

the focus of this study will not be on examining the details of the prolific rhetorical use of these poetical devices, but rather on the theology of the prophet's message.<sup>29</sup>

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translations can never capture all the subtleties of its virtuous style (e.g., alliteration, syllables, rhyme, etc.) (*Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* [trans. Ineke Smit; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001], 2-5, 12-13; idem, "Stylistic Analysis of Isaiah 40:1-11," in *Remembering All the Way* [*OtSt* 21; Leiden: Brill, 1981], 68-90); L. Boadt, "Intentional Alliteration in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 353-63; idem, "Isaiah 41:8-13: Notes on Poetic Structure and Style," *CBQ* 35 (1973): 20-34; Anthony R. Ceresko, "The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 1-10, esp. 9-10; Joze Krasovec, "Merism-Polar Expression in Biblical Hebrew," *Bib* 64 (1983): 231-39.

<sup>29</sup> For a further discussion on the nature of biblical poetry, see J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Meter, Parallelism, and Tropes: The Search for Poetic Style," *JSOT* 28 (1984): 103-04, esp. 99-106; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); D. J. A. Clines, "The Parallelism of Greater Precision," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (*JSOTSup* 40; ed. Elaine R. Follis; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 77-100; S. A. Geller, E. L. Greenstein, and A. Berlin, *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (*JQRSup*; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983); S. A. Geller, "Theory and Method in the Study of Biblical Poetry," *JQR* 73 (1982): 65-77; M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980); Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

## CHAPTER 2

### FOUNDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

#### 2.1 Holiness in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament

##### 2.1.1 Ancient Near East

The word for “holiness” is *qdš*. Historically, in the ancient Near East this word has been used almost exclusively in a religious context. It describes a deity and the deity’s related objects. Two popular theories have been advanced about the word’s origin.

The first theory defines holiness as “separateness” by associating the root קדש (*q-d-š*) with קד [a hypothetical primitive root] which is connected with קדר, from which קדקד (*Scheitel*, “parting” [e.g., crown of head with a line parting the hair]) is inferred, and means *Schneidung* “cutting”; furthermore, the root *kad* is compared with חדש (*ch-d-š*, “new”) and חדר meaning “sharp” (cf. גדר “cut”; גרע “cut down”), to derive a certain meaning of “to cut” or “separated” [*abgesonderten*] (cf. *kat*, *gad*, *chad*).<sup>30</sup> But this

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<sup>30</sup> Wolf Wilhelm G. Baudissin, “*Der Begriff der Heiligkeit im Alten Testament*” in *Studien zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte* (2 vols.; Leipzig: F. W. Grunow, 1876) 2:1-125, esp. 20-21. Scholars who accept this meaning “separated, isolated, different from the surroundings,” include A. Dumas, “*Sacré*,” *Encyclopedia Universalis*, XIV (1972), 579-81, esp. 580; Procksch, *TDNT* 1:88; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. A. Baker; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 1:270-82; H. S. Gehman, “*קדש* in the Septuagint, and Its Relation to the Hebrew Original,” *VT* 4 (1954): 337-48; Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock; New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 86.

commonly accepted meaning of “set apart”<sup>31</sup> is based only on an inference.<sup>32</sup> Kornfeld notes that this shift of *qdlhd* has not been demonstrated and the idea of “separating” is attested mostly by *pr*-constructions,<sup>33</sup> thus Kornfeld concludes that the original meaning of “separated” for *qdš* is deemed only as a “derived meaning.”<sup>34</sup> Jenson adds that separateness is not the basic original etymological meaning of holiness, but is the necessary consequence of it.<sup>35</sup>

The second theory relates the root to the Akkadian *qadāšu*. Müller comments that *qdš* is derived possibly from two proto-Semitic conjectural forms (*qadiš* and *qaduš*) that already express the idea of holiness with its “numinous quality sui generis” whereby the holy is set apart from the profane and is viewed as “wholly other.”<sup>36</sup>

In Akkadian, *quddušu* (intensive verb form of *qadāšu*) means “to clean and purify”

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:270-72.

<sup>32</sup> H. -P. Müller, “קדש *qdš* holy,” *TLOT* 3:1104.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *prd, prt, prm, prs, prq, prr, prš*. This basic meaning did not originate with Baudissin for it was already mentioned by the medieval Jewish commentators. Cf. Rashi’s comments on Lev 19:2 where *qdš* means *prš* (“separate”) particularly in reference to sexual relations (E. J. Wilson, “Holiness” and “Purity” in *Mesopotamia* [Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1994], 85 n. 3).

<sup>34</sup> W. Kornfeld, “קדש *qdš*,” *TDOT* 12:523. This theory suggesting that the verb is derived from a bilateral root (*qdlhd*) is viewed as tenuous because of the “uncertainties surrounding the transmission of bilateral roots to the trilateral form” (McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:787); Procksch disagrees that קדש is related to שרר because it “contradicts the Semitic laws of sound” (*TDNT* 1:89).

<sup>35</sup> He considers this theory that the original etymology of *qdš* meant separation has now been “abandoned” (Philip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* [JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992], 48 n. 4). But cf. Ernest Klein who notes that קרר means “to cut, to bore, drill” and is related to Syriac קר (“he tore, he cut away) and Arabic *qadda* (“he cut lengthwise”) (*A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language For Readers of English* [New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987], 561).

<sup>36</sup> Müller, *TLOT* 3:1104: (1) *qadiš* is evidenced by the Akkadian noun *qadištu(m)* “pure, consecrated, holy” and the verb *qa-di-iš* “is consecrated” (*Ugaritica* 5:9.22), *qa-di-šu* “are holy” (EA 137:32), and *lāqašid* “is unclean” (*BWL* 215:13). This form is closely associated with the Hebrew verbal adjective *qādēš* “holy one” and the verb *qādēšû* “are holy” (Num 17:2), as well as Aramaic and Syriac *qaddiš(ā)* “holy”; and (2) *qaduš* underlies the Hebrew *qādōš* “holy” and *qōdeš* “holiness,” the Syriac *qudšā* “holiness, sanctuary,” and Arabic *qadusa* “to be holy, pure” (“קדש,” 3:1104).

(e.g., persons, buildings, divine images, appurtenances), or “to consecrate, dedicate” (e.g., city, object) (*CAD* 13:46-47).<sup>37</sup> The term *quddušu* normally describes the ritual processes where sanctification was accomplished,<sup>38</sup> while other derived forms identify cultic personnel (e.g., *qadištu*, “consecrated woman,” a title of a class of priestesses and *qadšūtu*, “holiness,” the status of a priest). We also find the Old Babylonian *qašdu*<sup>39</sup> [metathesized form of *qadšu*] meaning “holy” used to describe gods, temples, offerings (*CAD* 13:146-47), and *qašdatu* used for a priestess or consecrated woman. These terms reflect cultic usages relating to consecrated personnel, and their sacred rituals and spaces.<sup>40</sup>

Some scholars also suggest that the notion of *qdš* conveys “the idea of radiant light.”<sup>41</sup> For example, the apparition of lower gods (*qdšm* or *qdšt*) may be perceived as

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<sup>37</sup> See also W. Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:523-24.

<sup>38</sup> Baruch A. Levine, “The Language of Holiness: Perceptions of the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Backgrounds for the Bible* (ed. Michael P. O’Connor and David N. Freedman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 242: Magical sanctification involved sacrifice, unction, incantations and prayers, investiture of priests, statues dedications, etc., and shares similar rites with the Israelite cult (cf. Hebrew *qiddēš*).

<sup>39</sup> W. Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:523-24: The verb *qašādu(m)* meaning “become clean, pure” “developed as a result of this euphonic metathesis from *qadāšu* (thus *dš* = *šd*) into a derived adjective *qašdu(m)*, “clean, pure, holy” (said of gods, the cult, and sacrifices).

<sup>40</sup> Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 242. When *qadāšu* and *qašdu(m)* are used cultically, they reflect freedom from pollutants (e.g., evil spirits), and noncultically, they indicate freedom from dirt (e.g., clothes), impurities (e.g., metals), or legal claims (Giuseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes in Buch Ezechiel* [Firenze: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali Università di Firenze, 1979], 26-29 cited in Jackie A. Naudé, “שִׁקְדָּה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:878); A. van Selms adds that this Akkadian intensive verb form of *qdš* may mean “to clean” (e.g., a type of grain) and the usual ideogram for *qadištu* (NU.GIG) means “not sick” (i.e., “clean”). It can depict a healthy person who has a radiant, gleaming skin (“The Expression ‘The Holy one of Israel,’” in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg O.P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979* [ed. W. C. Delsman et al.; AOAT 211; Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon und Bercker, 1982], 264-65).

<sup>41</sup> Selms, “The Expression,” 265.

“overwhelming in its gleam.”<sup>42</sup> קדש can denote “brightness” when a deity is referred to as being “brilliant” or “pure.”<sup>43</sup> Scholars who claim that the Akkadian *qdš* means “bright, clear,”<sup>44</sup> do so because the term was equated to *ellu* (“bright”) in the ancient lexical texts.<sup>45</sup> Levine affirms this association of *qadāšu* with other equivalents of Sumerian UD, which sometimes connote physical properties (e.g., “pure”). Generally, however, its attested forms emphasize the effects or processes that describe the “brilliance or aura surrounding gods and kings, or characterize processes relevant to cleansing and purification. [But] [t]hese forms do not signify an inherent *mana* [power].”<sup>46</sup> These Akkadian derivatives, in essence, are mostly used in religious-cultic contexts describing things, persons, or places that have been “cleansed, purified” and therefore “consecrated” to the deity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This radiant description also fits the meaning for “earring” as a derivative of the root *qdš* in Akkadian and Aramaic (Selms, “The Expression,” 264-65).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Helmer Ringgren, *The Prophetic Conception of Holiness* (Uppsala and Leipzig: Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Snaith (*Distinctive Ideas*, 24-25) lists: Wilhelm Gesenius (*Thesaurus* [Leipzig: Vogelii, 1829], but rejected by BDB), Heinrich Zimmern (*Babylonische Busspsalmen: Umschrieben, Übersetzt Und Erklärt* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1885], 37 n. 2), August Dillmann, (*Handbuch der Alttestamentlichen Theologie*, [Leipzig: Verlag Von S. Hirzel, 1895], 254), Cheyne (*The Origin of the Psalter*, 1891, 331), K. Kohler (*Jewish Encycl.*, 1904, 6:439); Franz Delitzsch views “bright” based on the connection with *ch-d-sh* (renew) involving the “freedom from defect” (“Heiligkeit Gottes” in *RE* 5:714-18).

<sup>45</sup> For example, the Akkadian verb *qadāshu* is listed under the broad semantic range for the Sumerian word UD, as well as *ellu* (“pure, clean, clear”) and *ebbu* (“clean”) and *namru* (“bright”) (Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 242). Snaith, however, notes that the equating of the Akkadian *quddushu* with *ellu* (“bright”) in the syllabaries occurred much later (neo-Babylonian) (*Distinctive Ideas*, 26-29): This occurred because the root *q-d-sh* had been first a designation for gods who were later associated with the heavenly bodies who were equated with *ellu* (“bright”). He explains that the association with *ellu* occurred because its ideogram sign is also the same for “god” (*ilu/AN*). But *q-d-sh* has been equated with an earlier ideogram for “god.” Furthermore, if *quddushu* (as equal to *ellu*) really means “bright” then how can it describe the temple prostitute *qadishu*? Therefore, he argues that the term originally meant “separation” (following Baudissin) of things that pertain to the gods and was only associated to its secondary meaning of brightness much later (esp. 28-29).

<sup>46</sup> Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 242-43.

<sup>47</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:524.

In earlier Sumerian, we observe that the term for *holy* (KU<sub>3</sub>) is used to describe affairs related or belonging to the divine realm. Wilson notes that objects, locations, beings, or times (e.g., holy food, sanctuary, mountain, gods, and words) are viewed with a certain awesome/inspiring quality. Temple offerings and instruments that are often used in rituals are designated as holy (e.g., bowls, baskets, plates, tables) and are similar to the utensils defined as *qdš* in the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup> The gods are not often called holy; but the goddess of fertility Inanna is often associated with this appellation.<sup>49</sup> Divine body parts were also revered and called holy (e.g., hand, heart). Animals symbolizing a god can be called holy, as well as the temple priest and their songs. There is little information given concerning the holiness of mortals, but people were sanctified (“purified”) as they prepared to enter into the presence of deity (by means of the *šu-luh* □ ceremony).<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, the linguistic range of the Akkadian *qadāšu* or *qašdu(m)* is different from the Sumerian KU<sub>3</sub>. The latter emphasizes the “state of pertaining to the realm of the divine” and the former implies either a freedom from physical pollutants or unwanted supernatural influences.<sup>51</sup> In other words, in Akkadian, there is no word for holy in the abstract or concrete sense [i.e., the supernatural aspect or as being sacred]. This explains why temple utensils are not called *qašdu* in Akkadian like they are called KU<sub>3</sub> in

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<sup>48</sup> In contrast to Hebrew, KU<sub>3</sub> is not used as a noun, but as an adjective (e.g., it is never used alone to designate a temple like *qōdeš* in Hebrew) (Wilson, “*Holiness*” and “*Purity*,” 5-40).

<sup>49</sup> Other deities like Gatumdug, Lugalbanda, and An are also said to be holy. Interestingly, Inanna is a goddess whose escapades would seem to make her an unlikely candidate for such an epithet. She thus indeed belonged to the realm of the divinity (Wilson, “*Holiness*” and “*Purity*,” 30).

<sup>50</sup> Wilson, “*Holiness*” and “*Purity*,” 30-40.

<sup>51</sup> Naudé, *NIDOTTE* 3:878.



Sumerian or *qōdeš* in Hebrew.<sup>52</sup>

Another historical link is provided from Ugaritic studies where the use of the root *qdš* (“holy” or “to consecrate”)<sup>53</sup> has been associated with the gods and the things consecrated or belonging to them: such as a minor male divinity (*qdš ʾamrr*<sup>54</sup>), or a title for the god El<sup>55</sup> (or describing king *Krt* [Kirta]<sup>56</sup>), or possibly for the goddess *ʾatrt*<sup>57</sup> [Athirat] (i.e., Hebrew אֲשֵׁרָה, Asherah).<sup>58</sup> Members of a heavenly council have been

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<sup>52</sup> Naudé, *NIDOTTE* 3:878: E.g., When cedar is called *qašdu*, it stresses “its purifying quality rather than any supernatural aspect.”

<sup>53</sup> See Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Boston: Brill, 2002), 695.

<sup>54</sup> *KTU* 1.3 VI 11; Or the expression *qdš-w-ʾmrr* (*KTU* 1.4 IV 2, 3, 8, 13; *ANET*, 133, lines 2, 8, 13, 16-17) can be a title for a pair of gods or two attributes of the same deity (“holy and exalted”): R. Dussaud argues for a divine pair (“Le Sanctuaire et les dieux Phéniciens de Ras Shamra,” *RHR* 105 [1932]: 283-89), and U. Cassuto views the two attributes as describing one god (*Biblical and Oriental Studies* [vol. 2; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975], 2:182-83).

<sup>55</sup> *krt bnm il šph ltpn w qdš*, “Is Kirta then the offspring of [El] the benevolent and holy one?” (*KTU* 1.16 I 10-11, cf. I 21-22). Against René Dussaud (*Les découvertes de Ras Shamra [Ugarit] et l’Ancien Testament* [Paris: P. Geuthner, 1937], 106-09), Marvin H. Pope argues that there is no warrant for seeing the epithet *qdš* as referring to a goddess (e.g., Asherah) in the Ugaritic texts (i.e., represented here as a divine pair El and Asherah) (*El in the Ugaritic Texts* [VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955], 43-44).

<sup>56</sup> *CTA* 16.1.10-11, 21-22; 16:2.111, where *Krt* is referred to as *El*’s son as *šph ltpn wqdš*. H. G. M. Williamson (“Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* [ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg; JSOTSup 333; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 33 n. 45) notes three main views on this: (1) *Krt* can be rendered as “the offspring of the Gracious and Holy One” who is El; see Dennis Pardee, “The Kirta Epic (1.102),” in *The Context of Scripture I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. William W. Hallo; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 339b and 341a; W. H. Schmidt, “Wo hat die Aussage: Jahwe ‘der Heilige’ ihren Ursprung?” *ZAW* 74 (1962): 62-66; cf. H. Niehr, “Bedeutung und Funktion Kanaanäischer Traditionselemente in der Sozialkritik Jesajas,” *BZ* 28 (1984): 69-81; (2) or it can be rendered as “an offspring of the Kindly One, and a holy being,” with *Krt* as *qdš* and a “minor god” (Selms, “The Expression,” 257-69; and (3) it has been also suggested to mean *Krt*’s divine mother: “the offspring of Kindly One (El) and *Qudšu* (ʾ*Atirat*)”; E. T. Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1980), 250.

<sup>57</sup> Selms views the female deity as improbable because one would expect the feminine ending *qdšt* (as used in human names) although there is a Syrian goddess mentioned with the masculine form *qdš* (“The Expression,” 262); cf. A. Ermann and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (vol. 5; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1931), 82.

<sup>58</sup> *lqdš At□rt* (*KTU* 1.14 IV 34); Frank M. Cross refers to *Qudšu* as an epithet of Asherah (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], 33-35); William F. Albright acknowledges this phrase can be rendered as the “holy (place)

referred to as *bn qdš* denoting “sons of holiness,” “sons of the gods,” “the gods,” “the holy ones,”<sup>59</sup> or “sons of *Qdš*” (an epithet for El, “sons of the Holy One”<sup>60</sup>). Cultic servants are referred to as *qdš(m)*, “consecrated ones”<sup>61</sup> who work together with *khnm* (“priests”),<sup>62</sup> although these are not analogous to the Assyrian-Babylonian male cultic prostitutes *qadištu*.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, a cup (*ks qdš*, *KTU* 1.3 I, 13), Baal’s voice (*KTU* 1.4.VII,

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sanctuary,” but prefers reading it as a reference to the sacred goddess very popular in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt called “the Holy One” (i.e., “the holiness [*qudshu*] of [Asherah, etc.]”) because of the preposition *l* used before the name of a goddess (*Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* [Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1946], 75, 78); idem, “A Vow to Asherah in the Keret Epic,” *BASOR* 94 [1944]: 30 n. 4); cf. Tony W. Cartledge, *Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 108 n. 3. However, Mark S. Smith (*The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* [VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 295) does not view *qdš* in Ugaritic as an epithet for a goddess [i.e., *Qudshu* = Athiratu, mother of the gods (cf. Johannes C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* [Leiden: Brill, 1987], 32 n. 140; J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978], 41, 156), but reads *qdš* as “sanctuary” and not a divine epithet; cf. N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts From Ugarit* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 54 n. 78; Selms, “Expressions,” 262; Tilde Binger notes that though the prepositional *l* is used twice to link the two phrases as being parallel and both could be referring to a goddess and a place, however, “it is not possible to deduce from this text whether the word [*qdš*] is a synonym for Asherah, a substantive meaning ‘sanctuary’, an adjective meaning ‘holy’, the name of a goddess in her own right, a generic term, a title or indeed, any of the above.” Furthermore, she states it is impossible to prove or disprove a connection between the existence of this goddess with the Egyptian goddess called *Qudšu* (so William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 121). It can only be stated that *Asherah* in the Ugaritic texts appears in parallel to the term *qdš* and the two might be connected (*Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament* [JSOTSup 232; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 55-58.) For a discussion concerning Asherah’s name, see Binger, *Asherah*, [ch. 7] 142-48.

<sup>59</sup> *KTU* 1.2 I 21, 38; III 19-20; *ANET*, 130, lines 21, 38.

<sup>60</sup> Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 326.

<sup>61</sup> *KTU* 4.36, 2; 4.38, 2; 4.68, 73; 4.126, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugarit and Minoan Crete: The Bearing of their Texts on the Origins of Western Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 18; cf. Kornfeld (*TDOT* 12:525 n. 29) cites T. Yamashita, *RSP*, 2: 67, no. 34; Paolo Xella, “*Qdš*: Semantica del ‘sacro’ ad Ugarit,” in *Materiali Lessicali ed Epigrafici*, I (ed. S. Ribichini; Roma: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, 1982), 1:112.

<sup>63</sup> As proposed by D. Urie, “Officials of the Cult at Ugarit,” *PEQ* 80 (1948): 42-47, esp. 43; A. F. Rainey, “The Kingdom of Ugarit,” *BA* 28 (1965): 102-25, esp. 124; Opposed by E. M. Yamauchi who notes that there are no explicit Ugaritic texts proving sacred prostitution (“Cultic Prostitution,” in *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. Harry A. Hoffner; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1973], 213-222, esp. 219); W. von Soden, “Zur Stellung des ‘Geweiheten’ (*qdš*) in Ugarit,” *UF* 2 (1970): 329-30.

29, 31-32),<sup>64</sup> and places (*KTU* 1.17 I, 26, 44; 1.14 IV 34; 1.23; citadel, *hlm qdš* 1.16 I, 7; II, 46; wilderness/desert 1.23 [V], 65), including the sanctuary (*KTU* 1.3 III 30; 1.14 IV 34?<sup>65</sup>) are also called holy.<sup>66</sup>

In Phoenician-Punic texts,<sup>67</sup> the verb means “to consecrate”<sup>68</sup> (and not “clean, purify” like in Akkadian),<sup>69</sup> and the adjective “holy” describes the god(s),<sup>70</sup> and the substantive adjective refers to a “sanctuary,”<sup>71</sup> or the “holy one(s)” (as an epithet for a god[dess]),<sup>72</sup> or cultic objects,<sup>73</sup> or a town.<sup>74</sup> Thus a person can be consecrated to a deity (e.g., Punic, to *b<sup>c</sup>l<sup>3</sup> dr*), animals (e.g., Phoenician, to *mlqrt*), or objects (e.g., an altar, to *□nt*). Things can also be dedicated to other persons (e.g., in preparation of the grave), and the “cultic edifices, locales, or objects consecrated to the given deity” are often described by the *qdš* substantives.<sup>75</sup> The adjectives *qdš* are used to “qualify the cult and its

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<sup>64</sup> C. J. Labuschagne, “𐤒𐤓𐤕 *qôl* voice,” *TLOT* 3:1135-36.

<sup>65</sup> See note 58 above; cf. John Huehnergard reads the text as “shrine” (*Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008], 173).

<sup>66</sup> Müller, *TLOT* 3:1105; cf. Frans van Koppen and Karel van der Toorn, “Holy One,” *DDD* 415-18.

<sup>67</sup> “qdš,” *DNWSI* 2:993-97.

<sup>68</sup> *KAI* 118<sup>1</sup>; 138<sup>6</sup>; 43<sup>14</sup>; 121<sup>2</sup>; e.g., an exedra 129<sup>2</sup>; animals 43<sup>9</sup>; altar 42<sup>4</sup>; cf. *hitp.*, “to be consecrated” 138<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:525.

<sup>70</sup> E.g., *KAI* 14<sup>9, 22</sup>; 4<sup>5, 7</sup>; 104<sup>1</sup>; 114<sup>3</sup>; 145<sup>4</sup>; Hofra 64<sup>1</sup>; Simon B. Parker, “Saints,” *DDD* 718-20.

<sup>71</sup> *KAI* 277<sup>1</sup>; 17.1; 14<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> E.g., *KAI* 27<sup>12</sup>; goddess 37A 7; 162<sup>3</sup>; In *KAI* 162<sup>3</sup>, *lqdšt* seems to mean “for the holy ones,” (the goddesses) in parallel to “for the lovely gods” (Selms, “The Expression,” 264).

<sup>73</sup> “First-fruits,” *KAI* 69<sup>12</sup>; cf. sacred? 145<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> “Holy Byblos” Hill lxix, 97.

<sup>75</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:525-26.

utensils...a city...[or] serve as an epithet for deities<sup>76</sup> and the nominalized adjective can become the name of a deity (cf. *Qudšu*).<sup>77</sup>

From this brief survey, we observe that the meaning of *qđš* (in its various forms of the Semitic languages) varies at any particular stage in its history, therefore its meaning is context determined.<sup>78</sup> Though the etymological meaning of its root is uncertain,<sup>79</sup> the usage of the word and its derivatives are predominantly religious and, more importantly, are not addressing ethical issues (unlike its OT usage). For example, in Akkadian, the word means “to be clean, pure, consecrated” and in Ugaritic, its basic meaning is “holy” as it relates to the cult. Thus the term focuses mainly on “an act of consecration, surrender, or dedication to a deity,”<sup>80</sup> and in reference to deity, it designates a divine/heavenly being who is removed from the human/earthly sphere (but used without ethical connotations, for even gods and angels were considered holy regardless of whether they were moral or immoral).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *DNWSI* 2:994-95.

<sup>77</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:526; *ANET*, 428b.

<sup>78</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:523; Müller, *TLOT* 3:1103; J. F. A. Sawyer, “Root-Meanings in Hebrew,” *JSS* 12 (1967): 37-50.

<sup>79</sup> E.g., The suggestion that the root *qđsh* is derived from an original bilateral *qđ* (“cut”) is problematic as there are uncertainties related to the development of bilateral roots to trilateral form and the meaning “to separate” is difficult to conclude philologically because of limited evidence (McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:786-87). See, however, W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:270-82.

<sup>80</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:526.

<sup>81</sup> Goldingay, “Theology of Isaiah,” 171. These holy deities can be ignorant, “devious, disorderly, ineffectual, mortal and not very ‘wholly other.’” This however does not compromise their holiness for they are still associated with the metaphysical realm (idem, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 2, Israel’s Faith* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 2:23).

## 2.1.2 Old Testament

### 2.1.2.1 *Its Meaning*

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew root *qds* occurs 842 times.<sup>82</sup> Its derivatives signify “consecration” or something/someone as being “consecrated” [“sanctified,” “offered”] or declared “holy.”<sup>83</sup> And in reference to God it connotes his “wholly-otherness” and “that which belongs to the sphere of God’s being or activity.”<sup>84</sup>

The denominative verb *קָדַשׁ* (*qādash*) denotes “be hallowed, holy, sanctified; to consecrate, dedicate.”<sup>85</sup> The Hebrew *qal* perfect signifies the status of consecration<sup>86</sup> and the imperfect expresses the process of being consecrated (“to become holy”<sup>87</sup>), and both are without ethical connotations.<sup>88</sup> The *qal* stem particularly connotes the state of belonging to the sacred sphere and being distinct from the common and profane.<sup>89</sup> A clear example of its use is found in the devotion of the Korahite censers offered to the sacred sphere during a cultic ritual (Num 17:3 [16:38]), and in the Levitical rituals,

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<sup>82</sup> Müller, *TLOT* 3:1106-107: The majority occur in the books of Leviticus (152), Ezekiel (105), Exodus (102), Numbers (80), Isaiah (73), Psalms (65), Josh, Judg, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs (48), Ezra, Neh, 1-2 Chr (110), Job, Prov, Eccl (9), and Jeremiah (19).

<sup>83</sup> *HALOT* 3:1072-75.

<sup>84</sup> Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:786.

<sup>86</sup> Num 17:2 [16:37]; Exod 29:21 corresponds perhaps to the Akkadian and Ugaritic stative verbs.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., Ingressive, Exod 29:37; 30:29; Lev 6:11, 20; Hag 2:12; present, 1 Sam 21:6; future, Deut 22:9; past, Num 17:3 (Müller, *TLOT* 3:1105).

<sup>88</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:527.

<sup>89</sup> McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:786. J. Muilenburg explains that the antonym of *קָדַשׁ* (e.g., *חָל*, “profane” or “common” and its verb *חָלַל*, “to profane” or “pollute”) expresses holiness as being profaned when it is treated as secular or common. Furthermore, the term, *קָדַשׁ* denotes things that are “devoted” to Yahweh are deemed *קָדַשׁ* (see also *נָזַר*, “to dedicate,” “to consecrate,” “to separate,” where the Nazirite dedicated to God is “holy to Yahweh” during his days of separation) (“Holiness,” *IDB* 2:617).

objects used were “consecrated to God and recognized as belonging to the realm of the sacred.”<sup>90</sup>

The *pi<sup>ˁ</sup>el* and *hip<sup>ˁ</sup>il* represent the act to produce the *qal* distinction.<sup>91</sup> Thus the *pi<sup>ˁ</sup>el* stem is factitive (creating the *qal* perfect state), and means “to make holy, sanctify” (like Akkadian).<sup>92</sup> The *nip<sup>ˁ</sup>al* form when used regarding God represents the nature of his divine holiness expressed through Israel among the Gentile world.<sup>93</sup> The *pu<sup>ˁ</sup>al* means “to be made holy” (cf. *nip<sup>ˁ</sup>al* functions like the *pu<sup>ˁ</sup>al*, Exod 29:43; Lev 22:32), and the reflexive *hitpa<sup>ˁ</sup>el* means “to sanctify oneself, dedicate oneself.” For example, when the people are entering into a state of holiness within the cult,<sup>94</sup> the *hitpa<sup>ˁ</sup>el* form is used. The causative *hip<sup>ˁ</sup>il* denotes “to dedicate, present” with God as the recipient (like the Phoenician-Punic *yip<sup>ˁ</sup>il*), and its factitive meaning is “to make holy, dedicate” (Josh 20:7; 1 Chr 23:13; 2 Chr 29:19; 30:17).<sup>95</sup> Thus, when the causative form is used, it represents a dedication or transfer of a person or thing to God’s possession so that the person or thing now belongs to him exclusively.<sup>96</sup> The following cultic-related things or people can be consecrated: vestments and priests (Exod 29:21; 1 Chr 23:13), sacrificial material (Exod 29:37; 30:29; Lev 6:11, 20 [6:18, 27]), utensils (2 Chr 29:19), sanctuary produce (Deut 22:9), arm bearers (1 Sam 21:6 [5]), sabbath (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11; Jer 17:22, 24, 27),

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<sup>90</sup> McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:787.

<sup>91</sup> McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:787.

<sup>92</sup> Also “to consider holy” Exod 20:8; Deut 32:51, etc., and “to declare holy” Exod 19:23 (E. Jenni, *Das Hebräische Pi<sup>ˁ</sup>el: Syntaktisch-Semasiologische Untersuchung einer Verbalform im Alten Testament* [Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1968], 41, 59-60).

<sup>93</sup> Isa 5:16; Ezek 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27; Num 20:13.

<sup>94</sup> Josh 3:5; 2 Sam 11:4.

<sup>95</sup> Müller, *TLOT* 3:1105-106.

<sup>96</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:90-91.

festivals (Ezra 3:5), city (Josh 20:7), temple (2 Chr 30:17), oneself (Exod 19:22; Lev 11:44; 20:7), and God himself (Num 20:12; 27:14; Isa 29:23; Exod 29:43).

The adjective קָדוֹשׁ (*qādōš*) is used as an attribute to describe places, people, priests, believers, angels,<sup>97</sup> and God (Lev 11:44-45; cf. as a nominalized adjective, קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל in Isaiah). Beyond places and time of the cultic (Lev 6:9 [16], 19-20 [26-27]), קָדוֹשׁ emphasizes a personal element rather than a material concept since *qādōš* characteristically is not used in association with sacrifices, clothing, or utensils.<sup>98</sup> It is the abstract noun קְדוּשָׁה (*qōdēš*) that is most frequently used to describe material things, as a genitive construction (Lev 19:8), or as an absolute noun (Lev 10:10), or as a predicate of *hyh* (“to be,” Lev 21:6; 19:24) to express “holiness.” Its substantival usage normally reflects a state and not an action. Its concept usually refers to the material aspects of the cult (e.g., temple, offerings, tithes, etc.). Thus *qōdēš* can mean “sanctuary” (Ezek 41:21; also מְקוֹדֵשׁ), or designate things characterized by holiness (e.g., the gradation of the “most holy” things, Num 4:4; Lev 21:22). The substantive קְדוּשָׁה also signifies God’s “perfection of being which transcends everything creaturely” and precludes all that is “unclean or sinful” (e.g., Amos 2:7; 4:2).<sup>99</sup> The nominal adjective קְדוּשָׁה/קְדוּשָׁה (*qādōš/qēdōš*)

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<sup>97</sup> The members of the heavenly ceremonial court and council are referred to as “the holy ones” of God (Job 5:1; 15:15; Zech 14:5; Ps 89:7) as a collective term (Ps 68:18, 25; Deut 33:2). The same expression also refers to the existence of many minor gods (Exod 15:11; Ps 16:3; 1 Sam 2:2). Furthermore, “heavenly beings” (Dan 4:10 [13], 14 [17], 20 [23]) and “people of God” (at the eschaton, Dan 7:18-27) are called in Aramaic *qaddišīn* and *qaddīš*. In the Hebrew portion of the book, these two meanings are also present (Dan 8:13, 24); and “the Holy One of Israel” is used in Sir 50:17 as a name for God and the “holy ones of God” in Sir 42:17 as the angels (These “angels” are slightly different from the OT מַלְאָכִים who are considered messengers only, and the OT seraphim and cherubim are never called מַלְאָכִים.) (Selms, “The Expression,” 265-66).

<sup>98</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:528; Procksch, *TDNT* 1:89-90.

<sup>99</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:91.

“consecrated one” (Deut 23:18) refers to “male and female cult functionaries,”<sup>100</sup> while קֹדֶשׁ/קָדְשׁ represent place names (Gen 16:14; Josh 12:22; 20:7; Judg 4:6).<sup>101</sup>

In sum, the root *qdš* represents a state of consecration or movement towards the sacred. Therefore, a more concise definition of OT holiness is given, where “‘holy’ is defined as that which belongs to the sphere of God’s being or activity.”<sup>102</sup> When applied to Yahweh it connotes his “unselfish moral and ethical behavior.”<sup>103</sup> (Note, however, that when a person or thing is declared *qdš* [i.e., consecrated or holy], it can still be *understood* as being “separated” [albeit as a “derived meaning”] because it now belongs to God.)<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Binger argues against these terms as referring to cultic “prostitutes”, but to derogatory Canaanite priest/priestesses (*Asherah*, 118-20; Meindert Dijkstra, “The List of *qdšm* in *KTU* 4.412 + ii 8ff.” in *Arbor Scientiae* [*AuOr* 17-18; Sabadell, Spain: AUSA, 2000], 81-89, esp. 86).

<sup>101</sup> W. Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:527-29.

<sup>102</sup> Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 48.

<sup>103</sup> Kinlaw, *Lectures in Old Testament Theology*, 229-34, esp. 230: He notes that Yahweh’s holiness gave the word *qadosh* a new meaning which had once been morally neutral. When the translators of the LXX sought to find a Greek word to capture what it now conveyed, they had at least five different Greek words to choose from (e.g., *hieros* [related to the divine]; *semnos* [reverential fear, honoring the gods with holy awe, noble, majestic]; *hosios* [consecrated or hallowed; pious or devout person; sinless or pure]; *hagnos* [ritually clean, chaste, morally blameless]; and *hagios* [defined by context]). Hence, there was not a lack of a term connoting a sense of the religious, or the sacred, or the separated and numinous. The lack was in a term that represented the essence of Yahweh’s character. Thus they chose *hagios*, which was seldom used in classical Greek (not found in Homer, 900 B.C.; nor in Hesiod’s literature, 8<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.; nor in any of the tragic poets or dramatists) because this rare word had almost neutral connotations so that “the Old Testament could do to *hagios* exactly what it had done to *qadosh*—transform it...the text would tell you what the word meant” (232-233). Kinlaw adds that *qadosh* reflects the Holy One’s “self-denying, self-giving Love, true and faithful to a fault” (229).

<sup>104</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 30. J. Muilenburg speaks of “separation” in terms of that which is not treated as secular or common (i.e., not profaned) (“Holiness,” *IDB* 2:617); Ringgren sees קֹדֶשׁ denoting “separateness” when an object is “withdrawn” from common, ordinary use” (*Prophetical Conception of Holiness*, 4); cf. *HALOT* 3:1072-73; *BDB* 872-73. This point is made because though the etymology of the root *qdš* is unresolved, this secondary meaning of “separate” or “set-apart” still appropriately describes its many usages in the OT; cf. Naudé, *NIDOTTE* 3:885.



### 2.1.2.2 Old Testament Usages

In the OT, קדש is often related to God's essential nature (Ps 99:9, "For holy is Yahweh our God"), the foundation of his being ("holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts,"<sup>105</sup> Isa 6:3). The term "holy" is first used in Exod 3:5 to illustrate Yahweh's sacredness. When Moses first encountered Yahweh at the burning bush, he was ordered to remove his sandals because the ground he was standing on was deemed "holy."<sup>106</sup> Thus God's holiness is so profound and so contagious that even common soil where he dwells is affected. When Yahweh introduced himself, Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (3:6). Here is Moses' fascinating encounter with, in the words of Rudolf Otto, the holy God as *numinous*<sup>107</sup> (From Latin *numen* ["divine power or deity"]) and described as *mysterium tremendum* ("the mysterious and awful [*sic*"]) or "wholly other."<sup>108</sup> This holy God reveals his name (Yahweh) to Moses and promises to redeem<sup>109</sup> Israel from Egypt. When he delivers Israel from Egypt, his people declare that their God is "majestic

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<sup>105</sup> For a discussion on the name "Yahweh of Hosts/Almighty," see note 254.

<sup>106</sup> This theophany, where God manifests his presence, reveals that holiness is a central feature when encountering the covenantal God (cf. John N. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* [Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House, 1999], 25).

<sup>107</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (trans. John W. Harvey; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 6-7, 75.

<sup>108</sup> Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 63: "Conceptually *mysterium* denotes merely that which is hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar" (Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 13) and it refers to the "wholly other" (expressing the "mysterious" that is "beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar...filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment") (26); The adjective *Tremendum* is analogous to: (1) "awe" (evoking "fear," but is distinct from being afraid and is like the Hebrew *hiqdīsh* [hallow] with parallel expressions like אִיִּקָּח [fear, terror, dread] that produces a paralyzing effect [cf. Exod 23:27; Job 9:34; 13:21]; (2) "overpoweringness" (*majestas*, namely, might, power) to express an element of majesty, that humbles a person to feel like "dust and ashes" and (3) "energy" or "urgency" [vitality, passion, will force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus] (Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 13-14, 19-20, 23, 26).

<sup>109</sup> נָאֵל, Exod 6:6; cf. פָּדָה, Deut 13:6 [5]; 15:15; 24:18.

in holiness and awesome in splendor” (Exod 15:11). God’s majestic presence elicits reverent praise (“Worship Yahweh in holy splendor, tremble before him, all the earth,” Ps 96:9). His holiness denotes his transcendence from this world and humanity: “I am God, and not man, the Holy One among you” (Hos 11:9). This otherness, or transcendence represents his essential Godness that is not to be identified with the things of creation (unlike many religions).<sup>110</sup> His holiness also represents his separateness from everything that is common and profane, from all that is unclean or evil. In other words, God’s holiness entails an ethical perfection manifesting “total righteousness and purity” (cf. Isa 5:16; Hab 1:13).<sup>111</sup>

The term *holy* is also used to describe things that are related to God. A “holy assembly” is formed to celebrate Passover (Exod 12:13,16; Lev 23). God established a “holy Sabbath” (Exod 16:23) on the day of rest (cf. Gen 2:3);<sup>112</sup> his abode is called “holy heaven” (Ps 20:7); he reigns from his “holy throne” (Ps 47:9 [8]), and Zion is his “holy mountain” (2:6). God’s people are chosen by him to be his “holy people”<sup>113</sup> (Deut 7:6;

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<sup>110</sup> See John N. Oswalt’s discussion on Continuity and Transcendence (*The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 47-84) and Yehezkel Kaufmann’s summary of Israel’s God as supreme over all (*The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* [trans. Moshe Greenberg; New York: Schocken Books, 1960], 29-121).

<sup>111</sup> J. R. Williams, “Holiness,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 561-63, esp. 562.

<sup>112</sup> Abraham J. Heschel notes that in all that God created that was “good,” only Sabbath was declared “holy.” It is a day meant to celebrate time rather than space; “to turn from the world of creation to the creation of the world.” The Sabbath is holy because God the Creator is holy. And keeping Sabbath permits Israel to remember the source of holiness (*The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* [New York: Straus and Giroux, 1951], 10; Israel could enjoy a weekly experience of communing with the Holy One (Haughey, *Housing Heaven’s Fire*, 37-38).

<sup>113</sup> When this holy God established a covenantal relationship with Israel at Sinai (Exod 24:4-8), he promised to dwell among his people, and called Israel to be a עַם קְדוֹשׁ (Deut 7:6; 26:19; cf. Jer 2:3). Thus this one term קְדוֹשׁ placed Israel in a distinctive status, setting her in a “mortal combat” with the heathen conceptions of holiness because any participation in the Canaanite cultus (קְדָשָׁה and קְדָשׁ, Deut 23:18) is now prohibited (Procksch, *TDNT* 1:92).

14:21; 26:19; 28:9), a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6)<sup>114</sup>—separated unto Yahweh (“For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; it is you Yahweh has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession,” Deut 14:2). To be associated with a holy God means they are also called to live holy lives (Lev 19:2; 20:7, 26). In Lev 11:44-45 Yahweh says, “For I am Yahweh your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. For I am Yahweh who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore, be holy, for I am holy.” Here Israel is called to be holy by obeying God’s moral and ritual commandments and by not “defiling” (נָטַם) themselves (cf. Deut 26:16-19 “keep all his commandments...that you may be a holy people to Yahweh your God”; Exod 22:31 [19:10-22:31]). Unclean and clean food must also be distinguished (Lev 11:47; Deut 14:3-21).<sup>115</sup> In Lev 20:7-8 God gives Israel the command to “sanctify [consecrate] yourselves” therefore and be holy, for I am Yahweh your God. You shall keep my statutes and observe them; I am Yahweh who sanctifies you.” The standard they were called to emulate (to set themselves apart and to keep the purification laws) is based on the “personal integrity and inherent holiness of God himself.”<sup>116</sup> Here in Lev 20:7-8 God sets the standard of holiness based on the fact

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<sup>114</sup> Israel is called to be holy in four ways: (1) Be a holy nation because of its relation with God; (2) Recognize God as their creator and sustainer, (3) Live for God and keep his commandments; and (4) Establish relationships with other peoples (Jo Bailey Wells, *God’s Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* [JSOTSup 305; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 56-57); For the story of Israel’s call to holiness, see Haughey, *Housing Heaven’s Fire*, 35-63.

<sup>115</sup> “The separation of animals into pure and impure is both a model and a lesson for Israel to separate itself from the nations. The latter have defiled themselves by their idolatry and immorality. Israel must therefore refrain from partaking of their practices, and thereby become eligible for a life of holiness—the way and nature of its God” (Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004], 121).

<sup>116</sup> Z. T. Johnson, *What is Holiness?* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing, 1936), 47.

that he is Yahweh, their God. He is the only God who can “sanctify” his people.

All that relates to the cultus can also be referred to as holy. There are holy days, holy priests, holy anointing oil, holy first fruits, and holy utensils. The adornment of the priest with a pure gold crown with the engraving: “Holy to Yahweh” (Exod 39:30) marks the holy priest as serving a holy people. His was a holy office offering holy service that executed God’s expectation that his people would be holy. “Holiness was the prime motive not only of the existence of God but of the relationships between Him and His people.”<sup>117</sup> In worship, ceremonial cleansing is required for the priests, instruments, and congregation.

In the Old Testament, one also notices an increasing emphasis on holiness as it relates to the ethical aspect of those called to “be holy” because Yahweh their God is holy (Lev 19:2). Such demands of holiness are noted in Exod 22:30 [31] (אֲנֹשֵׁי־קֹדֶשׁ תִּהְיוּ לַיְיָ) and the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), which necessitates reflecting God’s holiness. The Day of Atonement, for example, focuses on inward cleansing of one’s sins (Lev 16:30). God’s people are instructed to have clean hands and a pure heart when standing in God’s holy place (Ps 24:3-4).<sup>118</sup> In summary, Yahweh has revealed himself to his people as a holy God, who has “spoken his holy name, required holy statutes, ordained holy times and seasons, and appointed to his service holy men whose mission it was to perform his holy will, fulfill his holy purpose, and live in holy obedience.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Johnson, *What is Holiness?* 55.

<sup>118</sup> H. -P. Müller, *TLOT* 3:1116; Williams, “Holiness,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 562.

<sup>119</sup> Muilenburg, “Holiness,” *IDB* 2:621.

### 2.1.2.3 Significance in the Book of Isaiah

This concept of God's personal holiness is also central to Isaiah's theology. When the seraphim cried, "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts," the term *holy* describes Yahweh in the highest sense (e.g., as Lord and King). Based on his trisagion vision (6:3), Isaiah understood Yahweh's holy transcendence and his moral excellence. But for Isaiah to recognize Yahweh's exaltedness and to see his glory fill the whole earth did not diminish Isaiah's understanding of God's intimate desire to relate with a single people. This close association is indicated by the Hebrew construct relation, קדוש ישראל. Consider HOI who is so divine, yet inclines himself toward Israel with a divine willingness<sup>120</sup> to be near and enter into a genuine relationship with his people. The next section will discuss (1) the origin of this epithet, and (2) its connotations in the book of Isaiah as further indication of HOI's desire for a relationship.

## 2.2 The Epithet "The Holy One of Israel"

### 2.2.1 The Origin of the Epithet—"The Holy One of Israel"

A crucial question concerns the origin of this divine name "the Holy One of Israel": Was Isaiah responsible for coining the term? Most who say he did, base this on the holy attributes of Yahweh called out by the seraphim in Isa 6:3.<sup>121</sup> Never did any eye of man

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<sup>120</sup> Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," 133.

<sup>121</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:93; idem, *Jesaja I: Kapitel 1-39 Übersetzt und Erklärt* (KAT; Leipzig: Deichert, 1930), 32; L. Rost, *Israel Bei Den Propheten* (BWANT 4; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1937), 41; G. Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiel* (Quaderni di Semitistica 8; Florence: Università di Firenze, 1979), 44; W. J. Kornfeld, "QDŠ und Gottesrecht im Alten Testament," in *Congress Volume: Vienna, 1980* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 1-9.

“behold a sight more exalted” as expressed by the title the prophet used for Yahweh ever thereafter.<sup>122</sup> Yahweh’s holiness evoked an awesome fearful *numen tremendum* upon Isaiah, who forged this expression HOI.<sup>123</sup> Oswalt states that in addition to encountering the “terrifying ‘otherness’” of the world’s Maker, Isaiah also experienced God’s holiness as “moral and ethical purity,” thus inspiring the prophet to use this important title to address the Holy One.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, as Procksch and others have argued, it was this concept of Yahweh’s holiness that caused Isaiah to formulate the expression,

קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל.<sup>125</sup> It has also been suggested that Isaiah created the designation HOI since it is rarely used outside the book of Isaiah.<sup>126</sup> Kaiser, however, doubts it was first formulated by Isaiah during his call, but views it as being derived from the Jerusalem cult.<sup>127</sup> Hans Wildberger notes that the concept of Yahweh’s holiness was certainly a part of Jerusalem’s theology from ancient times.<sup>128</sup> Schmidt claims that the title “Holy One of Israel” most likely came to be applied to Yahweh based on the holiness attributed to God

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<sup>122</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah: Volume I Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 30.

<sup>123</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:93; cf. Roberts, “Isaiah in Old Testament Theology,” 131. The numinous and his moral aspect is evidenced in Isaiah’s vision where he first establishes the title HOI as the expression, *par excellence* for Yahweh. It is in this book that the attributes of this holy one are clearly conceptualized (e.g., omnipotence, goodness, wisdom, truth) (Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 75-76).

<sup>124</sup> Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 33; He believes Isaiah coined this term, thus its frequent usages, which in turn could have influenced the psalms, as noted by the other occurrences in Jeremiah and Ezekiel which are later texts (personal conversation on 10/25/2012); cf. Procksch, *TDNT* 1:93.

<sup>125</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:93.

<sup>126</sup> Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 27.

<sup>127</sup> Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (trans. R. A. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 9 n. a.; cf. Selms, “The Expression,” 259.

<sup>128</sup> E.g., Yahweh is enthroned on his holy mountain (Pss 2:6; 3:5, etc.), his holy temple (5:8; 11:4, etc.), the holy habitation of the most high (46:5; 68:6, etc.), and on his throne (47:9). Yahweh himself is also holy (99:5) thus it is natural that his name is also holy (33:21) (*Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 24). Ringgren notes the earlier psalms speak of Yahweh’s holiness: his way in holiness (77:14), and his holy heaven (20:7) (*Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 26).

in Ps 46:5 [4] (“the holy habitation of the Most High”).<sup>129</sup> Ringgren suggests that because the epithet HOI was in use by the cult even before Isaiah (e.g., Pss 71:22, 78:41, 89:19),<sup>130</sup> therefore, what Isaiah brings is not new but his contribution is the use he makes of the motifs associated with the epithet.<sup>131</sup> Gammie suggests that “the Holy One in your midst” of Hos 11:9 influenced Isaiah in adopting the epithet.<sup>132</sup>

Although the epithet may have pre-existed Isaiah, Williamson avers that the epithet was not widely used, nor did Isaiah himself use it often.<sup>133</sup> If Isaiah had, we would

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<sup>129</sup> “Wo hat die Aussage: Jahwe ‘der Heilige’ ihren Ursprung?” 62-66.

<sup>130</sup> This view, however, depends on the dating of these three HOI psalms and whether they are pre-Isaianic; see note 138.

<sup>131</sup> Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 27. Muilenburg says Isaiah gives the traditional motifs of holiness a fresh and powerful reformulation (“Holiness,” *IDB* 2:621).

<sup>132</sup> John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 74-76. It is said that Hosea “accentuates the ancient motif of the holy presence ‘in your midst’ (11:9; cf. Exod. 34:9; Num. 5:3; 14:14; Josh. 24:5) and gives to it a depth of meaning transcending the legal-institutional interpretations of the covenant bond. The personal inwardness of the holy relation” (Muilenburg, “Holiness,” *IDB* 2:621). Joseph Blenkinsopp (*History of Prophecy in Israel* [rev. and enl. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 108) adds that the messages of Amos and to a lesser extent, Hosea have informed Isaiah’s theology. For after the fall of the northern kingdom, the books of Amos and Hosea were brought south and the fulfilled prophecies were read in the light of the fall of Samaria, and applied to Judah (104-05, 107-08). Regarding divine titles (including HOI) used by Isaiah, he cautions making clear distinctions between Judean and Ephraimite traditions, suggesting that the “liturgical usage on which Isaiah drew was not as highly distinctive as it is generally represented to be” (108). A study between Amos and Isaiah has been presented by R. Frey, *Amos und Jesaja: Abhängigkeit und Eigenständigkeit des Jesaja* (WMANT 12; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1963).

<sup>133</sup> Williamson states that many of the epithet’s texts in chs. 1-39 cannot be ascribed to Isaiah himself, but to a later redactor (“Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” 24). He asserts that it was Deutero-Isaiah instead, who significantly used this title to unify the book by emphasizing God’s new salvific work that reverses God’s previous message of judgment (“Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” 37-38; cf. idem, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 240-41). Other scholars attribute all, or virtually all, texts to him (John N. Oswalt states that this book reveals the thoughts and writings of Isaiah, the son of Amoz. It can be viewed as “a collection of sermons, [and] sayings” that were created by Isaiah or those working with him” [*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 17-28, esp. 25-26]; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 25-27; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969], 764-78; Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953], 199-207; Oswald T. Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah: A Study of Prophecy* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1950]), while others deny his authorship for all the texts in question (O. Loretz, *Der Prolong des Jesaja Buches [1,1-2,5]: Ugaritologische und Kolometrische Studien zum Jesaja-Buch* [vol. 1; UBL 1; Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1984], 97-110; cf. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* [OTL; London: SCM Press, 1974], 311-12). Most scholars are somewhere in the middle (Hans Wildberger ascribes the following seven texts to

expect to find it used in ch. 6 along with the *trisagion* of v. 3. He argues that the threefold holiness attributes of God in 6:3 should not be narrowly linked to this epithet, even though they share a similar concept. It was likely a part of the Jerusalem liturgy.<sup>134</sup> Thus, with the absence of this title in ch. 6, and in other early sayings of Isaiah, he suggests that this “obscure name for God” did not make a great impression on Isaiah.<sup>135</sup> However, what if one translates *qadosh* as a substantive in Isa 6? Levine states that here it is a third-person orientation and not a direct address. The seraphim are making an announcement, and are not addressing God as worshippers. Hence, as Yahweh enters the throne room and takes his seat, the angels proclaim, “The Holy One, the Holy One, the Holy One!”<sup>136</sup> To accept such a translation would provide a possible explanation for Isaiah’s association of this term with HOI.

Muilenburg and Gammie believe Isaiah was profoundly influenced by the cult<sup>137</sup> and I would agree (and thus accept that the three HOI psalms are pre-Isaianic).<sup>138</sup> For if

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Isaiah himself [1:4; 5:19, 24; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1] [*Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 24]; Williamson further reduces Wildberger’s list by noting 1:4b and 5:24b as redactional (“Relocating Isaiah 1:2-9,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* [ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; 2 vols.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 263-77). This thesis does not attempt to identify which of the HOI texts can be ascribed to the eight-century Isaiah nor which human writer(s) produced the book of Isaiah. It examines all occurrences of the epithet HOI in the final text as we have it.

<sup>134</sup> Williamson, “Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” 30, 34-35: He notes that the *trisagion* refrain in Ps 99 has been shown to be influenced by Isaiah (35 n. 49), cf. R. Scoralick, *Trishagion und Gottesherrschaft: Psalm 99 als Neuinterpretation von Tora und Propheten* (SBS 138; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989).

<sup>135</sup> Williamson, “Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel,” 35.

<sup>136</sup> Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 254.

<sup>137</sup> J. Muilenburg notes that Isaiah’s theology was influenced by the cult and his theology influenced his successors, Habakkuk (1:12-13; 3:2[3]), and Ezekiel (5:11; 28:22, 25; 36:22-23) (“Holiness,” *IDB*, 2:621); Gammie states: The Song of Hannah (tenth or ninth century B. C.) in 1 Sam 2:1-10 reveals an early doctrine of holiness—praising God for his holiness and power. This song also furnishes the poetic structure found in Pss 72, 89 (*Holiness in Israel*, 72).

<sup>138</sup> This thesis assumes a pre-Isaian dating for Psalms 71, 78, 89 (although some scholars view Ps 89 as



Isaiah coined the epithet that influenced the psalmists, one would think that the epithet would be used more frequently (as observed by Isaiah's multiple usages [25 times] of it in only one book) than the mere "one occurrence" found in each of the respective psalms (71, 78, 89), or that more would appear in other psalms.

It seems more likely that Isaiah was familiar with these cultic HOI psalms,<sup>139</sup> which provided him with a prior knowledge of the traditional motifs<sup>140</sup> associated with Yahweh's holiness. In fact, in these three HOI psalms, the Holy One of Israel is described as Israel's deliverer and rescuer, therefore, the salvific attitude of Yahweh is recaptured by Isaiah as he understands the significance of the *redemptive* nature of the most Holy One. Yahweh seeks to reconcile his people to himself, particularly by forgiving their sins and iniquities (Isa 6; 40:2). Thus following his momentous trisagion encounter with the Holy God, Isaiah took this existing epithet to re-emphasize the nature of HOI to his own

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post-exilic); see Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 27; Selms, "The Expression," 268; David N. Freedman dates Ps 78 to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century ("Divine Names and Titles in Early Hebrew Poetry," in *Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: In Memoriam G. Ernest Wright* [ed. Frank M. Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller Jr.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976], 96); Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 497; H. G. M. Williamson notes Pss 78 and 89 as being dated early, but views Ps 71 as post-exilic ("Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel," 32-33; so also S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912], 226); M. E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 284-87, 413-18; P. Stern, "The Eighth Century Dating of Psalm 78 Re-argued," *HUCA* 66 (1995): 41-65; J. Day, "Pre-Deuteronomic Allusions to the Covenant in Hosea and Psalm lxxviii," *VT* 36 (1986): 1-12; O. Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32,1-43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Ps 78, samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (BSAWL; PH 104:5; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 33f.; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); G. W. Ahlström, *Psalm 89: Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des Leidenden Königs* (Lund: Gleerups, 1959).

<sup>139</sup> If these particular HOI psalms were used as a part of the cultic repertoire, then Isaiah was perhaps familiar with their content. For example, themes concerning HOI's power, righteousness, faithfulness, redemption, and the admonition to Israel to trust in God, not to be rebellious or disloyal, nor unfaithful, nor continue to sin against HOI their redeemer are all parallel motifs found throughout the book of Isaiah. Therefore Isaiah probably used this specific epithet to remind his readers that the same motifs that described Israel's early relationship with Yahweh are likewise applicable to Israel's relationship with Yahweh in Isaiah's time. Nevertheless, regardless of the dating of these three HOI psalms, the focus here is on seeking the general tenor of Isaiah's many utterances of the epithet-HOI in this whole book. Cf. Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 27-28.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 27-28.

people.

We may, therefore, suggest that what Isaiah brings may not be a new title, but rather, his contribution is a newly expanded version of its meaning. This epithet was obviously not used very frequently in the Psalms and elsewhere, until Isaiah started using it after his glorious throne room vision in Isa 6:1-3. This experience significantly influenced his understanding of Yahweh's holiness, which remained in his mind for his whole life and ministry.<sup>141</sup> This profound impact of hearing the trisagion vocabulary obviously shaped Isaiah's theology as evidenced by his *frequent* usage of his favorite epithet (the most occurrences in all the OT) and the reverence shown to the *holy* Yahweh (e.g., Isa 8:13). Goldingay states that Isaiah's profound address of Yahweh as HOI acknowledges Yahweh as the only true deity that deserves to be called "God"; Yahweh, who is unrivalled in holiness, represents one reality as the uncreated divine being.<sup>142</sup> This term expresses Yahweh's lordship and exclusivity.<sup>143</sup> It was based on his own unique holy encounter with HOI that Isaiah therefore began to re-emphasize, more fervently, the Holy Yahweh as Israel's true God, the Holy One "of Israel" who is their personal almighty redeemer.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I-XXXIX* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), xc-xci.

<sup>142</sup> Goldingay, "Theology of Isaiah," 171-72.

<sup>143</sup> W. Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (trans. David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 142.

<sup>144</sup> Wildberger notes that in addition to HOI, Isaiah also uses the term "the holy God" (5:16). But since that title has a long history in the aNE and most certainly existed even before the Israelite era, there was the danger of viewing and continuing the concept of holiness in a magical-cultic context (cf. 1 Sam 6:20; Hos 11:9). Therefore it is by a genitive form "Israel" that a genuine Israelite understanding was assured—that HOI is the covenantal God, a kind father who turns to Israel, leads and protects his people (*Isaiah 1-12*, 25). James H. Kennedy has argued that HOI represents the second person of the Trinity (God-man; Servant-Savior) (*The Holy One of Israel in the Roll of Isaiah* [Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1947]).

## 2.2.2 The Meaning of “the Holy One of Israel”

Beyond the origin of the epithet HOI, we turn now to consider its specific connotations in the book of Isaiah itself. The important considerations are whether the root קדש of this epithet is being used with an adjectival emphasis to express some kind of attributive idea of holiness for Yahweh (e.g., his metaphysical and ethical qualities), or if the epithet is simply a title in a substantival form (e.g., like YHWH). Or does it express both ideas?

### 2.2.2.1 Substantival Usage as a Divine Name

The epithet’s substantival usage can be traced to the title’s long history.<sup>145</sup> Selms argues that for the majority of usages the epithet does not express the [adjectival] overtones of God’s holiness, since in most cases there is only a limited connection between the title (HOI) and the idea of Yahweh’s holiness as expressed by the root קדש in the epithet.<sup>146</sup>

He states, for example, that Isa 10:20 (“In that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel”) contains no connection with the idea

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<sup>145</sup> Selms, “The Expression,” 261-62: Selms notes that the designation of Yahweh’s holiness represents Canaanite influence and was later adapted by the Jerusalem cult (e.g., Ps 89:19 as pre-Isaianic). Therefore, the epithet had probably been in existence before Isaiah and the fact that Isaiah used the expression frequently only points to a Jerusalem coinage. The name “Israel” itself also reveals that the name had existed before the divided kingdom. For if it had been devised after Rehoboam’s rule, then it should have been “the Holy One of Judah.” But now after two centuries, Isaiah begins to use the name to stress once again Israel’s God as their “holy one” (268).

<sup>146</sup> Selms acknowledges that in Isaiah, calling God “the Holy One” may imply the idea of holiness in terms of God’s might or authority (as it is despised in Jer 50:29; 51:5; Ps 78:41) (cf. Otto’s *tremendum* and *fascinans*). Several usages in the book, however, show a neglect of the revered nuances of the word “holy” by using it only as a variant title like the “the God of Israel.” He cites the following passages as perhaps making a connection between the general contents of the passage and the choice of the epithet—where it is because of Yahweh’s holiness that makes him susceptible to being despised, as when HOI is the object of the verb יאס (“to despise”) (1:4; 5:24; 37:23); another possible context is Isa 30:12, where God’s word is rejected. But Selms questions how this idea of holiness fits in the following context in 30:15 where “the Holy One of Israel” announces: “In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength” (259-261).

of holiness. The same applies to 12:6, or 17:7, or 29:19, where the prophet declares, “the poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>147</sup> Likewise in Isa 31:1 the concern is with military alliances, domestic versus foreign and is not between the profane and holy. Thus Selms claims that the epithet is used predominantly as a divine title (e.g., as a synonym of “the God of Israel”),<sup>148</sup> but since in its various expressions the epithet can refer either to God as a title or to the overtones of his holiness, its meaning must be derived from its context-specific usages.<sup>149</sup>

### 2.2.2.2 Adjectival Usage

When used adjectivally, the epithet can connote Yahweh’s metaphysical transcendence since *holy* means belonging to the heavenly supernatural realm, not the human, created world. Thus Yahweh is the ultimate supernatural, extraordinary, uncreated divine being.<sup>150</sup> C. L. Seow adds that the epithet highlights God’s kingship “since in Ugaritic literature, El, the celestial king and ruler of the divine council, is also called ‘the Holy

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<sup>147</sup> Selms, “The Expression,” 259-60: Although Isa 29:23 (“They will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob”) has a reference to the root *qđš*, the general tenor of 29:22-24 speaks of a return from captivity that does not, in his view, amplify YHWH’s holiness. Selms also sees no connection with the idea of holiness in Ps 71:22: “I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel” (though the psalmist mentions God’s righteousness in v. 24) and also Ps 89:19: “For our shield belongs to Yahweh, our king to the Holy One of Israel” (261-62).

<sup>148</sup> Selms, “The Expression,” 268: He argues that the epithet HOI refers to “the divine being adored by Israel.” For when *qđdōš* and its parallel words in Ugaritic, Aramaic and Phoenician refer to heavenly beings, minor gods, and divine courtiers (radiant in appearance), it may be that for Israel, the expression “the Holy One of Israel” originally meant “the celestial being adored by the Israelite nation” among the other surrounding gods (266-67); W. H. Schmidt suggests that the epithet was applied as a natural extension to Yahweh when holiness was associated with El Elyon of Jerusalem (Ps 46:5) the holy city of Zion (*The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* [trans. John Sturdy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983], 154; trans. of *Alttestamentliche Glaube und seine Umwelt: Zur Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Gottesverständnisses* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968], 136-37); cf. van Koppen and van der Toorn, “Holy One,” *DDD* 415-18.

<sup>149</sup> Selms, “The Expression,” 268-69.

<sup>150</sup> Goldingay, “Theology of Isaiah,” 171.

One' (*KTU* 1.2.I.20-21; 1.16.I.11, 22; 1.17.I.3, 8, 12, 22). Thus, too, the designation 'Holy One' in the Bible is sometimes juxtaposed with the term  $\square$ el (Pss 78:41; 89:7; Hos 11:9; 12:1)."<sup>151</sup> Therefore the Holy One signifies both his divine transcendence and kingship.

God's holiness also expresses his incomparable power. It is not uncommon for the ancient Near Eastern cultures to claim their god or goddesses as greater and more powerful than any member of the heavenly council. The holiness of Yahweh in Israel's faith is, however, to be rooted and traced back to their redemptive experience with Yahweh during the Exodus and at Mount Sinai.<sup>152</sup> For instance, when Yahweh rescued Israel out of Egypt, listen to what the people proclaimed about Yahweh in "The Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1-18): "Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in *holiness*, awesome in deeds, performing wonders? (Exod 15:11)."<sup>153</sup> Through these events (e.g., of deliverance), Anderson writes, holiness is primarily equated with God's divine *power* (a source from outside this human world that is "highly active, energetic, dynamic, even threatening" and evokes both fascination and dread).<sup>154</sup> Levine

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<sup>151</sup> C. L. Seow, "Holy One," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: D-H* Volume 2 (ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld; Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2007), 2:858.

<sup>152</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Holy One of Israel," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson* (ed. by Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 8; Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 8-16.

<sup>153</sup> Anderson notes that he who redeemed Israel is to be celebrated and worshipped and that special part of their sacred history is retold whenever his sacred name—Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel (Isa 1:4) is confessed ("The Holy One," 4).

<sup>154</sup> Anderson, "The Holy One," 8; idem, *Contours of Old Testament*, 44-45: For instance, when Moses was standing in the presence of God, he was told to remove his sandals because the ground he was standing on was sacred. In other passages, God's holiness makes objects sacrosanct so that one cannot even look upon them (Num 4:18-20) or touch them without dire results (Exod 19, there when the mountain convulsed, the people stood back in fear of Yahweh's powerful and awe-inspiring presence). The ark is represented as the throne seat of God (1 Sam 4:6) and therefore evokes fear when being transported into a city (1 Sam 6:20: "Who is able to stand before the Lord, the holy God?"). Thus the holy manifests itself as power that is

comments, “the conception of divine power as transcendent was first formulated within the context of Israelite monotheism” where Israel learns that the God of Israel is “all-powerful” and holiness is the means to receive his power (i.e., life-giving potency).<sup>155</sup> This perspective of Yahweh’s power, Oswalt observes, is likewise intimated by Isaiah, who in chs. 1-39 mocks those who undermine God’s ultimate power, and in chs. 40-55 acknowledges HOI’s power to redeem Israel.<sup>156</sup> Yet a key point to remember is that God does not want to remain as a “Being: being-in-itself, metaphysical reality and power; rather, God is known as being-in-relationship, being with identity, being that is identified with a people.”<sup>157</sup> As Berkhof writes, God is not “far away, aloof, and cold.”<sup>158</sup> The transcendence of God has its opposite, where his “condescendence” (“stooping-down”) is seeking to establish communion with humanity.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, within this “incalculable, mysterious, and ineffable” divine power, holiness contains a favorable “face” of redemption for the oppressed.<sup>160</sup> In other words, Yahweh’s holiness is not “merely the austere, white light of uncreated perfection, but the infinitely creative love that can take

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“out of this world.”

<sup>155</sup> Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 249-50.

<sup>156</sup> John N. Oswalt, “Isaiah: Theology of,” *NIDOTTE* 4:729: Isaiah in these chapters highlight Yahweh’s transcendent power. In the earlier usages, it seeks to reveal the folly of disobedience against the Creator, who has the ability to make things right again, and in the later usages Isaiah is seeking to promote faith in Yahweh.

<sup>157</sup> Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 50.

<sup>158</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of Faith* (trans. S. Woudstra; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 113.

<sup>159</sup> Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, 106-07.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson, “The Holy One,” 8-9. Edmond Jacob also speaks of the essential aspect of holiness is power, but is power that God uses to make his kingdom triumph and bestow life (*Theology of the Old Testament* [trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock; New York: Harper & Row, 1958], 87).

the tainted and defiled and make it over again.”<sup>161</sup>

God is not, therefore, only a numinous *mysterium tremendum* (per Rudolf Otto)<sup>162</sup> reality, nor just “wholly-other,” but is passionately pursuing a personal relationship with his people. We see this conviction in Isaiah when he uses his favorite title “the Holy One of Israel” to emphasize that Yahweh is the God “of Israel.” Isaiah remembered that this sovereign transcendent God who showed a redemptive concern for Israel during the Exodus and Sinai experience is engaged in an I-Thou relationship.<sup>163</sup> Anderson explains that this kind of close relationship between HOI and Israel expresses “God’s *involvement* in Israel’s history, God’s *initiative* toward the people.”<sup>164</sup> In fact, Yahweh wanted to be recognized as Israel’s own God among other supposed gods (e.g., Judg 11:21-24). His personal-relational qualities are unlike ancient Near Eastern gods who have irregular relations and conflicts with other deities.<sup>165</sup> Indeed the calling of Yahweh as “my God” (Isa 7:13; 25:1; “my Holy One,” Hab 1:12) bears witness to an intimate communion between humanity and God (cf. Pss 33; 16; 73:23-28) that is lacking in Babylon.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Oswalt, *NIDOTTE* 4:729.

<sup>162</sup> *The Idea of the Holy* (2d ed.; London: Oxford University, 1950).

<sup>163</sup> Anderson, “The Holy One,” 4.

<sup>164</sup> Anderson, “The Holy One,” 5: For instance, the personal pronouns in Yahweh’s self-declarations affirm Israel as the “recipient of divine love”: “I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your deliverer” (Isa 43:3a) means “the one who has delivered you”; or “I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King” (Isa 43:15) indicate God as Israel’s creator or “your Maker” (54:5; cf. 45:11) means “the One who made you;” and accordingly, “your Holy One (43:15) means “the One who has manifested holiness to you” or “in your midst.”

<sup>165</sup> Gray, *Book of Isaiah*, lxxxiv-lxxxv.

<sup>166</sup> Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 165: An exception to this is the personal tutelary deity in Mesopotamia, who acts as an intermediary interceding with the mighty gods (see also H. Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure: An Essay of Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977], 203-16: “the personal god appears as the personification of a man’s luck and success” [203], but is powerless over “an evil, lawless demon” [206].); cf. O. Eissfeldt, “‘My God’ in the Old Testament,” *EvQ* 19 (1947): 7-20. In the Old Babylonian period there is reference to a national god and a

This same theological meaning of God's presence with Israel is seen in Hosea 11:9 where the Holy One, though not used in construct relation with Israel, is described as being "in the middle of" the people (בְּקִרְבָּם) (cf. Isa 12:6b; Amos 5:14b). In the same sense, Isaiah is reaffirming that HOI is in Israel's midst (Isa 12:6b). He acknowledges God's immanence as being more than *wholly-other*: "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite'" (Isa 57:15). Indeed Yahweh is the HOI, and "the addition 'of Israel' reminds us that it is in his turning toward us, in his nearness, that this awesome exaltedness of God is experienced (e.g., Exod 15:11; Ezek. 20:41)."<sup>167</sup> This reminder that the Holy God wants to manifest his presence to his people is Isaiah's emphasis when he uses the epithet.

In addition, through his vision of Yahweh's trifold holiness (ch. 6) Isaiah realized that God's holiness was not merely depicting God's "ontological otherness," but it also reflected God's "moral and ethical perfection."<sup>168</sup> Though the root word קָדַשׁ was used in the surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures to describe a deity or that which belonged

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god who is often both a divine patron of the family (generational), and considered a "personal" god. These personal gods were referred to as "my god" or "the god of my father" and were probably chosen because the god(s) had a sanctuary in their district. Since few gods were omnipresent, a worshipper had to seek a god whose help was nearby (Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 76-79). However, these so-called "personal" gods lacked the "qualitative" intimacy that existed between Yahweh and his people. Jean Bottéro comments that these gods were never an object of "anxious, enthusiastic pursuit...but out of a need for his protection, his assistance. It was not inspired by a desire to be close to him, to be in his presence, to have the peace or happiness of finding oneself in his company" (*Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* [trans. Teresa L. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001], 37).

<sup>167</sup> Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, 123.

<sup>168</sup> Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 33.



to it, as set apart from the common,<sup>169</sup> it was, however, a term that was not widely used nor was it given special prominence.<sup>170</sup> The term had no ethical/moral connotations since the pagan gods had a variety of moral behaviors.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, to call the divine beings *holy* is to consider them as separate, exalted, and brilliant.<sup>172</sup> But when used for Yahweh it certainly refers to him as being *transcendent* at first, yet its main usage refers to his moral/ethical nature.<sup>173</sup>

For example, Smith writes that holiness in reference to Yahweh clearly means that he is removed from all that is *sinful* and is uncontaminated by the *profane*, and is glorious in majesty. This “glory” (*kābôd*) is also the outward manifestation of his holiness.<sup>174</sup> Through his contact with the most Holy One, Isaiah recognized his own impurity and the uncleanness of the nation. Yet in that encounter, Isaiah also received “atonement” [כַּפֵּר] for his sin and guilt (6:7) when the Seraphim cleansed Isaiah’s sin with a live coal from the altar. Through the purging of his sin, Isaiah thus experienced Yahweh’s holy ethical nature as the “Holy God [who] shows himself in righteousness” (5:16).

Furthermore, when God’s holiness becomes the basis for his just punishment of

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<sup>169</sup> As noted earlier, שִׁקְרִי refers to “holy gods” and other “holy” cult vessels that were separated from the common or profane and belonged to the heavenly supernatural realm, not the human, created world; cf. McComiskey, *TWOT* 2:788-789; Procksch, *TDNT* 1:89-93; Goldingay, “Theology of Isaiah,” 171.

<sup>170</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 126; idem, “Key Themes in the Book of Isaiah: Their Relevance for Christian Theology,” in *The Newell Lectureships: Volume III* (ed. Timothy Dwyer; Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1996), 76.

<sup>171</sup> The character of the gods is identical with that of humans: Strong, but weak; faithful, but deceptive; loving, but hateful; dependable, but fickle (Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective*, 11).

<sup>172</sup> Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 4.

<sup>173</sup> Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 165.

<sup>174</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* (ed. E. Ray Clendenen; NAC 15A; Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 81; Ringgren, *Prophetic Conception of Holiness*, 25.

sin towards a community, Goldingay states, his holiness can be characterized by **קדוּשָׁתוֹ** and **צִדְקָה**: the exercise of authority in a way that reflects what is right (e.g., Isa 5:15-16).<sup>175</sup> God had already revealed his “ethical righteousness” to Israel through the giving of the covenant (i.e., the law)<sup>176</sup> after Israel’s powerful liberation from Egypt. Anderson writes that this covenant instructed God’s chosen people with ethical and cultic demands to live as holy people because God himself is holy.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, the book of Isaiah proclaims the ethical and moral requirements of Yahweh for Israel through the use of this epithet.

In the book of Isaiah, to say Yahweh is the Holy One means everything that is called holy is so because it has been hallowed by Yahweh. Moreover, Yahweh did not call himself “the Holy One of the world, nor the Holy One of the human race, nor of any other people, but the Holy One of Israel only, because Israel alone was hallowed by Him as a people, and called by Him as a people to be holy...Israel, destined to be holy by the Holy One.”<sup>178</sup> When Israel is sold into bondage because of her iniquities (Isa 50:1), it is HOI who will redeem her (43:14; 48:17).<sup>179</sup> It is the redeemed who will *hallow* Yahweh’s name, for they “will *hallow* the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel” (Isa 29:23). Then, as Buber notes, the purpose of Israel’s election will be attained, when “the people hallowed by Him” establishes his holy kingdom. HOI promises to lead

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<sup>175</sup> Goldingay, “Theology of Isaiah,” 174.

<sup>176</sup> Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy*, 27-34.

<sup>177</sup> Anderson, “The Holy One of Israel,” 9.

<sup>178</sup> Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 207.

<sup>179</sup> The marriage metaphor also addresses this redemption when the forsaken “wife of youth (54:6) is received back again by her husband.

them to walk in the new “way” (48:17), “the way of hallowing” (highway of holiness, 35:8). This “hallowing, as a reciprocal action” is the “divine-human relationship”<sup>180</sup> that Isaiah wants to emphasize when he calls Yahweh the Holy One of Israel.<sup>181</sup> The prophet is reclaiming the use of this *holy* designation of Yahweh to remind his *holy* people of the nearness of this Holy covenantal God, who will help them to become holy. This nearness of Yahweh had been taken for granted by Israel as proclaimed in the book of Isaiah.

Based on these possible usages of the epithet (either substantively or adjectivally, and sometimes both), the character of Yahweh (i.e., the meaning of the epithet) is informed and amplified by examining the roles that HOI takes in each of the various contexts. For example, Stansell discusses the use of the epithet in chs. 28-33 where it is used five times (29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; cf. 29:23, “Holy One of Jacob”) as the object of people’s worship (29:19; cf. 29:23), or as a disregard of God (30:11, 30:12, 15).<sup>182</sup> Rendtorff sees the epithet used in chs. 1-12 as two groups of texts proclaiming salvation (e.g., Israel’s remnant will rely on HOI, 10:20-22) or judgment (e.g., rejection, 1:4; 5:24, and scorning/mockings, 5:19). In Isaiah 29:19, HOI is exulted which continues the liturgical praise of HOI in Isa 12:1-6. For chs. 40-55 the epithet is used differently. Yahweh frequently uses it: as a self-description (e.g., following “I am YHWH,” 40:3, 15), or following the introductory formula, “Thus says Yahweh” (43:14; 48:17), or together with “redeemer” (49:7a; 41:4; 47:4; 54:5). In addition, there are other participial (self-) descriptions of HOI: “helper [Savior]” (מושיע 43:3), “maker” (יוצר 45:11, עושה 54:5,

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<sup>180</sup> Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 207-08.

<sup>181</sup> John N. Oswalt states that this transcendent One is not distant but immanent to Israel, in the context of his election love (“Key Themes in the Book of Isaiah,” 76).

<sup>182</sup> 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; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 87.

בֹּרֵא 43:15), “faithful” (נֶאֱמָן 49:7b), “king” (43:15), “husband” (54:5), “God of the whole earth” (54:5). There are also verbal expressions regarding “creating” (בָּרָא 41:20), “choosing” (בָּחַר 49:7), and “glorifying” (פָּאֵר 55:5). These usages in chs. 40-55 are related to salvation and not judgment. In 60:14, HOI is associated with the eschatological Zion (cf. 55:5).<sup>183</sup>

From this brief survey of the title’s usages, a further comprehensive analysis summarizing Yahweh’s roles, including all the substantival and adjectival meanings of the epithet will be beneficial. But to only examine the unique traits of HOI without emphasizing Isaiah’s strong conviction of Israel’s relationship with this “HOI” would be an incomplete inquiry. Therefore, this study will attempt to provide a clearer theological portrait of HOI in the book of Isaiah.

The next section will provide brief but pertinent exegetical comments on the twenty-five occurrences of HOI, which will be used to establish an overall understanding of the prophet’s theological perspective concerning HOI.

### **2.3 Israel’s Relationship with the Holy One of Israel in the Book of Isaiah**

In attempting to explain the significance and meaning of the epithet HOI in the book of Isaiah, one should consider three verses that speak about “the Holy One” (קָדוֹשׁ, although not technically using “HOI”) and describe his holiness (6:3; 57:15; 5:16). These three verses identify the Holy One’s being and help to explicate Israel’s personal relationship with HOI. The first verse begins with Isaiah’s throne room vision (ch. 6). In that

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<sup>183</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, “The Composition of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 159-63.

encounter with קדוש, Isaiah saw so much of Yahweh's holiness and glory that it greatly influenced his faith life and subsequent ministry. When Isaiah saw the most holy God in his vision, it revealed the following concepts: (1) God is a living person; (2) God is transcendent; (3) God is simultaneously immanent at the altar; (4) God is righteousness itself; (5) God is pure and sinless and quite distinct from his creature man, who is a sinner.<sup>184</sup> In this awesome encounter, Isaiah first perceives “the Holy One”<sup>185</sup> as primarily being transcendent or “wholly-other.” In Isa 6:1, Isaiah saw the Lord (אֲדֹנָי)<sup>186</sup> who was described as קדוש קדוש קדוש as being “high [רום] and exalted [נשא] (v. 1).<sup>187</sup> This enthroned view of God describes him as being seated on a throne that is elevated so high that it is only the hem of his royal mantle that—hyperbolically—fills the entire palace.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> George A. F. Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), 54-55.

<sup>185</sup> Accepting Levine's translation of קדוש קדוש קדוש as “The Holy One, the Holy One, the Holy One!” (“The Language of Holiness,” 254). If translated as “holy, holy, holy” the description yields the same result.

<sup>186</sup> Notice that Isaiah did not use Yahweh's specific name, but addressed God with this reverent title (אֲדֹנָי) in order to reference him as being the “Holy One, Holy One, Holy One” who is יהוה צבאות. Johan Lust argues that Isaiah seems to have used אֲדֹנָי as a suffixed form of הָאֲדֹנָי to address God as “my Lord” as an expression of his personal relationship to God. This term הָאֲדֹנָי (“the Lord”) is a very rare title in the Bible; it occurs only five times in Isaiah (1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4) and once in Mal 3:1. What is distinctive in Isaiah is that he always uses this title followed with an exclusive combination with יהוה צבאות “YHWH Sabaoth” [which is the title associated with “the Holy One” here in 6:3. Hence his respectful acknowledgment of his Lord as the ruler of the world who is high and exalted and is the “Holy One.”] (“The Divine Titles in Proto-Isaiah and Ezekiel,” in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. Michaël N. van der Meer et al.; VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 131-49).

<sup>187</sup> Gordon C. I. Wong offers another perspective when he states that the greatness of God is repeatedly contrasted with the arrogance of humanity when the former is exalted and the latter humbled (2:11, 17). Here in 6:1, Yahweh is “high and exalted” and derivatives of these two adjectives (רום and נשא) are used in combination three times in ch. 2 (vv. 12, 13, 14). Those verses describe that even the best that humanity can offer cannot compare to the appearance of the splendor of Yahweh's majesty. Could the same human-divine contrast be seen in the noting of King Uzziah's death in Isaiah 6:1? (In 2 Chr 26:16, his downfall is attributed to his pride.) The death of this human king may be another contrast to the divine King that reigns forever (*The Road to Peace: Pastoral Reflections on Isaiah 1-12* [Singapore: Genesis Books, 2009], 82-83).

The essence of this superlative holiness “reveals how separate, different, or totally other he is in comparison to all other aspects of the created world.”<sup>189</sup> Isaiah recognizes the high and lofty One as the Sovereign of the universe.<sup>190</sup> As a result of the seraphim declaring his holiness, the earth is filled with his glory (this glory is his disclosed holiness<sup>191</sup>), and the foundations of the thresholds trembled and the temple was filled with smoke. Delitzsch notes that “[t]he building was seized with reverential awe throughout its whole extent, and in its deepest foundations.”<sup>192</sup> This experience produced a “solemn awe in the beholder”<sup>193</sup> and thus Isaiah stood in trembling reverence before the Holy One—who was at that moment both transcendent and yet immanent (cf. Sinai theophany, Exod 19:18).

A second similar verse explicates what “the Holy One” means to the prophet. Isaiah 57:15 states: “For thus says the high [רום] and exalted One [נשא] who inhabits forever, whose name is Holy, ‘the high and holy place I inhabit, and with the contrite and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” Here the prophet proclaims the fundamental essence of HOI as expressed by the name

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<sup>188</sup> Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 262; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 224.

<sup>189</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* (NAC 15A; Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 190.

<sup>190</sup> Paul D. Hanson, “Covenant and Politics,” in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride Jr.* (ed. John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 217: This profound encounter with HOI reminded Isaiah of God’s governance of the universe—the important truth that all national life and human government exists under the authority of divine rule (219-20).

<sup>191</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 55.

<sup>192</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (trans. James Martin; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), 1:194.

<sup>193</sup> Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 1:148.

“Holy [One].” He is called the “*Enthroned One* of Isaiah’s vision (6:1).”<sup>194</sup> He is “the high and exalted one”: the highest, the absolute majesty who is exalted above all things and above all powers. Because he is “enthroned forever”<sup>195</sup> he shall never be removed from power.<sup>196</sup> This Holy One is also noted as the Incomparable One in ch. 40 (v.25: “To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? asks the Holy One.”). This similar expression affirms the Holy One’s high and lofty stature. To call God the Holy One means, as Köhler states, he is “*at once exalted, supreme and fearful.*” In Hosea, God calls himself holy because he is Lord of his own will. Thus he is independent and free. Yahweh is superior and almighty. He is the free master of his own will.<sup>197</sup>

But for Isaiah, the Holy One does not remain in his exalted status, he also comes to save his people. As Isa 57:15 declares, he who inhabits the high and holy place (cf. Ps 102:20 [19]: *ממרום קדשו*), who seems to be utterly unapproachable (transcendent or not a part of this world in time and space), comes to  *dwell*  with his creation,<sup>198</sup> specifically with the contrite (cf. 3:15) and lowly of spirit.<sup>199</sup> When the Holy One comes, his presence brings life to those whose lives have been severely crushed by their captors and whose

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<sup>194</sup> (Italics mine) Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 170.

<sup>195</sup> J. Alec Motyer clarifies the translation as being “a dwelling-one of eternity/eternally dwelling,” hence “the everlasting God” (NIV) (*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 476).

<sup>196</sup> August Pieper, *Isaiah II* (trans. Erwin E. Kowalke; Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), 522.

<sup>197</sup> L. Köhler, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. A. S. Todd; Philadelphia: Lutterworth Press, 1957), 52.

<sup>198</sup> The verb *שָׁכַן* is used to describe the Lord’s dwelling among his people (e.g., Exod 25:8; 29:45) as it is about to be used here.

<sup>199</sup> “Contrite” are those who are crushed by life’s burdens and battering (e.g., the sufferings of the righteous, 57:1; cf. the Suffering Servant, 53:5, 10) and “lowly” are the humble who know their rightful place at the bottom, but whom the Lord will revive (Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 476). These blessed people are unlike the stubborn rebellious ones (e.g., children of the sorceress, 57:3-13a).

spirits have been weighed down by sin and shame.<sup>200</sup> Therefore the Holy One offers them deliverance, healing and comfort (57:18).<sup>201</sup> Isaiah experienced such a healing in ch. 6, when he witnessed Yahweh's majestic holiness. Upon confessing his sinfulness before the Holy One (v. 5), his lips were purified, and he received forgiveness and atonement for his guilt (עוֹן) and sin (חַטָּאת). Through this encounter, Isaiah came to understand that though the Holy One is transcendent (or "wholly other"), he is also morally pure.<sup>202</sup> HOI's holiness "consumes what is unholy."<sup>203</sup> As a result of experiencing the "purging effects of God's holiness," this primal sense of awe infused Isaiah's entire future messages concerning HOI.<sup>204</sup>

This experience relates closely to the third verse that describes "righteousness" (צְדִיקָה) as a quintessential component of God's holiness. Isaiah 5:16 states, "Yahweh of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the Holy God will show himself holy in righteousness." God's holiness is powerful and it brings down the "proud and holds the sinful accountable."<sup>205</sup> In this chapter, the Holy God rebukes the iniquities, sins, and bloodshed of Judah, and judges the people who "call evil good, and good evil" (v. 20, cf.

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<sup>200</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488. Blenkinsopp notes the one obstacle that needs to be removed is the people's sinful addiction to alien cults (cf. Ezek 7:19; 14:3-4, 7; 44:12) (*Isaiah 56-66*, 169-70).

<sup>201</sup> Paul D. Hanson notes that it is through the contrite and humble, rather than through any holy ground or sacred building, that the only One makes his entry point to bring blessing and healing" (*Isaiah 40-66* [IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995], 202). Childs notes that to enjoy salvation in God's holy presence requires repentance and humility (*Isaiah*, 471).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 33: God holiness was due to his "moral and ethical perfection."

<sup>203</sup> O. Procksch, "hágios [holy]," *TDNT abr.*, 15.

<sup>204</sup> Hanson, "Covenant and Politics," 217. The holiness of the thrice "holy" God represents a dramatic contrast to the people's sinfulness (Carolyn J. Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009], 61).

<sup>205</sup> Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today*, 60.



vv. 7-15; 18-23; see discussion below). Because conduct reflects character, Yahweh does what is right because he is holy and detests sin. God's צדקה ("justness, justice"<sup>206</sup>) "refers to proper behaviour which aims at order" and צדק refers to the "correct order."<sup>207</sup> This Holy God who is righteous and compassionate is committed to battling injustice and oppression in the world. His divine righteousness and mercy overcomes wickedness and heartlessness. In him, one receives the forgiveness of sin and the healing that enables a person to freely live "the order of life intended by God for all."<sup>208</sup>

God's desire to purify his people was made clear to Isaiah when Isaiah witnessed God's holiness in Isaiah's vision. Thereafter, Isaiah was called to help his people become exposed to this same holiness. As Haughey observes, Isaiah understood that HOI was initiating his holiness toward Israel, but also realized that this holiness is "short-circuited when Israel is unjust." God's holiness is intrinsically linked to justice [צדקה], therefore Israel's relationship with HOI is dependent on her people doing justice to one another. Israel becomes clean in God's eyes not just through ritual cleansing, but by practicing justice (ceasing to do evil, and learning to do good, 1:15-17).<sup>209</sup> Thus the Holy One desires to abide with his people in order to promote his holiness for the "once-faithful city had lost its essential ethical qualities—justice and righteousness...consistent with its

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<sup>206</sup> HALOT 3:1006.

<sup>207</sup> Alfred Jepsen, "Tsdk und Tsdkh im Alten Testament," in *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land: Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg zum 70 Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 78-89 cited in HALOT. John J. Scullion notes these terms צדקה and צדק denote "order," "uprightness," "justice," or "right conduct," and "saving action" ("Righteousness [OT]," ABD 5:725-26).

<sup>208</sup> Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 77.

<sup>209</sup> Haughey, *Housing Heaven's Fire*, 52-53: "When justice is wanting, God will purify Israel until justice is done by her. This purification is best understood by God's response to Isaiah's bewailing of personal unworthiness upon his beholding the vision of God's holiness" (54).

relationship with a holy God, and had become a harlot (*zônâ*, 1:21).<sup>210</sup> Isaiah understands that the Holy One encompasses an ethical impeccability that becomes the basis of his just punishment of sin (5:16). His holiness, however, also implies a readiness to forgive and produce a righteous remnant.<sup>211</sup>

The next section will provide brief but pertinent comments on the twenty-five occurrences of HOI.<sup>212</sup> These are foundational observations that will be expanded on in the next chapter when the prophet's theological understanding concerning HOI is formulated.<sup>213</sup>

### 2.3.1 *Isaiah 1:4*

הוי גוי חטא עם כבד עון זרע מרעים בנים משחיתים עזבו את־יהוה נאצו  
את־קדוש ישראל נזרו אחור:

“Woe, sinful nation, people heavy with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who act corruptly! They have forsaken Yahweh, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from him.”

The initial point made in ch. 1 is Yahweh's emphasis of Israel's “rebellion” against him.<sup>214</sup> This imagery merits special attention since it is located in the opening part of this book. Yahweh states in 1:2, 4 that Israel has “rebelled” (*פשעו בי*) against him ([me], *פשעו בי*, 1:2), “abandoned” (*עזבו*) him, “despised” (*נאצו*) HOI, and has become “utterly estranged”

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<sup>210</sup> William S. LaSor et al., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 302.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 81-82.

<sup>212</sup> The Holy One of Israel: 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14.

<sup>213</sup> With this many verses, an exhaustive exegetical analysis is not being attempted.

<sup>214</sup> Chapter 1 discusses three elements: (1) Israel's rebellion (1:2-7), (2) Pretentious worship in the temple courts (1:8-20), and (3) Unfaithful (people of) Zion (1:21-31).

(נזרו אחר) <sup>215</sup> (1:4). His people are less sensitive than livestock, who at least recognize their master.

Notice the father-son blood bond relationship mentioned in vv. 2, 4 (along with the familial term “offspring” [זרע] in v. 4). HOI cares about his people because they are his “sons (children)”<sup>216</sup> whom he “reared” (גדל) and “raised up” (רום). The usage of the father metaphor is remarkable since this term is not commonly associated with Yahweh in the OT.<sup>217</sup> When it is used in the Semitic languages (e.g., Babylonian), the concept of fatherhood emphasizes the aspects of ruler, of ownership, and of general authority.<sup>218</sup> The imagery here reflects Yahweh’s loving care for Israel.<sup>219</sup> Generally the OT uses the verbs ילד (“beget”) and גדל (“bring through”; in light of the high mortality among children; cf. Isa 49:21; 51:18; Hos 9:12; Job 31:18) to speak about the details of parental care.<sup>220</sup> Here the meaning of גדל parallels the meaning in Job 7:17: “have deep concern for” (cf. Job 31:18). It is, however, interesting that Isaiah does not use ילד (beget) to describe Yahweh as father. He does not even use the title “father” to address Yahweh (in contrast to Deut

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<sup>215</sup> William L. Holladay reads נזרו אחר in 1:4b as “they have dedicated themselves to another (god)” in anticipation of Isaiah’s reference to fertility cult practices in 1:29-31 (“A New Suggestion for the Crux in Isaiah I 4B,” *VT* 33 [1983]: 235-37, esp. 236: Interpreted as a *nip’al* verb of נזר [instead of זור] with a substantive complement).

<sup>216</sup> For a study on children metaphors in Isaiah, see Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah’s Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 46-84.

<sup>217</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 13.

<sup>218</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:235.

<sup>219</sup> In the aNE, the concept of goodness has been used to describe fatherhood: Azitawadda (from Karatepe, Phoenicia) states: “On account of my righteousness and my wisdom *and the goodness of my heart* (נעם לבי), every king considered me his father” (see *WO* I/4 [1949], 274; *WO* II/2 [1955], 178 cited in Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 13).

<sup>220</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 12.

32:6). Perhaps, as Wildberger notes, Isaiah did not want to associate Yahweh as possibly functioning on the same level with the surrounding pagan procreating deities (e.g., El as father in the Ras Shamra texts<sup>221</sup>). Isaiah instead wanted to emphasize Israel's status as [adopted]<sup>222</sup> "sons" before Yahweh (cf. 30:9). The verbs that are used here are related to the theme of child-rearing.<sup>223</sup> In the light of the nature of this bond, it should be unnatural for Israel to respond in such an improper manner to God's love. This ingratitude is the basis for the recent calamities noted in vv. 5-9.<sup>224</sup>

In 1:2-9 Isaiah indicts the people of Israel in general, but in 1:10 it is the rulers of Sodom (one segment of the broader society); likewise in 1:23 it is the princes who are specifically addressed, all of whom are in contrast to the just leadership and counselors of Zion who will later be restored (1:26).<sup>225</sup> Isaiah addresses their rebellion by making a lamenting interjection "Woe" (הוי)<sup>226</sup> in 1:4 and speaks directly at the

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<sup>221</sup> Cf. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 47-48; John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament* (VTSup 5; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 116-17.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Janet L. R. Melnyk, "When Israel was a Child: Ancient Near Eastern Adoption Formulas and the Relationship between God and Israel," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan; JSOTSup 173; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 245-59.

<sup>223</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 12-14.

<sup>224</sup> John T. Willis, "The First Pericope in the Book of Isaiah," *VT* 34 (1984): 63-77, esp. 69.

<sup>225</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 32-33.

<sup>226</sup> He announces an "impending misfortune, doom, destruction because of the specified deeds which had been committed by such evildoers." Here God's people have neglected their responsibilities toward their God (Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Woe-Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 [1962]: 249-63, esp. 253). Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that the woe-saying originated as a simple exclamation that has "no significant emotional charge or moral content" which was then "co-opted by prophetic rhetoric." He adds that the use of *hōy* in funerary contexts was limited (1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 29:1) (*Isaiah 1-39*, 212). But R. J. Clifford describes the prophetic *hōy*'s as mainly "a cry of funeral lamentation" for a friend or foe alike and only later develops into a curse-like formula (e.g., Ezek). In Isaiah's chs. 1-39, it is used 18 times (7x in Isa 5, the parable of the vineyard, and 5x in Isa 28-33) to announce the prophet's lament (and taunting in chs. 28-33) of Israel's upcoming destruction. Indeed the tone of each *hōy* must be context determined because it can exhibit a wide range of emotions from genuine compassion to scorn and bitterness ("The Use of *HŌY*

גוי חטא עם כבד עון זרע מרעים בנים משחיתים (“sinful nation, a people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who act corruptly”). This outcry can be rendered as “Shame!” As appearing next to the word “nation” (גוי), which usually references the heathen nations surrounding Israel, it implies that Israel has lowered herself to their level.<sup>227</sup> In fact, the holiness of HOI has thus been repudiated by a people whose life now “reflects the exact opposite character.”<sup>228</sup> The rest of the verse explains the causes for their unfortunate state: God’s children “abandoned” Yahweh, “despised” HOI, and neglected their responsibilities toward their God.<sup>229</sup> They rejected the “almighty, glorious, holy, and just covenant partner who loved them” and to reject his covenant love is to refuse his daily assistance and deny his divine character. For Isaiah, HOI’s moral purity contrasts the sinful rebellion of the people.<sup>230</sup> They became estranged to HOI, “he was theirs, their own peculiar God” who was the most infinitely excellent one.<sup>231</sup> Therefore, as Leupold notes, to use such a strong verb as “despised” implies who would dare do this to Yahweh, HOI?<sup>232</sup>

Isaiah views HOI as the sacred God, worthy of his people’s reverence, who wants to relate with his children. HOI seeks to be the source of their holiness in order to help his

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in the Prophets,” *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458-64, esp. 459; cf. W. Janzen who says the word can sometimes also function as an invective or curse when announcing judgment (*Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972], 27-28). However, it may also be possible that the nuance of lament and grief can occur together in the context of judgment and anger, especially when a parent who is confronting a rebellious child experiences both anguish and anger (Wong, *The Road to Peace*, 72 n. 12).

<sup>227</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:57.

<sup>228</sup> Childs, *Isaiah*, 18.

<sup>229</sup> Gerstenberger, “Woe-Oracles of the Prophets,” 255.

<sup>230</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 81, 103.

<sup>231</sup> Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:82.

<sup>232</sup> *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:57.

people become a *holy* remnant (Isa 4:3). HOI's children were meant to be connected to him, particularly through prayer, but unfortunately, that relational aspect has become defective and meaningless once Yahweh hides his eyes from them and says, **אִינְנִי שׁוֹמֵעַ**, "I will not listen" to their many "prayers" (1:15). HOI condemns their insincere animal sacrifices, seeing the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats, when there is the blood of injustice on their hands (1:11, 15). To stand in the presence of HOI would require Israel to wash her hands, stained with blood, and to remove such evil deeds from God's pure sight.<sup>233</sup> This is the reason Isaiah sees "an ongoing process of alienation and separation between Yahweh and his elected people unfold[ing], ending in a necessary and total decline of the human partner because of God's withdrawal."<sup>234</sup>

But HOI who is so far above human defects nevertheless reaches forth to Israel.<sup>235</sup> As Wildberger notes, Isaiah calls Yahweh HOI because "he turns toward Israel, leads and protects the people." In Ugaritic, the term *qdš* (holy) is used together with *ltpn* (kind, fine), which is similar to Arabic *latîf* ("kind, friendly"). This suggests that Yahweh's holiness describes him "bend[ing] down toward his people in a friendly way."<sup>236</sup> For example, God says to his children, "come now, let us reason together" (1:18), but Israel has forsaken and spurned HOI. Motyer describes HOI as the divine sovereign who has drawn near to Israel to become her possession, "Israel's Holy One."<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Childs, *Isaiah*, 20.

<sup>234</sup> Klaus Koch, "Damnation and Salvation: Prophetic Metahistory and the Rise of Eschatology in the Book of Isaiah," *ExAud* 6 (1990): 8.

<sup>235</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:57.

<sup>236</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 25.

<sup>237</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 17, 44: From the call narrative of ch. 6, Isaiah understood God's holiness in three aspects: (1) transcendence—the exalted Sovereign (*Lord*, **יְהוָה**, in v. 1; *King* in v. 5); (2)

This title reveals that the “Holy One” is the God who is withdrawn and above the whole world (a different nature), but as the Holy One “of Israel” he has intervened in the history of his people. To draw near to him, he expects his people to be holy [avoid evil and wrongdoings]. For HOI will maintain his holiness by judging all perversions of justice.<sup>238</sup>

This point relates to the sterner view of Yahweh that reveals HOI’s seriousness concerning his relationship with his children. This can be seen by focusing on the imperative statements interspersed throughout 1:10-17. Watts notes that the sequencing of the tenses is insightful: The execution of *torah* is presented with imperatives. Yahweh’s role is stated in emphatic perfects, whereas, Zion’s behaviors are presented in imperfects. Thus the statements of 1:16-17 reveal how God will deal with his people and these are viewed in non-negotiable terms. This informs us of God’s concern for his people regarding the proper forms of worship. However, 1:18-20 reveals the attitude that would make negotiation possible again.<sup>239</sup> In other words, following the “father’s” deep regret over his children’s rebellion against him,<sup>240</sup> the father thus pleads with his children to stop their sinful behavior so that the severe calamities can cease (1:5-8). This plea is found in Yahweh’s invitation to his children to “reason” together with him. But it is more than just an invitation for them to consider doing good or evil. It is the plea of a father to

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judgment—Isaiah’s awareness of personal and national guilt (v. 5) reveals the severity for a sinner to be in the presence of the Holy One as described by the setting in v. 4.; and (3) salvation—behind the smoke of holiness (cf. Exod 19:18) the means of salvation (the altar) was visible (v. 6), and from the “presence and by the will of the Holy One a seraph flew to be the minister of cleansing and atonement to the sinner.” Thus Isaiah’s theology reflects the truth experienced in chapter 6 (17).

<sup>238</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 280.

<sup>239</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised* (WBC 24; Colombia: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 23-24.

<sup>240</sup> Koch comments that the utterance אִי־כֹהֵל in 1:21 does not only imply an outcry, “How the faithful city has become a harlot,” but reflects a mourning song for a dead person: “How dead has become the harlot, who was formerly a faithful city.” For “a collective disaster is hanging over the city” (“Damnation and Salvation,” 7).

his children to give heed to his instructions (תורה, 1:10) and to personally follow him, instead of rebelling, abandoning, despising, and turning away from HOI.

The term פשע<sup>241</sup> “rebelled” is an appropriate word to describe the apostasy of God’s people in the book of Isaiah. This same theme closes the last verse of the book in 66:24: “the men who have rebelled against me.” The verb has a political pitch (1 Kgs 12:19: “Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David”) that expresses the breaking of a covenant (2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5, 7; 2 Chr 10:19); it is thus the opposite of “covenant faithfulness” (חסד) or “faithfulness” (אמת).<sup>242</sup> The term means both falling away from God but also rising in opposition to him.<sup>243</sup> It shows Israel’s disobedience<sup>244</sup> and “unwillingness to recognize the nature of the relationship to God as parent or king and to draw the consequences of that relation and the dependence that it implies.”<sup>245</sup>

The Old Testament places great value upon filial obedience and devotion (Exod 20:12, “Honor your father and your mother”; Prov 1:8-9; 23:22) and defines clear punishments for disobedience and recalcitrant attitudes (Prov 30:17; 20:30; 3:11-12). Deuteronomy 21:18-21 instructs parents to seek community assistance when all other methods of rehabilitating a defiant child have been exhausted. The rebellious child is to

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<sup>241</sup> Occurs in 1:2; 24:20; 43:25; 44:22; 50:1; 53:5, 8; 57:4; 58:1; 59:12, 20.

<sup>242</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 14.

<sup>243</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:56.

<sup>244</sup> Köhler refers to this word פשע as the most profound word for sin in the OT (see others below), but it occurs relatively few times because rebellion in the OT is described in legal terms. Therefore reference is made more often to the individual sins (its circumstances), than to its sinfulness. Thus this term describes sin as disobedience and the revolt of the human will against the divine will (*Old Testament Theology*, 170).

<sup>245</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 24.



be denounced publicly and the elders of the town shall stone him to death.<sup>246</sup> Yahweh is also following a similar procedure as he denounces a rebellious Israel (see §4.2.1 below)—engaged in social and cultic sins—and seeks to persuade individuals to make a decision to turn back to God (1:18-20; 27-28).<sup>247</sup> (Interestingly, this admonition is introduced as the very first topic in this book.)

But the people's problem is noted in 1:3: "Israel does not know (יָדַע), my people do not understand (בֵּין)."<sup>248</sup> There is no object for the verb "know," making the indictment even stronger and all the more "scathing."<sup>249</sup> This lack of knowledge and understanding is the result of sin,<sup>250</sup> but both can be made available to those who are redeemed. This

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<sup>246</sup> Darr, "Child Imagery and the Rhetoric of Rebellion," in *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, 48-84, esp. 54-55: But despite experiencing corporal punishment that leaves them bruised and bleeding, God's children persists in rebellion.

<sup>247</sup> The plural form used is distinctive, addressing persons as individuals. This plural indictment continues in 2:5-8, 5:9-25, 9:9-10:4, 30:1-5; 31:6-7, and after fruitless appeals (e.g., in chs. 40-55), Isa 54:17 addresses "the servants of Yahweh" and in ch. 55 calls upon "all who are thirsty" to return and seek Yahweh and receive pardon. Chapters 56-59 continue addressing those (in terms of plural persons) who may be saved or remain lost (refusing to change), encouraging them to take responsibility for their own repentance (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 25).

<sup>248</sup> "Know" and "Knowledge" are found in: Isa 1:3; 5:13, 19; 7:15, 16; 9:8 [9]; 11:2, 9; 12:4, 5; 19:12, 21; 28:9; 29:11, 12, 15, 24; 32:4; 33:6; 37:20, 28; 38:19; 40:14, 21, 28; 41:20, 22, 23, 26; 42:16, 25; 43:10; 44:8, 9, 18, 19, 25; 45:3, 4, 5, 6; 47:8, 10, 11; 48:4, 6, 7, 8; 49:23, 26; 50:4, 7; 51:7; 52:6; 53:3, 11; 55:5; 56:10, 11; 58:2; 59:8; 12; 60:16; 61:9; 63:15; 64:1; 66:14; and "Understand" and "Understanding" are found in: Isa 1:3; 5:22; 6:9, 10; 10:12; 11:2; 14:6, 16; 27:11; 28:9, 19; 29:14, 16, 24; 32:4; 33:19; 40:14, 21, 28; 43:10, 18; 44:18, 19; 52:15; 56:11; 57:1.

<sup>249</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:56.

<sup>250</sup> The basic idea of אָטָה is "to fail, to go astray, miss the mark." It refers to a clear violation of a given command or prohibition; and it means missing the requirements of the law, whether that be in society or of God's. The parallel word עָוֹן means being "crooked" (not straight, or not right) and prone to living and acting wrongly. Whereas אָטָה entails doing something forbidden or failing to do something that is commanded, without knowing the reason for the prohibition, the crime of עָוֹן, however, originates in wrong intention. The term אָטָה designates the offense committed against the divine order of things, but עָוֹן indicates the sinful intention of men that is not aligned with God's will and always presupposes a consciousness of guilt. In brief, אָטָה represents failure, error, blunder, and עָוֹן means crime or iniquity (Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, 169-70): There are numerous terms for sin in the OT that reflect their varying degrees of profundity: אָטָה, עָוֹן, פֶּשַׁע, מַעַל (disloyalty, acting contrary to one's duty; it judges the

would require turning to HOI as noted in 55:6: “Seek Yahweh while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.”

The other terms “abandoned or forsaken” (עִזַּב) and “despised” (נִאָץ) stress the deliberate distancing of Israel from Yahweh, HOI. Three times in the book עִזַּב is used to accuse Israel of a breach of covenant (1:4, 28; 65:11). The term נִאָץ echoes a covenant background (cf. Deut 31:20; 32:19; Jer 14:21) and means “to despise” in the sense of “think lightly of” or actually ignoring the covenant. In Isa 1:4, its use is similar to Numbers 14:11 where it describes “despising” (נִאָץ) as the exact opposite of faith (אֱמֵן) in Yahweh. Both terms (עִזַּב and נִאָץ) are used to express the breaking of covenant and as well as participating in idolatry (Deut 31:16; Num 14:11; Judg 2:12; 10:6, 10, 13; 1 Sam 8:8; 12:10).<sup>251</sup>

It is important to note that when the title HOI is used, the genitive determinative (Israel) reviews Israel’s history with God (cf. Mighty One of Jacob, Gen 49:24; Isa 49:26; 60:16; Ps 132:2, 5; Mighty One of Israel, Isa 1:24; 29:23), and the prophet wants his people to remember God’s face because the HOI is the God of the covenant, the father who raised his children. Therefore to abandon him would be incomprehensible.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, Israel’s Holy God extends his incredible offer of forgiveness to his children in 1:18-20: For he states that though their sins be “scarlet” or “crimson,” he can wash them clean and make them white as snow, like wool (1:18). Therefore he admonishes his

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act by the norm of the law, not by the intention), רָשַׁע (an individual instance of wrongdoing, and not a tendency of doing wrong; it generally describes the character rather than the action), and אָשָׁם (guilt that needs to be made good).

<sup>251</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 28. As a result of Israel forsaking the covenant (cf. Deut 31:20), Yahweh also breaks his covenant obligations (cf. Deut 32:19; Jer 14:21) (Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 23).

<sup>252</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 25.

children to be clean (זכה) and to remove the evil (רע) deeds and cease doing evil (רע) (1:16). The Holy God shows here his redemptive nature (פרדה, 1:27) that desires to “smelt away” the people’s dross (1:25) and restore the people to become a city of righteousness, the faithful city (1:26). Isaiah understands that God, because of his holiness, wants to consume all that is “impure and ungodly” like a burning fire (cf. Isa 30:27; Jer 23:29).<sup>253</sup> Therefore Isaiah rebukes anyone who contends with HOI who is seeking to establish justice and righteousness on the earth (cf. 6:3).

### 2.3.2 Isaiah 5:19

האמרים ימהר יחישה מעשהו לזמן נראה ותקרב ותבואה עצת קדוש ישראל ונדעה:  
 “Who say, ‘Let it hurry, let his work hasten, that we may see [it]; and let the plan of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may acknowledge [it]!’”

### 2.3.3 Isaiah 5:24

לכן כאכל קש לשון אש וחשש להבה ירפה שרשם כמק יהיה ופרחם כאבק יעלה  
 כי מאסו את תורת יהוה צבאות ואת אמרת קדוש־ישראל נאצו:  
 “Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass shrivels into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their flower, like dust, will blow away; because they have rejected the law of Yahweh Almighty<sup>254</sup> and despised the word of the Holy One of

<sup>253</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 9. As James M. Hamilton Jr. rightly notes, the root issue for these symptoms of evil is forsaking and despising HOI, in other words, not worshipping him and cleaving to him (*God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2010], 192).

<sup>254</sup> Three main interpretations have been given for the divine epithet צבאות in the phrase יהוה צבאות (“Yahweh of Hosts/Almighty”): (1) armies of Israel (cf. 1 Sam 17:45, with Yahweh Sabaoth as the God of the armies of Israel) and the close affinity with the ark as a war sanctuary. But this military interpretation of the cultic name is reoriented by the later prophets when it is often used to designate Yahweh turning against his own people. This correlates with the second interpretation that relates it to (2) cosmic hosts (stars with astral powers), or the angels as the heavenly armies representing Yahweh’s council, or the totality of all earthly and heavenly beings. But this cosmological interpretation for צבאות is not found in the OT since heavenly hosts is always presented as צבא השמים or צבאיו “his hosts” (Ps 103:21) (Although the feminine plural is not used in any of the passages related to cosmic hosts [e.g., Josh 5:14; Ps 103:21; 1 Kgs 22:19], Wildberger prefers to translate it as “Yahweh of Hosts” because these examples still affirm Yahweh as the lord of those spirits assembled by his throne [*Isaiah 1-39*, 29-30]). The third interpretation remains and is most likely. It refers to (3) the epithet of “Yahweh, the mighty” or “Yahweh, the Almighty” (cf.

Israel.”

Beginning in ch. 5, Israel is symbolized as a vineyard and Yahweh Almighty as its owner (5:7). In this passage one notices the attentive details and the great expense that the owner makes in high hopes for a quality harvest (cf. Song 8: 11). The *hapax legomenon* עֲזָק refers to the initial deep breaking of the soil to prepare it for planting the grape vines. The stones of the ground have to be removed (סָקַל), which can be thrown to the path or used to build a protective wall around the plot. Once the ground is prepared, the choice vines of highest quality (שָׂרֵק) (cf. Jer 2:21, זֶרַע אֱמֶת, “wholly of pure seed”), a type of bright red grapes, are planted (5:2). In addition, the owner builds not the typical “booth” (cf. 1:8), but a watchtower in the middle of the property that provides a much better accommodation for the one who will protect the vineyard. The final installation is to cut out a winepress to be placed on-site. Once completed, the owner “waited” (יָקַן) for the vines to produce their sweet grapes (עֲנָבִים). But the vineyard produced only בִּאֲשִׁים (“stinking, spoiled berries” [a *hapax legomenon*]).<sup>255</sup> It was not unreasonable for the owner to expect a fruitful yield since it is clear he had provided them with the best possible support (“What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?” 5:4). Unfortunately, Yahweh Almighty sought for justice (מִשְׁפָּט), but found bloodshed (מִשְׁפָּח); for righteousness (צְדָקָה), but found an outcry (צַעֲקָה) (5:7).

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LXX, “Lord, Ruler of all”) reflecting his royal dominion as God-king enthroned on the cherub throne (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; cf. Isa 37:16; Ps 80:2; 99:1). And when this divine predicate is combined with other predications, it emphasizes “the scope of Yahweh’s power” (A. S. van der Woude, “צָבָא,” *TLOT* 2:1044-45; O. Eissfeldt, *Klein Schriften* [ed. R. Sellheim and F. Maass; Tübingen: Mohr, 1966], 3:122; cf. Isa 6:3; 54:4f.; Mal 1:11).

<sup>255</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 181-82.

The people's ungodly behavior is condemned by HOI in 5:8-24 and is introduced with the word "woe" (הוֹי).<sup>256</sup> The woe reflects the sins of the people in relation to the kind of lives expected of them as covenantal people. These sins include greed (vv. 8-10), self-indulgence (vv. 11-17), cynicism (vv. 18-19), moral perversion (v. 20, 21), and social injustice (vv. 22-24).<sup>257</sup> In response, God decides to remove his divine protection over the land that he had cultivated (5:5): "I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground." Yahweh's personal and regular care will cease: "I will lay it waste, it will not be pruned or hoed,<sup>258</sup> but briars and thorns will come up. I will also command the clouds to rain no rain on it" (5:6). Yahweh announces that the social disturbances and degradation of the people will eventually lead them into exile<sup>259</sup> (5:13). This is the result of their "lack of knowledge" (5:13) of Yahweh Almighty's law and despising the word of HOI (5:24). This disconnect from the source of life and strength produces spiritual insensitivity and ethical rebellion that evokes God's anger (5:25).<sup>260</sup> Their self-indulgent lifestyle (carousing and drinking while music is playing) prevented them from paying attention to the "deeds of Yahweh"

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<sup>256</sup> This word was often used in a funeral lament for the dead (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18) (Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 196). By addressing these sinners with this mourning cry, the prophet is comparing them to a dead man. It suggests that their "demise was so certain that their death could be lamented proleptically...The prophet was figuratively acting out their funeral" (Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Structure, Style, and the Prophetic Message: An Analysis of Isaiah 5:8-30," *BSac* 143 [1986]: 46-60, esp. 54-55).

<sup>257</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 113.

<sup>258</sup> Pruning the vines is just as important as sowing the fields for a good harvest (Lev 25:3). Unfruitful sprigs are cut off and surplus sprouts are removed to allow more juice to fill the berries. Hoeing and weeding (pulling out) occur together to prevent thorns and thistles from spreading through the grape vines (Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 183).

<sup>259</sup> The word גֹּלָה "exile" appears here for the first time in Isaiah (cf. 22:14; 23:1; 20:4; 26:21; 38:12; 40:5; 47:2, 3; 49:9, 21; 53:1; 56:1). Exile opens the possibility for restoration; cf. W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

<sup>260</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 94-95.

and from seeing the “work of his hands” (5:12). Yet Yahweh is not mocked. He will banish his people into exile. The rich lords who indulge in their debauchery will suffer bitter hunger. Because these men of power and responsibility have sinned, the whole people will suffer the consequence. Parched with thirst, the masses will be deported. The appetite of *Sheol* (“the grave”) will swallow the revelers (5:14). Then “those who today are rejoicing in the land will disappear tomorrow into the abyss.”<sup>261</sup> All the haughty ones will be humbled by God (5:15), including those who scorned Isaiah’s threats and warnings from HOI. For יהוה זבאות will ultimately exalt himself through his judgment and the Holy God (האל הקדוש) will be hallowed (נקדש) in righteousness (5:16).<sup>262</sup>

Another woe in particular shows the severity of their contempt towards HOI. In 5:18 there are those who behave in an unholy manner and further the cause of iniquity and promote sin by dragging them along<sup>263</sup> as with cart ropes, who say, “let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!” (5:19). Here the religious skeptics, presumably the political leaders of Jerusalem, expressed themselves by sardonic use of Isaiah’s own words—referring to HOI who has a “plan” (עצה) and “agenda”

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<sup>261</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 67-68.

<sup>262</sup> Righteousness seems to be a component of Yahweh’s holiness. Recall that Yahweh’s judgment is meant to achieve constructive objectives and to correct his people; thus one will understand how the HOI will display his holiness by righteousness (Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:117). George A. F. Knight comments that the word “holy” has been given a new moral content by Isaiah. It was originally applied to cultic objects that were ceremonially set apart from profane usage. When applied to Yahweh it reiterates his great otherness from mortal man. But Isaiah adds a new content to this otherness. He states: “God who is holy shall show himself holy in the form of righteousness.” God’s holiness then is “in reality his goodness, or better still, his saving purpose for man [צדקה, ‘vindication’]” (*Deutero-Isaiah: A Theological Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1965], 60).

<sup>263</sup> This implies willful and conscious sin, which is not in any way inadvertent (H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1-27* [ed. G. I. Davies; ICC; New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 1:381).

(מעשה), but which were unverifiable to them.<sup>264</sup> They cynically mock the ways of the Holy One, thinking nothing is going to happen. But the “woe” in this section and the reference to HOI (though used contemptuously) is a warning of HOI’s judgment on sin.

The work (מעשה) here is not the same as the work described in 5:12 since in that context, it is referring to God’s past care of the nation. Here it is referring to a future event.<sup>265</sup> This is evident by the way the scoffers urge that this “work” be made manifest hastily and demand that the “purpose” (עצה) of HOI come to pass so that they may know it (5:19). These wise men are skeptical about “applying prophetic solutions in the political sphere.”<sup>266</sup> McKane notes that the indictment upon these sages (הכמרים, 5:21) is on their “mental posture as practitioners of a self-contained system of political wisdom. They rely exclusively on rational scrutiny and on a practiced delicacy of appraisal and have no room in their system for the religious authority [e.g., Yahweh’s עצה] which is exemplified in the prophetic *dābār*.” Furthermore they are oblivious to Yahweh’s precise power that enables all divine עצה to be implemented.<sup>267</sup>

The divine work and purpose mentioned<sup>268</sup> here in 5:19 is most likely a reference to God’s משפט announced in 5:16 that is in contrast to the people’s wicked deeds—inebriating themselves with wine and ignoring Yahweh’s *holy* deeds and works

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<sup>264</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 214.

<sup>265</sup> Williamson, *Isaiah 1-27*, 381.

<sup>266</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 214.

<sup>267</sup> William McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 65-66, 79-82.

<sup>268</sup> Wildberger states that both terms represent Yahweh’s lordship of history (his complete control of it), even including his judgments (cf. Isa 28:21, work is synonymous with labor and in 28:29 counsel is paired with wisdom). These activities are always used in the singular, thus the issue is not the individual actions of Yahweh, but this unique power to act according to his predetermined plan (*Isaiah 1-12*, 202-03, 207).

(e.g., **נִשְׁפָּט** and **צַדִּיקָה**, 5:7) (5:11-13, 22). Others claim a private morality (calling evil good, 5:20) and exhibit counterfeit wisdom (5:21; rejecting [**נִאֲס**] Yahweh's *torah* and word, 5:24; cf. Jer 8:8-9). Some subvert the judicial system by accepting bribes (5:23), which was a major point of protest of the prophets (Isa 1:23; Mic 3:11; Amos 2:6). The Mosaic law in Exod 23:8 states that a bribe blinds the eyes of the officials and subverts those who are **צַדִּיק**. This same clause is restated in Deut 16:19 to apply to the wise (**חֲכָמִים**).<sup>269</sup> During this time of the nations' economic prosperity, unbelief was widespread, and people were indifferent to God's commandments to be holy. As they expanded their personal power, they treated God's instructions (v. 24) as outdated ordinances.<sup>270</sup>

The woeful people rejected the law of Yahweh Almighty and despised (**נִאֲץ**) the word of HOI (5:24) that intended to teach holy people to live rightly (e.g., Lev 19). This is an offense that could not have been done by the nations outside of Israel since the **תּוֹרָה** was only given to God's people. Thus to refuse to listen to HOI's precepts is also to spurn his word (**אֲמָרָה**). The word of HOI was given to guide Israel in the ways of holier conduct. But the people failed to live this way as evidenced by the woe indictments just pronounced.<sup>271</sup>

Once these series of woes are over, the supreme holy judge declares his judgment in 5:25-30. As the proud and cynical rebels in 5:19 dared God to "hasten" (**מְהֵרָה**) his work

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<sup>269</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 214-15.

<sup>270</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 68.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:121.



so that they may see it, HOI in a sense fulfills their request by “hastening” [גִּזְרָה] the arrival of an invading [Assyrian] army in v. 26. Similarly in v. 20 it describes those who “substitute darkness for light and light for darkness.” Then in verse 30, it warns of a future day when there will be only “darkness” and no light because “[t]hose who had brought ‘darkness’ to the moral/ethical realm would find their sphere of sinful activity ‘darkened’ by God’s judgment.”<sup>272</sup>

In v. 25 Yahweh reveals that there is more to his anger than has been experienced by his people in his past punishment. This anger and judgment is part of a series of accounts of punishment that end with the formula: “For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.” This refrain concludes four other units: 9:8-12, 13-17, 18-21, and 10:1-4 (The last of these also uses a “woe,” which is followed by the refrain). The warning given here, as Wong notes, is that “God’s anger is not to be trifled with.” His hand is still raised, so do not provoke him. No one should trivialize God’s anger. It will be horrible when an invading army attacks like growling lions (v. 29). No one should want to experience his judgment.<sup>273</sup>

But what is the point of declaring these judgments (e.g., here the devastation was like an earthquake)? Is it, as Tucker notes, to evoke repentance?<sup>274</sup> Is Yahweh’s hand still

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<sup>272</sup> Chisholm Jr., “Structure, Style, and the Prophetic Message,” 46-60, esp. 54.

<sup>273</sup> Wong, *The Road to Peace*, 74.

<sup>274</sup> Gene M. Tucker, “The Book of Isaiah 1-39,” *NIB* 6:97. This is contra Chisholm who views it not as an intent to “motivate repentance” but as necessary [fully deserved] divine justice condemning sin. This judgment would be interpreted by the remnant as a part of the divine program of renewal and restoration (“Structure, Style,” 48-49). But Wong views “God’s threatened anger as a warning to elicit repentance from the sinful acts and attitudes outlined in Isaiah 5.” The refrain of v. 25 concerning the Lord’s anger is repeated again in Isaiah 9:12 where it is followed by a lament for the people’s failure to repent. Here the refrain concludes the preceding series of “woe” passages. In vv. 24-25, like vv. 13-14 both speak of the lamented acts and attitudes in the preceding woes that are signified by the use of “therefore.” Verse 25, however, also introduces vv. 26-30 that speak of God’s “unfinished anger.” In v. 26 God raises the signal

stretched out because they have not learned their lesson? In other words, is it punishment as a penalty for their offenses, or is it a purging? A close parallel of reporting a series of disasters and concluding with a refrain also appears in Amos 4:6-12. There Yahweh says: “Yet you did not return to me.” So past disasters are viewed as invitations to repent. But the reciting of past judgment prepares one for the concluding announcement: “Prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12). Thus in Amos, and possibly here in Isaiah, the past account becomes an indictment: Because Israel refused to learn from the disasters, their end has come.<sup>275</sup>

#### 2.3.4 *Isaiah 10:20*

והיה ביום ההוא לא-יוסיף עוד שאר ישראל ופליטת בית-יעקב להשען על-מכהו  
ונשען על-יהוה קדוש ישראל באמת:

“Now in that day, no longer will the remnant of Israel, and the escaped of the house of Jacob, rely on the one who struck them, but will rely on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.”

Two important concepts stand out in this verse: “rely” and “remnant.” The key word שֶׁעָן (“rely”) appears twice here, and it emphasizes the anticipation of seeing Israel coming back and faithfully trusting in Yahweh, HOI, and not depending upon their allies who are seeking to destroy them. From the dispersed people of northern Israel (cf. 11:11, 16; 2 Kgs 17:6), a remnant will exercise genuine faith in Yahweh (in contrast to the godless and evildoers in 9:7 [8]-10:4). The word “rely” or “lean on” appears in Mic 3:11, where the corrupt leaders, and duplicitous priests and prophets who “lean on Yahweh” say, “Is not Yahweh in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us.” The word appears parallel to

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(presumably with his raised hand) to summon the fearsome invading army. This divine anger is the result of the preceding acts and attitudes that were rebuked through a series of woes (*Road to Peace*, 74-75, 77-78).

<sup>275</sup> Tucker, “The Book of Isaiah 1-39,” *NIB* 6:97.

“trust” (בטח) in Isa 30:12, where HOI rebukes those who “reject” his word and rely upon a “most perverse tyrant.”<sup>276</sup> The terms “trust” and “rely” are mentioned again in 31:1 in reference to depending on Egypt and its horses. Thus in a political context it refers to reliance on military alliances or authoritarian methods. In the religious sphere it represents a frivolous reliance on God and a lack of ethical considerations. Moreover, since “lean on Yahweh” carried a negative connotation (as pretentious piety), it was particularly appropriate to add the “in truth” (באמת) at the end of the verse.<sup>277</sup>

By “relying” on HOI, they will come to realize that this Holy God is righteous (10:22) and sincere, unlike the foolish person who “leans” (שען) on someone who turns out to be an enemy (see 2 Chr 29:19-21).<sup>278</sup> Here the trustworthiness of HOI makes relying on him a wise and secure choice. Unlike Assyria, HOI can never be destroyed, but is the destroyer. As the Holy One, he blazes the flaming fire (v. 17) that will burn and consume the “splendor of [Assyria’s] forests and fertile fields.” In fact, the holy “destructions” that HOI executes are decreed three times (vv.18, 22, 23). Assyria was, however, originally the rod of Yahweh sent against a “godless” nation (v. 6). The HOI was angry primarily at Samaria and Jerusalem for her idolatry (notice the sequence of this theme in vv. 10-11: idols...images...images...idols).<sup>279</sup> When God uses such a strong nation (e.g., Assyria; Philistia, 14:28-32; Egypt, 19) to direct his people to “yield to

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<sup>276</sup> William H. Irwin, *Isaiah 28-33: Translation with Philological Notes* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 84: He joins the two words in hendiadys “oppression and perversity,” בְּעֵשֶׂק וְגִלּוּז (“tyranny most perverse”).

<sup>277</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 191-92.

<sup>278</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 262.

<sup>279</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 112.

holiness, one gets an idea of how high on God’s agenda holiness is.”<sup>280</sup> We sense HOI’s seriousness by the “woe” that had been pronounced earlier (10:1) against God’s people who promoted unrighteousness by enacting evil statutes, made unjust decisions, deprived justice to the needy, denied the poor of their rights (מִשְׁפָּט), and defrauded the widows (10:1-2).<sup>281</sup> Therefore, the “unholy” ruling class who have enriched themselves at the expense of the helpless will suffer God’s holy wrath (vv. 3- 4). Yahweh’s hands raised up an instrument to punish his people (e.g., nations of Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Babylon), but when the nation Assyria, thought she was the exalted sovereign power, she became the object of God’s woe. Therefore the Lord Yahweh of hosts will send his strong army to obliterate her vain “glory” (10:16). But in that day when God brings destruction to the whole land (v. 23), a remnant will escape.

The second key point of this verse states that it will be the “remnant” of Israel/Jacob who will enjoy relying upon HOI, “in truth” (אֱמֶת; “sincerely”) (cf. the previous “remnant” of trees that survived the destruction, 10:19), when they witness the powerful work of Yahweh, HOI. They will return to the mighty God and recognize that the destruction (כְּלִיִּין) that HOI administers, is one that is “overflowing with righteousness” (שׁוֹטֵף צְדָקָה) (10:21-22). Therefore it is his side of righteousness on which they need to lean. They will be the ones who will know how to draw close to HOI. This theme had been originally stated in the name of Isaiah’s child Shear-Yashub

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<sup>280</sup> Haughey, *Housing Heaven’s Fire*, 55.

<sup>281</sup> Gary Stansell notes that these undoubtedly refer to royal officials or judges who abuse their official position to promulgate statutes and ordinances that contribute to their own wealth (*Micah and Isaiah: A Form and Tradition Historical Comparison* [SBLDS 85; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 111). Hanson notes how righteousness was related to the measures used in commerce. In Lev 19:35-36, it speaks of just balances, just weights, and an ephah of צֶדֶק, and a hin of צֶדֶק as a “belabored” formula to regulate just measures for protecting the weak and the poor (*The People Called*, 71-72).

(שׂאר יִשׁוּב), “a remnant shall return,” 7:3) and addresses those “who remain” (4:3; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:4, 31-32; 46:3). A “remnant” (שׂאר) can mean the remaining survivors of a decimated people or the army that survives a battle.<sup>282</sup> But here it also had a specific meaning: the genuine Israel. This authentic core group enabled the nation to be saved and to prosper. They are the “pious remnant,” “the righteous remnant,” and the “faithful remnant.”<sup>283</sup> This remnant consisting of the escapees (פְּלִיטָה) will, as noted earlier in 4:2-3, constitute a holy community, although it will be a very small remnant (10:22). For example, following the good news in 10:20-21, verses 22-23 are an announcement of judgment. The severity of the disaster is expressed in v. 22: “even if your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, [only] a remnant of it shall return.” The next line is stronger still, announcing a “full end” in all the land (cf. Amos 5:3-4: “For thus says the sovereign Yahweh, ‘The city which goes forth a thousand will have a hundred left, and the one which goes forth a hundred will have ten left to the house of Israel.’ For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel, ‘Seek me and you shall live.’”).<sup>284</sup>

God wants a remnant to remain. Earlier in 9:9 the prideful Ephraimites (9:9) are said to be “struck” (נִכְחָה) by Yahweh, but they do not turn back (שׁוּב) to him. Now in 10:21 the verbal element of the name of Shear-Yashub reveals conversion, a “change of

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<sup>282</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel speaks about a remnant theme found in Assyrian texts related to the subjugation of conquered enemies (*The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* [Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1980], 96-98).

<sup>283</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 191-92; G. F. Hasel, “Remnant,” *IDBSup*, 735-36. Wildberger notes the root יָהַר (“remain”) is close in meaning to שׂאר, but the prophet uses it to acknowledge an extremely poor group that still remains (1:8; 7:22; 30:17) in addition to שׂאר (*Isaiah 1-12*, 297).

<sup>284</sup> Tucker, “Book of Isaiah 1-39,” *NIB* 6:136-37.

heart and of life.”<sup>285</sup> This root שׁוּב “to turn, return” can mean to come back physically (as from exile), or it can refer to a change of mind or policy. When related to God, it can mean “repent.”<sup>286</sup> Repentance entails both turning from evil and turning to good. One who has strayed from the right path can turn and redirect his destiny through God’s power.<sup>287</sup> The remnant will appear again when Yahweh Almighty executes his *righteous* destruction (10:22-26, 33), as HOI, to break the “hubris of human power.” Then the remnant will return to the “mighty God” (10:21) who is Yahweh, HOI.<sup>288</sup> Therefore with this punishment declared upon Assyria (10:5-19), Yahweh Almighty admonishes his remnant people not to fear Assyria (10:24-27). It is HOI, who does what is right, who is with Israel.

### 2.3.5 *Isaiah 12:6*

צְהִלִי וְרַנִּי יוֹשְׁבַת צִיּוֹן כִּי־גָדוֹל בְּקִרְבְּךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 “Shout and sing, O inhabitants of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

The background of songs of thanksgiving expresses deliverance from trouble and celebration for that deliverance. Here both the trouble and the deliverance are attributed to the same God.<sup>289</sup>

The song in ch. 12 is an appropriate conclusion to chs. 1-12 by ending the threats, imprecations, and predictions of disaster with a renewed hope of security. In 12:2-3 the

<sup>285</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 257.

<sup>286</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 192.

<sup>287</sup> J. Milgrom, “Repentance in the OT,” *IDBSup*, 737-38.

<sup>288</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 433, 437. This phrase “mighty God” is the same one used in 9:5 [6] in reference to the Messiah.

<sup>289</sup> Tucker, “*Book of Isaiah 1-39*,” *NIB* 6:147.

use of the word “salvation” (ישועה) is a play on the name of Isaiah (ישעיהו), thereby forming an inclusio with his name that appears in the opening of the book. This theme is the most basic message in comparison to the names of the three children featured in the earlier chapters.<sup>290</sup> The title HOI also closes chs. 1-12 as it opened them in 1:4. Here the epithet’s use is opposite to the despising and abandoning mentioned earlier (e.g., 1:4). This Holy One plays a key role in personally addressing Israel’s failure and destiny (cf. 5:19-25; 10:17-20).

HOI’s salvific work is spoken of as the awesome work of the root of Jesse, a shoot from the stem of Jesse (11:1, 10), who is the Spirit-filled person wearing righteousness (צדק) and faithfulness (אמונה) (11:2, 5). Upon his arrival, he will slay the wicked, strike the earth and decide with fairness (צדק) (11:4). As a result, hostile creatures and the infant will dwell peacefully together (11:6-9). This root of Jesse will also draw the peoples of the world together (cf. 60:1-3) as well as restore a remnant of Israel (Ephraim and Judah, v. 13). He will spread his kingdom and people by conquering Philistia, Edom and Moab, and Ammon. He will also destroy (חרם) the Egyptian sea.<sup>291</sup> The remnant who are dispersed will return (11:12-16) on the highway built for God’s people and be gathered in Zion, God’s holy mountain (11:9; 12:6). Therefore in one voice the people declare the majesty [גארת] of their salvific God, giving him thanks (12:1-6), and praising Yahweh, HOI for the excellent things he has accomplished.<sup>292</sup> Therefore

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<sup>290</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 269-70.

<sup>291</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 126-27: The root חרם is used when something is so vile in God’s sight that it needs to be destroyed. Here also, the Lord judges all the natural barriers that “become manifestations of humankind’s sinful divisiveness” that obstruct the Lord’s plans and are therefore abhorrent to him.

<sup>292</sup> As R. B. Y. Scott rightly states, “The more confident men become in their own powers the less

Isaiah 12:6 says, “Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitants of Zion, for great in your midst is HOI.” On that day, the remnant will recognize Yahweh’s salvation and give thanks to him who is trustworthy (12:1-2) and promises to do the right thing.

The predominant theme in chs. 5 and 9-10 was God’s wrath, and in ch. 12 the song acknowledges this reality: “you were angry with me.” (12:1). Yet the worshipper is also grateful that Yahweh has turned his wrath aside (here lies the heart of God’s redemption). Notice he presents a prayer in the jussive mood that expresses respect for the divine: “May your anger turn [ישב אפך] that you may comfort me [תנהמני]!” Then his prayer turns into a confession of faith, affirming two times that salvation (ישועה) comes from no one else but God (12:2).<sup>293</sup>

With this salvation the people need not fear. They can have bold confidence to trust in Yahweh who is their “strength,” “song,”<sup>294</sup> and “salvation.” This statement recalls the Exodus deliverance where the people sang, “יה is my strength and my song [might], and he has become my salvation” (Exod 15:2) (Isaiah here adds Yahweh to Yah [יה יהוה]).<sup>295</sup>

In verse 3 Isaiah moves from the singular to the plural to acknowledge that other people will also enjoy HOI’s comfort. Here the key to the people’s gladness is in this exquisite verse: “Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

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inclined they are to remember and give thanks to God” (“The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39,” *IB* 5:253).

<sup>293</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 221; Or it may be that the jussive is simply an imperfect (cf. *GKC* § 109 k).

<sup>294</sup> Some scholars argue that זמרה does not mean “song” as elsewhere but “strength” (cf. Exod 15:2; Ps 118:14; “might,” NRS, TNK); see Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 500; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33: Revised*, 219 n. 2.c.

<sup>295</sup> The divine names are understood as synonyms and can be interchangeable. LXX has κύριος. Thus if LXX is original, then the MT may be a conflation of it and of Exod 15:2 (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 290 n. 7).



This second thanksgiving makes more explicit the public nature of praise.<sup>296</sup> The praise in this context is God's salvation (12:2; notice how this wonderful new experience is introduced with "behold"). And because HOI is praiseworthy, the rest of the world should know about it. These excellent things done by Yahweh will need to be told to the nations (12:5; cf. 2:2-4) for as noted earlier: "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea" (11:9). And in order to experience the exaltedness of Yahweh (12:4), Isaiah exhorts the community of faith to draw water from this spring of salvation (12:3).

Water is powerful life-giving imagery,<sup>297</sup> especially to thirsty souls who need this living water. When they draw this water of salvation, a new joy will mark their lives, and the song of faith will resound on the lips of those who know the gladness of redemption (12:3).<sup>298</sup> Isaiah also uses this imagery of water in 41:18 to announce the help of HOI (41:20) who will "open rivers on the bare heights and springs in the midst of valleys; [HOI] will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water." There the afflicted and needy will find the water they seek and quench their thirsty tongues (41:17). Once they see what HOI has done and created, the people will rejoice in Yahweh and glory in HOI (41:20).

Once the people have tasted the water of salvation, they will also exhort others to

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<sup>296</sup> John Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBCOT 13; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 90. R. B. Y. Scott comments on the significance of associating singing with labor. Modern man has taken the song out of social life and devalued the dignity of labor by neglecting to sing at work ("Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39," *IB* 5:253).

<sup>297</sup> Water was a symbol of salvation in Israel's early history when the nation needed water ("What shall we drink?" Exod 15:24-27; "Give us water that we may drink," 17:1-6; "Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink," Num 20:2-11; 33:9, 14) (cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* [vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 1:404-05).

<sup>298</sup> Scott, "The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39," *IB* 5:254.

give thanks (יָדָה, the same verb as in v. 1) to Yahweh, and to “call upon his name” (12:4; both imperatives). This phrase קָרָא בְשֵׁם can have four meanings:<sup>299</sup> (a) to name a person for service (Exod 35:30); (b) to invite a person into fellowship (43:1); (c) to invoke God by using his name (Gen 12:8); and (d) to proclaim the name (Exod 34:5-6). The third meaning applies here. God has revealed himself by the significance of his name. Anyone who uses his name can “enter into a worshipping intimacy with the God who has revealed himself.”<sup>300</sup> Through this relationship of thanksgiving and worship one can then execute the third and fourth imperatives, “make known his deeds”<sup>301</sup> among the peoples and “make them remember” that his name is exalted (12:4). This God who is majestic and transcendent is also a God who saves (recall that it was Yahweh Almighty [10:33] who *approached* the city in 10:27-32 and resided in their midst).

In 12:6 the common bond between God and his people is accented by the designation “the inhabitants of Zion” (יֹשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן)<sup>302</sup> since Zion is the place where the house of Yahweh is established (cf. Isa 2:2-3). Solomon testified to God’s dwelling during his temple dedication (1 Kgs 8:13): “I have surely built you a stately house, a place for you to dwell [שְׁבַתְךָ] in forever.” Isaiah, likewise testifies that Yahweh dwells upon Mount Zion (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַשֹּׁכֵן בְּהַר צִיּוֹן, 8:18; Ps 9:12 [11]) and more

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<sup>299</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 130.

<sup>300</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 130.

<sup>301</sup> His deeds (עֲלִילָתָיו) of salvation are praised in Ps 9:12 [11], 15 [14]: rebuking the nations, judging in righteousness, dwelling forever, and being a stronghold for the oppressed (vv. 5 [4]-10 [9]). Therefore it is those “who know your name will put their trust in you [Yahweh]” (v. 11 [10]).

<sup>302</sup> Mentioned elsewhere are also: עַמֵּי יִשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן “people who dwell in Zion,” 10:24 and the “daughter of Zion” (בַּת-צִיּוֹן, Ps 9: 15 [14]; Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:1] praising Yahweh who dwells in Zion (Ps 9:12 [11]), his “holy hill” (Ps 15:1); cf. יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם, “inhabitants of Jerusalem,” Isa 5:3 (Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 442).

specifically, it is HOI who is “great”<sup>303</sup> (גָּדוֹל) that dwells in their midst (קָרַב). Thus the inhabitants are privileged to live in the same place where he dwells. For it is Israel, the inhabitants of Zion who can experience all of Yahweh’s majestic things—his comfort, his salvation, his power and song [strength] (12:1-6).

HOI’s name is thus to be exalted (שִׁנָּה) because of the excellent things (נִאוֹת) he has done through this great salvation. Therefore Isaiah can say, “I will trust [בַּטָּח] and not be afraid [פֶּחַח]” (12:2). This Holy God had proved his salvation in the past during the Exodus (see Exod 14:13-14, 29-31; 15:1-18), for which the people gave thanks in a song for his deliverance. Here also, for those who experience his salvation, HOI is worthy to receive their praise (12:5) and thanksgiving (12:1, 4; cf. Ps 145:10<sup>304</sup>). In their present difficult situation, they are not able to defeat the Assyrians. It is God alone “who defeats one nation and saves another. Fearing God and trusting him is what makes the difference (12:2). This trust is based on God’s personal deeds of salvation for his people...[and] God’s salvation is not an abstract philosophical concept; it has a relational dimension that is personal, for the LORD is ‘my salvation.’”<sup>305</sup> In this text, HOI is the source of salvation who has the power to deliver people from any threat of danger. HOI is worthy of one’s trust. Having made such a decision to trust, one need not fear man or nation like Ahaz did (7:4, 9; 8:12-13); he will rather revere God so highly that he will

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<sup>303</sup> Means: “In thy midst the Holy One has shown Himself to be great” and not “the Holy One in thy midst is great” (Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:407).

<sup>304</sup> In Ps 145 King David extols Yahweh who is “righteous [צַדִּיק] in all his ways, and kind [חַסִּיד] in all his works” (145:17). His mouth speaks praise of Yahweh because of his mighty acts, glorious splendor of his majesty, wonderful works, and power (145:4-5, 11). Thus all flesh will bless his “holy name” (145:21). Here the Holy One has acted justly for his people.

<sup>305</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 280, 282.

place his faith in God's ability to save.<sup>306</sup> The joyful praise to this strong resource is similarly expressed in the song of joy proclaimed to the God who is "majestic in holiness" (Exod 15:2, 11).

### 2.3.6 *Isaiah 17:7*

ביום ההוא ישעה האדם על-עשהו ועיניו אל-קדוש ישראל תראינה:

"In that day people will have regard for their Maker and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel."

Though the chapter opens with Damascus, it follows that after v. 3, Israel is the main concern. After presenting the oracle of Damascus' fall (Aram's [Syria's] capital city), Isa 17:4-6 describes how bad things will be for Jacob [Israel] as they will be for Ephraim (perhaps a reference to the Syro-Ephraimite alliance in 735-732 B.C.). The glory of Jacob will be humiliated, and he will fade away through illness, or like harvesting followed by gleanings, with a small portion remaining, like the few inaccessible olives on the topmost branches.<sup>307</sup> The coming destruction will force one to come to terms with HOI's purging effects. This includes not only Damascus and Israel, but all "godless human beings" will come to see that their human solutions will ultimately fail.<sup>308</sup> When human power is depleted and the folly of idolatry is exposed, humanity must recognize their Maker (17:1-

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<sup>306</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 282-83.

<sup>307</sup> Wildberger does not see this passage as related to Isaiah's "concept of a remnant," just what is left over after the "knocking" procedure, which is "hardly worth mentioning" (*Isaiah 13-27: A Continental Commentary* [trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], 172). Leupold adds that it is not Isaiah's remnant idea (of *some* will be left) that is being emphasized here, but on the fact that "exceedingly few will survive the calamity" (*Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:295); cf. Isa 24:13. However, Blenkinsopp sees the theme of gleaning grain and olives as applicable to the theme of a faithful remnant (*Isaiah 1-39*, 304); Motyer views it as referring to the survival of Israel just as the idea of a world remnant is noted in v. 3 (*Prophecy of Isaiah*, 157); and Smith sees it as the few remaining Israelites after the nation's destruction (*Isaiah 1-39*, 344).

<sup>308</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 174.

7). The use of **האדום** suggests a subject broader than simply Israel. For example, Aram will face its own religious failure (like Moab) and will turn to worship HOI. Aram's religion highlights a theme that becomes prominent later in the book, that man "made" their gods, whereas Israel's God is their maker.<sup>309</sup>

If 17:1-11 is viewed as a vision of God's impending judgment, , then vv. 7-8 would provide a subtheme of "return" under this main theme of judgment. Isaiah speaks on the futility of placing significance upon one's handiwork. One must instead turn to the One who is transcendent, yet holds us in his hands.<sup>310</sup> It is the intention of HOI to help Israel recognize their false gods (i.e., he is the only Holy God worthy of their respect) and to abandon their forbidden idols (cf. the Second Commandment). Thus, in that day humanity will not have regard (**שעה**) for the altars, nor look (**ראה**) to the work of their own hands, including the Asherim and incense stands, but will regard (**שעה**, "gaze") their Maker and will look (**ראה**) to HOI (17:7-8; cf. 31:1: **ולא שׁעו על-קדוש ישראל**, "they do not look upon HOI"). These two verses emphasize the foolishness of a religion devoted to human-made objects or rituals. These cannot protect a person on the day of God's judgment. Yahweh is the creator of humanity and the universe; and "people cannot create a real God," says Smith. Only Yahweh is holy and all powerful and worthy of "attention and exaltation."<sup>311</sup> Here HOI is acknowledged as humanity's Maker, who is above all creation and creatures (this also affirms his **קדוש** as being "high and exalted"). Psalm 115

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<sup>309</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 112. This theme is also found in the prophet Hosea, who mentions how "Israel has forgotten his Maker" (8:14) and when the "Holy One" (11:9) called them, they kept sacrificing to Baals and burning incense to idols (v. 2) (cf. Hanson, *The People Called*, 158-67).

<sup>310</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 352.

<sup>311</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 344.

declares a parallel thought, describing Yahweh as the “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 15) who is in the heavens and does whatever he pleases. He is unlike the idols of silver and gold. They have mouths, but cannot speak; eyes, but cannot see; ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell, hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk. Those who make them will become like them. Therefore, trust in Yahweh, and not in the work of a person’s hands (Ps 115: 3-9). To look to HOI is to pay no regard for the altars of idols. HOI seeks to remove all that is unholy in Israel’s presence and will one day successfully cause his people to reject and abandon their sinful detestable accouterments.

For Israel, to recognize HOI as their Maker meant more than appreciating his initial creation; it also pointed to the God who made Israel his special people. As Calvin notes, to address God as Israel’s Maker is not to stress that he is the creator of the whole human race, but in the same sense that HOI is used. In other words, for although all people were created in God’s image (Gen 1:27), Israel was especially chosen to be his workmanship, his heritage, and his holy and chosen people (Exod 19:6). Therefore Isaiah sees that the Holy God who has sanctified (separated) Israel to himself, desires his people to look to him and return to that state of favor with him. For “[w]here the knowledge of God exists, there reverence dwells; where forgetfulness of God is found, there contempt of him also prevails.”<sup>312</sup> Hence it is the God of their salvation whom Israel has forgotten (17:10).<sup>313</sup>

To gain their attention, God chastises his people. His severe form of discipline to

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<sup>312</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 2: 25-26.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Isa 54:5: “For your husband is your Maker, Yahweh Almighty is his name; and your Redeemer is HOI, who is called the God of the whole earth”; 51:13: “and you have forgotten Yahweh your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you dread continually all day long the wrath of the oppressor when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?”

the Israelites allows them to understand that help can only come from HOI, their Maker.<sup>314</sup> Those who have regard (שעה) for their Maker overcome their obstinacy. When comparing the meaning of שעה (“look intently at”) with ראה (“see”), one notices a particular emphasis. The former, Wildberger states, refers not to looking dispassionately, but to a “paying careful attention to,” which forces a person to observe astutely his surroundings and circumstances (Akkadian: *še’ū*, “see, look around, search for, be on the lookout for someone”). In 31:1 a parallel phrase to the term reads: “But they do not gaze [שעה] upon HOI, and Yahweh they do not seek out [דרש]” (ולא שעו על-קדוש ישראל ואת-יהוה לא דרשו), and here “seek” [דרש] can mean “consult” Yahweh. Therefore to gaze [שעה] upon Yahweh is to “look intently” at HOI/Yahweh and is close in meaning to consulting Yahweh (דרש יהוה).<sup>315</sup>

Although there is no mention of the implications of one looking to their Maker, Isaiah does identify what the people will no longer look at: “the work of his hands” and “that which his fingers have made.” This idol-creator places his trust in his self-made “images” (cf. 2:8: “Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.”). A question about what these works of his hands and fingers are, is further explained by the text—they include the altars (המזבחות), and the cultic pillars and incense altars (האשרים והחמנים).<sup>316</sup> But “in that day man will gaze upon his Maker and his eyes will look to HOI” (17:7).

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<sup>314</sup> In times of crisis, their statues and images will be of no avail to help. Only the true Maker, HOI can deliver them from such a severe judgment.

<sup>315</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 175.

<sup>316</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 175-76; He provides a detailed discussion on altars, cultic pillars, and incense altars on pp. 176-79.

Interestingly, within the eleven chapters<sup>317</sup> dealing with the foreign nations, HOI is not used at all in relation to other nations, but is used to personally address God's own people—Israel (Ephraim/Jacob) who forgot the God of her salvation (17:10). The title that does appear most frequently (at least 23 times) in these eleven chapters dealing with the foreigners is “Yahweh Almighty” (יהוה צבאות). Isaiah acknowledged God as such when he saw him as the “king, Yahweh Almighty” in his temple vision (6:5). This God judges pride and arrogance committed by any nation (including Israel or Judah) or individual (e.g., Shebna, 22:15-25). No haughty nation or person can successfully exalt himself above God, for the individual will sooner or later be dethroned by יהוה צבאות.<sup>318</sup>

### 2.3.7 Isaiah 29:19

ויספו עניים ביהוה שמחה ואביוני אדם בקדוש ישראל יגילו:

“The afflicted also shall increase their gladness in Yahweh, and the needy of humankind shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

In 29:15-16 another section begins with the “woe” saying. It addresses people who think they can hide their עצה (plans) and מעשה (deeds) from God. From the adjoining chapters (cf. 28:15-22; 30:1-5), it seems that their “unholy ‘schemes’” included pro-Egyptian international politics. The persons involved even thought that they had kept their schemes hidden from the eyes of Yahweh. Their statements “Who can see us and who knows us?” is a denial of the omniscience of God. They also deny God's omnipotence by equating the “potter” as no more than the “clay.” More absurd is their denial of a creature being

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<sup>317</sup> Isa 13-23 (also includes Israel/Jerusalem in chs. 17 and 22); cf. prophecies against foreign nations in Jer 46-51 and Ezek 25-32.

<sup>318</sup> Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 308-09.



made by its Creator (i.e., the product denying its manufacturer).<sup>319</sup> This attitude reveals their fundamental error of denying the existence of a transcendent God.<sup>320</sup>

The prophet's message counters the fears that cause these leaders to make secret plans with Egypt. There is no need to fear the Assyrians, for God will resolve this situation shortly (29:17; cf. 10:25; 26:20). For according to Oswalt, God begins to make some swift changes for the powerless beginning in Isa 29:17 ("Is it not yet just a little while before Lebanon will be turned into a field, and the field regarded as a forest?"). This text can be viewed as an image reflecting the coming changes for the noble and the common people. The forest of Lebanon symbolizes the mighty (2:13; 10:34; 33:9; 35:2; 60:13) and the cutting down a symbol of humiliation (2:13; 10:34; 37:24). Thus as the Lebanon forest is plowed, the fields will flourish. So the mighty of Judah and of the world will fall, but God's common people will prosper.<sup>321</sup> This view fits well in introducing the promises given in 29:18-19. In v. 18 it will be HOI who will transform the spiritually deaf people who rejected his word by enabling them to find satisfaction in his book.<sup>322</sup> Likewise the blind who have been consigned to "gloom and darkness" will be able to strip off their defects and will see again.<sup>323</sup> Then in 29:19 it is the humble (עניים)<sup>324</sup> and the needy (אביון, poorest among men) who will be glad to see HOI punish

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<sup>319</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:459-60.

<sup>320</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 537.

<sup>321</sup> *Isaiah 1-39*, 538. Smith notes an alternative interpretation that would focus on the agricultural setting, i.e., at some future day God will "transform, turn back" (שׁוּב) Lebanon into a garden (cf. 32:15) and Carmel will become totally new and the land will be blessed with great fertility (*Isaiah 1-39*, 505).

<sup>322</sup> As noted in v. 10, a spirit of deep sleep had been poured over the people so that they could not hear.

<sup>323</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:462.

<sup>324</sup> See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1988),

the ruthless and the mockers who do evil (אוי). As Wildberger notes, Isaiah desires Israel to trust in Yahweh and believe in his protection and security through his holiness. These pious ones, who tenaciously exercise faith in Yahweh, may not have material blessings, but they have hope in a future salvation. They zealously worship HOI and they enjoy experiencing “the wonder of the gracious presence of God. They know Yahweh’s name (Ps. 9:11), which means that they stand in a special trust relationship with God.”<sup>325</sup> For Isaiah, HOI is the God who will do what is right, and therefore, needs to be revered. HOI will naturally reveal himself to those who are meek (ענו) <sup>326</sup> and needy, just as he does to the contrite (דכא) and lowly in spirit (רוח) (57:15; i.e., God-fearing). Their reverence of HOI is in stark contrast to those, here in 29:13, who draw near to God with words that honor him in lip service (i.e., language of hypocrisy), but have “removed their hearts far” from him and “their reverence [ירא]” is based on following traditions (i.e., being pretentious and superficial). Young states that there may have been a certain fearing of God in the people, but their fearing was a learned fear that did not proceed from the heart, but originated in following the external commands taught by men.<sup>327</sup> HOI thus sees through their fraudulent piety.

In 29:20, the opponents of the humbled and needy are characterized as being the

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92-93; R. Martin-Achard, “ענה <sup>nh</sup> to be destitute,” *TLOT* 2:931-92. Edward J. Young views the “humble” and the “poor” as the same as the “deaf” and “blind” (*The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* [vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969], 2:327).

<sup>325</sup> Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39: A Continental Commentary* (trans. T. H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 112.

<sup>326</sup> Zephaniah mentions Yahweh leaving a remnant people at his holy mountain who are humble and lowly and manifest godly behavior. These people will know how to take refuge in Yahweh’s name (3:12-13), and properly revere him (3:7).

<sup>327</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2:320.

*ruthless* (עריץ; cf. v. 5) and the *mockers* (לץ, cf. 28:14, 22), who will someday vanish. The *ruthless* may be external foes (other nations, like Syria; cf. 25:3-4, 5; Ezek 28:7; 30:11) and the *mockers* (לץ) are from within (e.g., deceptive political and judicial leaders in v. 21; cf. 28:14, rulers; also Prov 3:34; Ps 1:1). But both types may be found here within Israel (i.e., those in power [עריץ, tyrants] dwell with the לץ [braggarts/rulers, cf. 28:14]). The לץ (*mockers*) is the proud and cultured person, who also seeks to preserve his power of influence; he does not look for Yahweh's salvation. Both these types are against religion since they כל-שקרי און ("lie in wait for iniquity"—misuse their power). Their judicial roles are illustrated in v. 21, whereby they are able to manipulate the legal system for their own advantage.<sup>328</sup> HOI will, therefore, come and defend the marginalized ones, as an expression of his קדוש (i.e., justness). As HOI, his holiness will target specifically those who are "intent on doing evil" (v. 20) and purposely cause men to sin.<sup>329</sup> They lay a snare against those who come to plead their dispute in the gate ("these evil ones wish by their deceitful tactics to make the just man appear guilty"), and they turn aside those who are in the right (צדיק; seek to defraud the righteous probably with lies and falsehoods [cf. Amos 2:6-8; 5:12; Hosea 4:1-2; Micah 2:1-2]).<sup>330</sup> When all this wickedness comes to an end, the humble and needy will increase in gladness (שמחה), and they will rejoice (יגילו) in HOI (v. 19). As a result of HOI purging evil, the children of Jacob יקרישו שמי ("they

<sup>328</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 113-14.

<sup>329</sup> The *hip* <sup>c</sup>*il* root of חטא means to cause to mislead into sin (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:16; 15:26ff.; Jer 32:35; etc.) and the "word" represents the judicial process (e.g., Exod 18:16) and with the preposition is best rendered, "by means of." Hence they cause a man to sin by means of a word (which possibly is a deceitful and misleading one). The "word" may also refer to those who sin, thus "causing men in their words to sin" (Young, *Isaiah*, 2:328).

<sup>330</sup> Young, *Isaiah*, 2:329: It is quite possible that these deeds were committed by the judges themselves.

will sanctify my [Holy One's] name," v. 23),<sup>331</sup> indeed, הקדישו ("they will sanctify") the Holy One of Jacob,<sup>332</sup> meaning they will show reverence toward God (cf. 8:13) and will stand in awe of the God of Israel because of the work of his hands (i.e., his deeds of redemption on their behalf, matching the way Yahweh redeemed [פרה] Abraham,<sup>333</sup> v. 22). It will be "the Holy One" who will take away their shame (בוש), and they will no longer (ערה is used 2x) turn pale (v. 22).<sup>334</sup> It will be God's holiness that will change people's behavior, and the oppression of the tyrants and scoffers will cease. Justice will return to the courts. The people will rejoice as the Holy One spiritually transforms the people's moral behavior standards. These changes will affect people's personal

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<sup>331</sup> What does it mean to hallow Yahweh's name? It is difficult to say in this context, but a reference to Num 20:12 can perhaps provide some insight. When Yahweh told Moses to speak to the rock so that water would pour forth, Moses did not follow God's instruction, but insisted on exercising his own prerogative by striking the rock twice. Yahweh then rebukes Moses and Aaron by saying: "you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the sons of Israel" (לֹא־הִאֲמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). The failure to follow God's simple command dishonored him in public. Martin Noth says it means: you did not "ma[k]e clear" the holiness of Yahweh "which manifests itself in mighty wonders" (*Numbers: A Commentary* [trans. James D. Martin; OTL; London: SCM Press, 1968], 147). The provisions of God's waters at Meribah "showed [Yahweh] himself holy among them" (20:13). Therefore to demonstrate the holiness of Yahweh is to obey Yahweh, to revere him as the transcendentally powerful one, and to respect his word. Young says to sanctify God's name means to regard that Name as holy—to acknowledge him as the Holy One of Israel who is "the God of gods, utterly distinct from His creatures and separate from all evil" (Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:332).

<sup>332</sup> The interchange of using "of Israel" and "of Jacob" is anticipatory of the prophet's practice in the latter chapters of the book. Thus the Holy One of Jacob is the same God Isaiah saw in his throne room vision and is referenced here because of the present context (i.e., House of Jacob, 29:22) and is used to affirm that the same God that the ancestor Jacob worshipped will one day be acknowledged by all (Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:333).

<sup>333</sup> This is the first time Abraham is mentioned in the book. Joshua (24:2-18) acknowledged that the God of their ancestor Abraham, from whom came the house of Jacob, was the same Yahweh, the God of Israel who redeemed Jacob from Egypt. Joshua even referred to Yahweh as "a holy God" (v. 19). Abraham also received God's protection in Gen 12:10-20 and ch. 20; cf. Isa 41:8; 51:2; 63:16. Young notes that as God had once brought Abraham out of Ur and separated him from the heathendom (land of idolatry) and made him into an ancestor of a multitude who belong to Yahweh, so too will God deliver this physical nation, "steeped in superstition and unbelief," to become a true people of God. And Jacob will no longer be ashamed because he will see his offspring glorifying God as their great deliverer (Young, *Isaiah*, 2:330-31).

<sup>334</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 281. The passage in Isa 1:29 explains how much shame and embarrassment Israel has to suffer because of her participation in idolatry (cf. 20:5; 30:1-5).

relationship with God.<sup>335</sup>

### 2.3.8 *Isaiah 30:11*

סורו מני־דרך הטו מני־ארח השביתו מפנינו את־קדוש ישראל:

“Leave the way, turn aside from the path, stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.”

### 2.3.9 *Isaiah 30:12*

לכן כה אמר קדוש ישראל יען מאסכם בדבר הזה ותבטחו בעשק ונלוז ותשענו עליו:  
“Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, ‘Because you have rejected this word and have trusted in oppression and deceit, and have relied on them.’”

### 2.3.10 *Isaiah 30:15*

כי כה־אמר אדני יהוה קדוש ישראל בשובה ונחת תושעון  
בהשקט ובבטחה תהיה גבורתכם ולא אביתם:

“For thus says the sovereign Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, ‘In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength. But you would not.’”

In chapter 30 the prophet denounces the people’s proposed alliance with Egypt and calls them to have faith in Yahweh. He attacks the people’s “false *attitudes*: a wrong and inflated sense of one’s own importance, a selfish lack of concern for others, and (in the case of political alliances) a tendency to rely on the unreliable rather than on God, the source of true strength.”<sup>336</sup> The international politics of that day concerns the “deep-seated inclination” to seeking alliances with foreign nations when difficulty arises.<sup>337</sup>

Thus the prophet called his people not to form alliances but to rely upon the God of Israel.

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<sup>335</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 505.

<sup>336</sup> (Italics his) John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 36.

<sup>337</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:467.

Barton adds that such foreign alliances (e.g., with Egypt) that ignore the difference between God and humanity or between “created and uncreated power” reveals a hubris of boasting in one’s own success and showing disregard for Yahweh’s ways.<sup>338</sup>

In 30:1 the rebellious children (בָּנִים סוֹרְרִים) devise their own plan (עֲצָה) and “contrive an alliance that comes not from [Yahweh’s] Spirit” (וְלֹא מִסֵּכָה וְלֹא רוּחִי). Two possible meanings can be offered for the verb “contriving” an alliance. The first is to translate it as “to weave a weaving” to express the intricate and complex nature of their strategic planning. The second would suggest to “pour a libation” as expressing a prayer for divine sanction or blessing. Either stance would yield almost the same result. The main issue is that God is excluded, and his Spirit is not consulted (vv. 1-2).<sup>339</sup> Therefore with each act of rebellion, they are heaping sin upon sin (30:1; cf. Hos 8:4). In terms of seeking assistance from Egypt, the issue is not to look outward, but within (it lies within their own hearts). In 30:9 Israel is again called a “rebellious” (מָרִי, obstinate; cf. 1:20)<sup>340</sup> people, deceitful sons, sons who refuse to listen (לֹא־אָבוּ שְׁמוּעַ) to Yahweh’s instructions. This group resembles those described earlier in ch. 1—the offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly, and who have despised HOI. The same rebellious attitude that plagued the Israelites as they marched through the wilderness with Moses still persists. When God

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<sup>338</sup> Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*, 37.

<sup>339</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:468. Hugh G. M. Williamson concurs that such alliances may have involved a ceremony where other gods besides Israel’s were invoked, which would devalue God’s strength (“Isaiah 30:1,” in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. Michaël N. van der Meer, Percy van Keulen, Wido van Peursen, and Bas ter Haar Romeny; VTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 193-94); cf. John Barton, “Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 32-44 esp. 37; idem, “Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem,” in idem, 130-44.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. the verb form is used in 1:20 in parallel to “refuse.” The opposite concepts are expressed in 1:19 as אָבָה, “be willing” and שָׁמַע, “obey.” There it is used as a conditional clause, here in contrast, it is stated as a fact. Numbers 17:25 [10] describes Israel as בְּנֵי־מָרִי (rebels).

speaks, they are unwilling to listen. The people did not want to hear HOI's divine message nor moral instructions of truth (לֹא תַחֲזוּ-לֵנוּ נִכְחוֹת), "do not prophesy to us what is right"), but only what is pleasant (or smooth) and cheerful illusions (30:10). They did not want holiness, in following the way of its path (30:11) nor God's holiness with its rightful demands. "To leave the way" (סוּרוּ מִנִּי-דֶרֶךְ) is to search for a new humanly devised morality. They did not request that the preaching from HOI stop, but only that it be "innocuous, void of moral imperatives and without the backing of the ultimate moral absolute of the nature of God."<sup>341</sup> They wanted the prophets to cease acting as true prophets and instead to act as false prophets. These prophets had been fearlessly proclaiming the law of God. But perhaps the people were tired of hearing this designation of God—HOI, since it pointed to the contrast between his exalted character and their own worthless condition.<sup>342</sup> However, by dismissing HOI in v. 11, their arrogance becomes an affront to HOI. Therefore, HOI himself refuses to be dismissed. For how can HOI cease proclaiming what is holy? HOI therefore declares his holy word of judgment against their iniquity (v. 13) for they despised (מֵאֵס) his message (cf. vv. 9-10) and found a substitute of "trusting" (בִּטָּח) in oppression and deceit.<sup>343</sup> All of which is opposite to the expected *trust* that HOI advised in 30:15 ("In quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not

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<sup>341</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 248.

<sup>342</sup> Young, *Isaiah*, 2:347.

<sup>343</sup> In this context, "oppression" may refer to the methods they used to raise the tribute to pay the Egyptians to enlist their assistance. "Deceit" or "crookedness" may be a description of their entire policy relating to international politics, both of which are a poor substitute for Yahweh's word (Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1: 473). An alternative view sees Egypt as the oppressor but her promises of aid are worthless and should be considered deceitful (Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Proverbs–Isaiah* [ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland; rev. ed.; 13 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 6:667).

willing”). HOI’s character is what makes him trustworthy (בטחה). But this rejection of the prophet’s message from HOI may be the reason for the command in v. 8 to write an inscription; it testifies to the impending disaster upon God’s people for their guilt and denial of God’s power,<sup>344</sup> and refusal to trust and return to HOI.

In 30:12 HOI rebukes the rebellious people for trusting in oppression and perversity (deceit). Oppression refers not to a particular act, but to the leaders’ attitude. They stifled the prophet’s message so that they could continue to practice their own desires. Oppression allowed them to accomplish their will. Their perversity (root means “to turn aside”) reflects what is devious or crooked (cf. 29:15); things they trust and lean upon.<sup>345</sup>

In 30:13 the illustration of the high wall collapsing represents this “unholy” iniquity (עוֹן) of the people increasing in magnitude until it causes the nation to self-destruct. The downfall of Israel is not attributable to the Assyrian power, they were but an instrument in God’s hand to execute his punishment. The judgment was made because of the sin within.<sup>346</sup> The breaking of the wall is vividly portrayed by the breaking of a potter’s fragile vessel. The words “broken” (כתת) and “unsparingly” (לא יחמל) emphasize the result. Furthermore, among the shattered fragments, not one shard will be adequate for any future use (30:14). Judah’s predicament will also be similar, good for nothing.<sup>347</sup> To appeal to Egypt is a senseless policy doomed to destroy those who carry it

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<sup>344</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 294.

<sup>345</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:348

<sup>346</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:349.

<sup>347</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:349. J. J. M. Roberts explains that the imagery of the collapsing wall does reflect the topographical realities of ancient Jerusalem. As a city “built on a rather steep hill and much of its



out. Thus HOI reaches out to Israel, offering them refuge by saying in v. 15, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust is your strength.” Yahweh wants Israel to trust in him and not to look for help from outsiders. He offers his assistance to those who think about him and adhere to his counsel (e.g., 30:1).<sup>348</sup> What HOI was calling them to do was opposite to what Israel was doing (This aspect of returning is a contrast to the people’s activity of carrying riches on donkeys toward Egypt in verse 6). HOI called them to be quiet and show trust (בטחה; a contrast to their false trust in 30:1) (in this political context, it meant to temporarily submit to Assyria and acquiesce to the status quo), until Yahweh acts. He will destroy the Assyrians in his time and in his way. Therefore it is up to the people to “wait on him” (cf. 28:16) and be blessed.<sup>349</sup> HOI is the Sovereign ruler of all nations and he wants Israel to draw near to him.

Salvation for Israel can happen only from HOI, who in this verse is also designated “the Sovereign One” (אדני יהוה), for he is the powerful God who alone can accomplish the nation’s deliverance. Thus the means of salvation can only come by

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fortifications rested on artificial stone platforms, the rapid runoff from a violent rainstorm would tend to erode the base of the platforms or terraces, producing massive stone slide and the collapse of the undermined structure.” This imagery is used as a polemic against Judah’s rulers who have shifted from seeking security from divine strength. “The present government’s policy of trying to found Jerusalem’s security on the human strength of political alliances and military preparation, a policy vividly embodied in the actual refortification of Jerusalem.” But “Isaiah contrasted the solid foundation Yahweh was laying [i.e., city built by justice and righteousness] to the government’s flimsy fortifications, hastily built on inadequate foundations.” Furthermore the people’s sins are identified in 30:12 as relying “on oppression and depended on deceit” which reveals God’s concern for the unfortunate victims serving to rebuild the city’s defenses under the government’s oppressive building program. Thus HOI can say that “Israel’s true security would come by giving relief to their citizens who were paying for the royal fortifications with their houses, labor, taxes, and time” as noted in 30:15: “In returning and rest you will be saved; in quietness and trust will be your strength, but you were not willing” (cf. Isa 28:12, “This is rest: give rest to the weary; This is repose: give repose to the needy; But they refused to listen” [Roberts’s reconstruction]). God is adamantly concerned for even the oppressed (“Yahweh’s Foundation in Zion [Isa 28:16],” *JBL* 106 [1987]: 27-45, esp. 42-44).

<sup>348</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 160-61.

<sup>349</sup> John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, The Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1987), 341-42.

simply returning and resting in HOI. “Returning” suggests a turning to God, a true conversion.<sup>350</sup> “Resting” explains how this turning is to be accomplished. They were busily sending messengers and camels laden with treasures to procure Egypt’s favor. But this was not the way of deliverance. Isaiah knows that their human efforts were futile unless they would rest in the grace of God. Strength over enemies is tapping into a divine strength that is found in quietness and confidence, not in frenzied activities as is characterized here. Isaiah once commanded Ahaz to be still (7:4), but he would not do so. He instead followed his own ways of procuring salvation. It is likewise here for Israel who “was not willing” to turn to HOI. They rejected the true way of deliverance, and sought to flee on horses (סוס ננוס) from their danger. Their wishes are granted, thinking that riding these swift (קל) horses would carry them to safety. However, it will not be the horses they ride that are swift, but their pursuers who will be swift (יקלו) to chase after them (30:16). Only a few will remain like a flagpost on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.<sup>351</sup>

Even after condemning and judging his people, the Lord will still wait to show mercy to Israel and bless them. In 30:18 Yahweh “longs” (חכה) or “waits” to be gracious to Israel. He will be exalted to show “compassion” (רחם) to his people. For Yahweh is a

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<sup>350</sup> Mitchell Dahood notes שובה is a *hapax legomenon*, which many scholars interpret as derived from the root שוב (“to return”). He, however, posits שובה is derived from the stem *yāšab* “to sit down” (the JPS translates “in sitting still and rest shall ye be saved”). In the Ugaritic Baal cycle, there is a word pair that expresses a similar concept of sitting and resting (*yṯb* and *nwh*). Thus the prophet admonishes “abstention from foreign entanglements” that is harmful. With this alternative reading, there would be no “moral conversion to Yahweh, but only a political sitting still as the means of deliverance” from Assyria. This interpretation, however, depends on the likelihood of associating the nominal derivative from a *pê yôdh* root instead of the *mediae wāw* (“Some Ambiguous Texts in Isaias [*sic*]: [30,15; 52,2; 33,2; 40,5; 45,1],” *CBQ* 20 [1958]: 41-49, esp. 41-43).

<sup>351</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:350-53.

God of justice; blessed are all who wait for him. The details of his compassion are developed further in vv. 19-26. Notice the personal responsive attention Yahweh gives: “he will be very gracious” (חַנּוּן יְהוָה) to those who have wept (expressing sorrow; cf. Isa 16:9; Pss 126:6; 137:1), but will weep no longer. When he hears the sound of their distressing cry (זַעַק)<sup>352</sup>; he answers it (30:19).<sup>353</sup> Their teacher [Yahweh, cf. 2:3; 28:26] will “no longer hide himself” (כִּנְיָהּ, *nip<sup>al</sup>, hapax legomenon*), but their “eyes will see” their teacher (30:20). Moreover, their ears will hear his word from behind (מֵאַחֲרָי)<sup>354</sup> directing their paths, “this is the way, walk in it” when they are to turn to the right or to the left (30:21). The words of this voice can help the people of v. 15 find their way to return to true rest.

### 2.3.11 Isaiah 31:1

הוּי הַיִּרְדִּים מִצְרַיִם לְעִזְרָה עַל־סוּסִים יִשְׁעֵנוּ וַיִּבְטְחוּ עַל־רֶכֶב כִּי רַב וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים  
כִּי־עֲצָמוּ מֵאֲדָם וְלֹא שָׁעוּ עַל־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־יְהוָה לֹא דָרְשׁוּ:

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, [who] rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek Yahweh!”

In 31:1-2 HOI is speaking against “the house of evildoers and against the help of the workers of iniquity.” The prophet tries again to admonish Judah to look not to Egypt, but

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<sup>352</sup> Wildberger states that the cry is uttered by people suffering oppressions (cf. Isa 15:5, 8); Isaiah also uses the related word זַעַקָה in 5:7 (*Isaiah 28-39*, 173).

<sup>353</sup> The verb is in the perfect (עָנָה), unlike the previous verb that was imperfect (יָחַן). It lays particular emphasis on an individual aspect of God’s vivid response—once he heard, he answered (Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:356 n. 40).

<sup>354</sup> Yahweh is like a shepherd directing his flock from behind, making sure that they stay on the right path. Cf. Isa 53:6: “All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us have turned to his own way.” Every person needs guidance to know the right road to travel. Thus Ps 25:12 states: “He [Yahweh] will teach him in the way he should choose” (יִוְרֵנוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ יְבָחָר) (*Wildberger, Isaiah 28-39*, 175).

to HOI, who is on Israel's side. He repeats similar themes from the previous chapter: "Woe," "go down to Egypt," "help," "rely on," "horses," "trust," "HOI," "fall." His use here of the participle "who go down Egypt" (הֵיֹרְדִים מִצְרַיִם) indicates this is not their first trip there. His heart is grieved in seeing them placing their trust (בטח) in all that Egypt possessed: their horses, cavalry, and chariots. In Isa 31:1, he condemns those who would rather go to Egypt for help rather than to turn to HOI.<sup>355</sup> For Isaiah, HOI is the lofty and exalted one who knows the right thing to do in every situation. His presence is much greater than all the superior armaments of the nations. As Jacob notes, God's holiness is a character *sui generis* which entails a "power" that is used by God to make his kingdom triumph and to give life. All acts of deliverance for Israel's sake are, therefore, a manifestation of his holiness.<sup>356</sup> In light of HOI's power to save, the prophet rebukes them specifically because they do not *look* (שעה, cf. 17:7) to HOI by keeping a steady eye on him as the sole object of confidence.<sup>357</sup> By not looking to HOI, they do not even show enough respect or reverence to the "Holy One." Their "trusting" (בטח) in Egypt discounts the fact that HOI is strong and all-powerful, and knows how to bring just order because he is HOI.

Furthermore, Israel seeks Egypt's help (עזרה, v. 1) and refuses to consult with Yahweh (את־יהוה לא־דרשו), who as HOI wants to be her helper. Thus a "woe" is

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<sup>355</sup> John F. A. Sawyer views the idea of going down to Egypt was opposed by Isaiah because it would be viewed as a reversal of the Exodus and a symbolic return to slavery (E.g., In Exod 15 the Egyptian horses, chariots and army are noted as being cast into the sea by Yahweh) (*Isaiah: Volume 1* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984], 1:259). But this event in the past would hardly be applicable to Israel during Isaiah's time.

<sup>356</sup> *Theology of the Old Testament*, 87-89.

<sup>357</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 157-58.

pronounced against his people who receive help (עֲזָרָה) from Egypt, who is referenced as Israel's "helper" (עֲזָרָה) (31:3). As 30:2 has already shown, Israel sought to make a treaty with Egypt to gain protection and security.<sup>358</sup> The term עֲזָרָה has various nuances of meaning: "support, encourage" to "stand by to save, come to one's help."<sup>359</sup> "A distinctive realm of usage involves being united with another in a war (1 Kgs 20:6; Isa 31; Ezek. 32:21; Ps. 35:2, etc.)."<sup>360</sup> Hence, Israel would rather seek confidence in horses in contrast to simply trusting in HOI (cf. Ps 20:8 [7]: "Some [trust] in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Yahweh our God"). To not "gaze" (שָׁעָה) at HOI, means to not turn to him for his holy-just aid that is much more (רַב), and much stronger (עֲצָם מְאֹד) than any human military might (v. 1), and is right there for them to access.

By not looking to Yahweh, they hide their plans from him (29:15) and seem to look intelligent in their decision-making process. But HOI is the "wise" one (31:2) who will bring רָע ("evil" or "disaster"). This latter word raises a theological question here. For the term רָע can mean both moral evil or misfortune. But the Bible never attributes moral evil to God. It does, however, attribute to him those events that are bad or

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<sup>358</sup> Gordon C. I. Wong argues that Isaiah is condemning Israel for their futile attempt to avert the *judgment* of Yahweh that had already been pronounced earlier via the hand of Assyria (cf. Isa 5:26-30; 7:17; 8:7; 10:5-6). Thus turning to Egypt for help would not counter God's intention of bringing judgment to Jerusalem for their social injustice ("Isaiah's Opposition to Egypt in Isaiah XXXI 1-3," *VT* 46 (1996): 392-401, esp. 395-96). If this is the case, Isaiah's plea for his people to seek Yahweh and his mercy would still be a significant theological statement of reminding Israel that Egypt is only human, not divine. Egypt is unreliable and Yahweh is the one who will ultimately decide Jerusalem's destiny.

<sup>359</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 209.

<sup>360</sup> U. Bergmann, "עֲזָרָה," *TLOT* 2:873.

misfortunate.<sup>361</sup> This is the case here (so RSV and NIV “disaster”). For one of the indictments against the gods is their impotence, being unable to control good or bad, or bring about rewards or punishments (e.g., 26:9-11; 41:21-24; 43:11-135:18). But Isaiah insists that God is sovereign and is not “bound by fate or chance.” He will cause Egypt’s help to become useless when he brings “trouble” to Jerusalem (cf. 42:24; 45:7).<sup>362</sup> HOI will march against “the house of the evildoers” (בית מרעים), which is likely referring to the pro-Egyptian political party and against “the helpers who work iniquity” (פעלי און), which are likely the Egyptians (Isa 31:2).<sup>363</sup>

Isaiah in 31:3 therefore declares that Yahweh’s outstretched hand will cause them both to perish together. However, as Seitz writes, this act of hostility against helper and helped is chiefly aimed not to destroy Zion, but to protect and rescue her. Yahweh’s hostility toward Zion (cf. ch. 29) is “aimed at exposing the false trust of those who seek alliance with Egypt, and as such it intends Zion’s deliverance and rescue... [they are condemned] because they seek strength and salvation in a source other than the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>364</sup>

Notice Isaiah’s plea to his people in 31:6: “Return [to him] from whom you have deeply revolted, O sons of Israel” (שובו לאשר העמיקו סרה בני ישראל). This exhortation to “return” echoes the same call of “returning and rest” from 30:15. Isaiah

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<sup>361</sup> See G. Herbert Livingston, “רָעָע,” *TWOT* 2:855-56.

<sup>362</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 571.

<sup>363</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 210-11. The house of Jacob (2:5), a seed of evildoers (1:4) is now a house of evildoers. Young notes these workers of evil are not the Egyptians but those in Judah who seek help from humans rather than God; so in the phrase “help that the workers of evil receive” the “help” comes from the Egyptians that the doers of evil receive (wicked Judahites) (Young, *Isaiah*, 2:375).

<sup>364</sup> Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 225-26.

clearly identifies their false political alliances that overshadow their religious reliance upon HOI. As Kaiser reiterates, how can they rely upon their own plans to seek the cavalry of their allies instead of finding support from Yahweh (cf. Prov 3:5; Isa 30:12; Micah 3:11; Isa 50:10; 10:20)? Should Jerusalem not seek help from its God first (cf. 2 Sam 22:42) who sits far above the world and yet has protected Israel in the past, this God who is HOI (cf. 17:7)? Indeed, Israel has forgotten that Yahweh is much wiser (31:2; cf. Job 9:4; Eccl 1:1; 15:18).<sup>365</sup>

### 2.3.12 *Isaiah 37:23*

את־מי חרפת וגדפת ועל־מי הרימותה קול ותשא מרום עיניך אל־קדוש ישראל:  
 “Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised a voice, and lifted your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel!”

Isaiah’s message from Yahweh, the God of Israel, is in direct response to Hezekiah’s prayer concerning Sennacherib. In his prayer (37:16-20), Hezekiah acknowledges that Yahweh is God, sovereign over the nations, and the creator. (37:16). He is called “Yahweh of hosts [Almighty],” signifying his cosmic omnipotence. As the creator of heaven and earth, he has absolute rule over the kingdoms of the earth.<sup>366</sup> Thus this earthly king sees the “true nature of reality.”<sup>367</sup> He then seeks God’s attention, calling him to listen and look, not upon the person praying, but at the events transpiring. He gives his verbal presentation of the letter. In vv. 18-19 he speaks directly and succinctly concerning the actual situation, even though God knows all about it. He then proceeds to make a very brief prayer request, “deliver us from his hand” (v. 20a) and reminds God of the pertinent reason to act—“that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone,

<sup>365</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 312-13.

<sup>366</sup> Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 393.

<sup>367</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 210.

Yahweh, are God” (v. 20b). Finally he leaves the outcome to God, knowing that God must preserve his reputation as the true God, and protect his name’s sake (cf. 43:25; 48:9).<sup>368</sup> Hezekiah recognizes Yahweh’s exclusiveness; for there is no other God besides Yahweh (v. 19). Does Sennacherib know who he has reproached and reviled? Those other gods may have disappeared, for they were not real. Now, however, Sennacherib is facing the living God [HOI]. Therefore to blaspheme the living God [HOI, v. 23] is to incur his wrath.<sup>369</sup>

Once Yahweh hears this pious and humble prayer, he sends a dramatic message addressing Sennacherib, but it is uttered for Hezekiah to hear. God humiliates Sennacherib for attacking Judah, “daughter of Zion,” and more importantly, for “taunting” (חָרַף) and “blaspheming” (גָּרַף) HOI, raising his voice<sup>370</sup> against HOI, and [haughtily] lifting up his eyes to be “higher than” (גָּרוּם) he who is HOI (v. 23) [who is lofty and exalted]. This blasphemous Assyrian king perceived his international power and deeds to be greater than HOI’s plans; notice the shift to the “I” of the Assyrian braggart (vv. 24-25) in comparison to the divine “I” who is in command.<sup>371</sup> As HOI, he will act to restore justness (vv. 26-28), and perhaps to protect the sanctity of his holy name.<sup>372</sup> Young describes Sennacherib’s contempt for God was great because it was founded on

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<sup>368</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 211.

<sup>369</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:485-88.

<sup>370</sup> This idea of lifting up one’s voice against someone is an expression of rejection or defiance (cf. Gen 39:15, 18, Potipher’s wife lied and claimed to have screamed to defy Joseph’s harassment) (Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 624).

<sup>371</sup> Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah, The Eight-Century Prophet*, 378. Childs comments that this mockery is a theological issue concerning, “Who actually controls the world?” For the Assyrian king does not acknowledge God’s plans of old (*Isaiah*, 275).

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Gary W. Light, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001), 52.



ignorance of God. “The devils believe and tremble. Sennacherib did not believe, for he did not know enough to believe, and therefore he did not tremble. He was boastful instead. Boasting blasphemy based upon ignorance can only lead to destruction”<sup>373</sup> because it damages the holiness of God.<sup>374</sup> He evidently believed that HOI was just like the other gods and was but another national God of the Judahites, impotent to defend his honor, since his nation [Assyria] had cast the gods of other nations into the fire (37:19).<sup>375</sup> He did not reckon HOI as a real powerful force to oppose him. Smith adds that his mockery was against “the power and divinity of Israel’s holy divine King who controls history and dwells in unimaginable splendor on his royal throne.”<sup>376</sup> The Assyrian king’s boastful attitude concerning his military might (vv. 24-25) has been attested in their monumental inscriptions.<sup>377</sup> This haughty monarch claims his startling achievements (using strong hyperbole) of crossing very difficult terrain, cutting the tallest cedars in Lebanon, dug wells for water and brought forth numerous troops who by merely wading through the Nile delta made the streams dry (Isa 37:24-25). Yet Isaiah addresses such inflated pride that has been boldly directed against HOI, who is the only One and the most high God.<sup>378</sup> In Isa 37:26 God challenges him and draws his attention to the fact that all that has happened is primarily the result of Yahweh’s plans, which

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<sup>373</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:489.

<sup>374</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 426.

<sup>375</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:485: Hezekiah knew that the Assyrians could do this because their gods were simply not gods, but the creation of men’s hands. For a true living God cannot be the work of men’s hands.

<sup>376</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 624.

<sup>377</sup> Oswalt describes Sargon II’s boastful letter addressed to the god of Ashur was written in the first-person style (*Isaiah 1-39*, 704-05).

<sup>378</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:569-70.

were set in place long ago.<sup>379</sup> Assyria, as noted earlier (10:5-20), is simply the instrument of the Holy One who allowed Sennacherib to “turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps” (37:26). In fact, Yahweh has this arrogant one under continual surveillance. He knows his every move, when he sits, when he goes out, and especially when he raged (רָגַז, vv. 28, 29) against the Holy One.<sup>380</sup> Yahweh thus intervenes to bind up the tyrant who thinks he is in control (“I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came,” 37:29), like restraining an obstinate animal (cf. Ezek 19:4 where Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt with “hooks”; 38:4; 2 Chr 33:11).<sup>381</sup> It is tragic that even though Sennacherib had lifted up his eyes to HOI (v. 23), he did not catch the same sight that Isaiah caught in the throne room. Isaiah saw the holy one high and lifted up and cried out in dismay over his sin; Sennacherib’s eyes, however, are blind and he does not know the true Holy One of Israel.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> This passage reveals Yahweh’s involvement in history decided “from long ago” (לְמִרְחֹק) or “most ancient times” (מִיָּמֵי קָדִים). But the former term “from long ago” is quite different from the similar thoughts found in 46:10 (“declaring the end from the beginning [מִרְאשִׁית] and from ancient times [מִקְדָּמִים] things not yet done,” cf. v. 11) or 48:3 (“The former things I declared long ago [מִיָּמֵי קָדִים]”), and 45:21 (“Who told you this long ago [מִקְדָּמִים]? Who declared it of old [מִיָּמֵי קָדִים]?”). As Wildberger writes, “The discussion here is not about announcing something beforehand, but rather about making (עֲשֶׂה) something happen in advance and shaping (צַר) something for the future, a completely isolated theologoumenon about God that appears only here in the OT.” The event that takes place had “long been planned transcendentally.” One can reflect on Jeremiah’s call, “before I formed you in the womb.” But to make a prediction in the OT is more than a mere prediction of an upcoming event; such a prediction sets into motion certain events in history. This “unique formulation in the present passage is not intended to make a statement that speculates philosophically about the determinate nature of history, but it does strive to show that what appears to be deeds of a ruler is really God’s work” (*Isaiah 28-39*, 428). Notice God vividly saying, “I did it” (37:26), taking ownership of something he established long ago.

<sup>380</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 1:571.

<sup>381</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 429: Assyrians have been known to lead captives away by dragging them like wild animals. One of Esarhaddon’s victory stele depicts him subduing two small kings (presumably Ba’lu, king of Tyre and Pharaoh Tirhakah (or his son Ushanahuru) using two leashes that are hooked to the lips of the two leaders as though they were wild animals (see AOBib, pp. 143-44 and ANEP, pp. 300-01, #447). This Assyrian leader is now humiliated in a similar way (429). He will be Yahweh’s prisoner compelled to abandon his siege of Jerusalem and return to his land.

Finally in 37:36, Yahweh sent an angel and killed 185, 000 of the Assyrian army. Earlier in 37:33 HOI assured Hezekiah that the enemy would not enter the city (לא יבוא), shoot an arrow, come before it (לא יקדמנה), nor build a ramp against it because Yahweh defends this city and will save it (37:35). This act was in response to Hezekiah's personal request/prayer (37:20) asking Yahweh to "deliver us from his hand" so that the kingdoms of the earth may know that Yahweh alone is God; He is HOI, who is with Israel.

### 2.3.13 Isaiah 41:14

אל־חיראי תולעת יעקב מחי ישראל אני עזרתך נא־יְהוָה וגאלך קדוש ישראל:  
 "Do not fear, O worm Jacob, O men of Israel; I myself will help you,' declares Yahweh, 'and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.'"

### 2.3.14 Isaiah 41:16

תזרם ורוח תשאם וסערה תפיץ אותם ואתה תגיל ביהוה בקדוש ישראל תתהלל:  
 "You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them; But you will rejoice in Yahweh, in the Holy One of Israel you shall boast."

### 2.3.15 Isaiah 41:20

למען יראו וידעו וישימו וישכילו יחדו כי יד־יהוה עשתה זאת וקדוש ישראל בראה:  
 "That they may see and know, and consider and understand all together, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it."

In chs. 40-55 the fundamental emphasis is on the possibility of restoration, especially for a group that would be in exile. The questions raised would be whether God *can* restore (has the ability) and does he *want* to restore?<sup>383</sup> In these chapters Yahweh will show that

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<sup>382</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:489.

<sup>383</sup> Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 8.

he is the incomparable God, able to explain the past and tell the future and he has the ability to deliver Israel in a new way.<sup>384</sup> He reminds his people that he wants to redeem them. He wants to show the world that he is truly Israel's God. Therefore we see in ch. 41, Yahweh tells the captives not to be afraid but to trust that he will execute a new restoration for those in exile (cf. 43:1-7; 44:1-5, etc.). Through this book, the exilic community is encouraged to not abandon their preexilic faith and to not assimilate into the dominant Babylonian culture.<sup>385</sup>

In Isa 41:8-16<sup>386</sup> Yahweh reassures fearful Jacob-Israel that he is their explicit helper (עֲזָרָה, 41:10). In vv. 8-9 Yahweh reassures Israel to not be afraid because she is his servant (In chs. 1-39, the nation is never referred to as "servant").<sup>387</sup> Here it is an encouraging term. Israel, like Abraham, Moses, and David, has been chosen to serve God. As God had taken the *seed* of Abraham, the Israelites, from the remotest parts to Canaan, God can do this again. For the exile does not change his relationship with his people.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Oswalt comments that God is the one who called everything into being. One sees in 41:4 Yahweh asserting his sovereign power, his eternity, his ruling lordship and self-existence. His self-predicating statement: "I am he" affirms he calls everything into being (the first and the last, nothing escapes his purview). "He is the one like whom there is no other; he is the only noncontingent being in the universe, the only one who can say 'I Am'"; therefore he will be able to do something radically new (*Isaiah 40-66*, 84).

<sup>385</sup> Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 8-9.

<sup>386</sup> In vv. 1-7 a trial scene is presented (see also 41:21-29; 42:18-25; 43:8-13; 44:6-20; 45:20-25) to summons the nations and the gods to establish who is God. Yahweh acts as the judge and jury, bailiff and prosecutor. These scenes enable Isaiah to "make the logic of God's transcendent monotheism both clear and compelling" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 79).

<sup>387</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 90: Chapters 1-39 calls three persons servants of the Lord (Isaiah, 20:3; Eliakim, 22:20; David, 37:35), and the officers of Sennacherib and Hezekiah are referred to as their servants four times (chs. 36, 37). The absence of references to the nation as servant in chs. 1-39 is not surprising since it only occurs in two other places in the OT (Ps 136:22; Jer 30:10; both Ezek 28:25 and 37:25 refer to the patriarch). Here the prophet makes a point: As God reveals himself to the nation, the nation will reveal him to the world; as David delivered his people, so will the Servant deliver his people and all nations (90 n. 64; cf. idem, *Isaiah 1-39*, 49-52).

<sup>388</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 90: Certainly God's promises to Abraham, Moses, and David concerning

They have been “chosen” (בחר) and will not be “rejected” (נאס) (v. 9). Thus in 41:10 Yahweh declares, “Do not fear [תירא], for I am with you, do not be afraid [תשתע], for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” “Fear not” are words that were first delivered to Israel’s progenitors: To Abraham, “Fear not, Abraham, I am a shield for you!” (Gen 15:1); to Isaac, “Fear not, for I am with you!” (Gen 26:24); and to Jacob, “Fear not to go down to Egypt!” (Gen 46:3) (cf. Jer 30:10-11; Gen 21:17).<sup>389</sup>

Then in both verses 14 and 16, the epithet HOI appears. The prophet comforts his people concerning HOI’s personal (setting himself apart for Israel) help. HOI mocks those who turn to “idols” for strength (41:7). Through his moral rectitude, he reassures Israel that he will uphold them with his righteous right hand (41:10). HOI will come against those in v. 11 who were “incensed” against Israel. It is HOI’s holiness that will put them “to shame” and disgrace. Likewise, “those who contend with [Israel] will be nothing and will perish.” Even those who quarrel and wage war against Israel shall be as

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their election and a future Davidic ruler would be fulfilled. But election promises do not guarantee automatic participation. When people sin, they will be punished; if they are righteous, they will be rewarded (Ezek 18:1-24) (91).

<sup>389</sup> Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 166: This motif also appears in the aNE, e.g., Ishtar’s prophecies to the Kings of Assyria (Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal) from the seventh century B.C.: “‘Do not fear (*la tapallah*)!’”; cf. ‘Esarhaddon, king of the lands, Fear not!...Fear not!...I am the Great Lady, I am Ishtar of Arbela, who has thrown your enemies under your feet...King of Assyria, Fear not!...Fear not! I will deliver up the enemy of the Assyrian king for slaughter’ (see Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, 4-5)” (166). The Aramaic equivalent is found in an inscription of Zakkur, king of Hamath (early eighth century B.C.), when he was under siege, surrounded by sixteen kings led by Bar-Hadad, king of Aram. He pleads with his god, Baalshamayn, who answers him through a seer: “‘Fear not, for I was the one who made you ki[ng, and I shall sta]nd with you and I shall save you [from all these kings]!’ (KAI 202 II:12-14). (One should note that Aram. אנה אקם ענך, ‘I shall stand with you,’ is the semantic equivalent of Heb. כי עמך אני, ‘I am with you.’)” (166-67). Parallel to תירא is the rare verb תשתע (root שתע), “to be afraid.” It is found in Ugaritic: “‘Mighty Baal feared (*yraun*), the Rider of the Clouds was frightened (*tt*)’ (CAT 1.5.II:6-7)—note that here too there is a parallel between *yr*’ (= ירא) and *tt*’ (= שתע)”; and in Phoenicia, an inscription of King Azitawada of the end of the eighth century B.C.: “‘Even in places that formerly were feared (נשתעם), where a man feared (ישתע) to walk the road...’ (KAI 26A II:3-5)” (167).

nothing (v. 12). This is HOI doing what is right for his people when he manifests his presence before them.

Childs notes, the “fear not” phrase indicates the closeness of God’s help. He has heard them and announced his salvation.<sup>390</sup> HOI is their holy powerful redeemer who will do right and humiliate the nations. This same majestic Holy One who delivered Israel from Egypt (Exod 15:11), to create them into a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, desires to redeem his people to become his holy remnant (Isa 4:3). HOI who reached out to Isaiah in ch. 6, is still turning to his people, extending his holiness to rescue and restore Israel. For the prophet to address the people as “worm Jacob” (v. 14) symbolizes them as being hopelessly inferior to the task and may reflect Job 25:6 (“How much less man, *that* maggot, and the son of man, *that* worm!”; cf. Ps 22:7 [6]).<sup>391</sup> It is not used disrespectfully, but to acknowledge their “sad plight and distressful condition into which the nation had fallen and from which only the power of God could bring help.”<sup>392</sup> The **נְוֹתֵי** in “men of Israel” is often used in contexts that reflect human weakness (e.g., Gen 34:30; Deut 4:27; Job 11:11). Thus the emphatic divine declaration I *myself* is made in contrast to their human incapacity.<sup>393</sup> They need not “fear” (41:14, 13, 10)<sup>394</sup> for Yahweh has uttered (**נֹאמֵי־יְהוָה**), “I will help you” (**אֲנִי עֹזְרֶיךָ**) (41:14 and 13) and presents himself with a

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<sup>390</sup> *Isaiah*, 318-19.

<sup>391</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 313.

<sup>392</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:88.

<sup>393</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 313.

<sup>394</sup> God repeats “the things that we find hard to believe.” Perhaps the description that Jacob-Israel is a worm necessitates it. This is not meant as an insult, but a “quoting of their own self-perception.” It is how some people describe themselves in their lament (Ps 22:6). But his inaccurate self-perception is overcome by Yahweh’s reassurance (Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 233).

new designation as their “redeemer.” This describes a near kinsman (Lev 25:24, 25) who delivers from bondage by paying a ransom.<sup>395</sup> HOI has set himself apart to be with Israel during this national crisis and HOI is declaring that he belongs to Israel. Therefore “*the Holy One of Israel*, is the next-of-kin for his feeble people.”<sup>396</sup> As the holy God had redeemed Israel from the bondage of Egypt, he will redeem his people once again (see HOI’s history of redemption from Egypt in Ps 78:12-41). He will turn this puny worm into a threshing sledge (flat plank with rollers underneath studded with iron or basalt spikes), new, sharp and having teeth (to be effective in its cutting work; cf. 28:27). HOI will cause her to prevail over her enemies (who will purge the evil around them) and obstacles. She will pulverize the mountains. This is figurative language to show that no powerful nation could stand in the way of Israel’s God.<sup>397</sup> This HOI is “an awesome, transcendent, majestic God” and to disdain him would lead to deep trouble. But to be redeemed by him is awesome good news.<sup>398</sup>

So when those shameful nations are carried away by a strong wind and scattered by the whirlwind (41:16; cf. Ps 1:4), Israel, however, will “rejoice” (גִּיל) in Yahweh, and “praise” (הַלֵּל) HOI (cf. ch. 12) for his righteous deeds. She will boast that her victory comes not from her own power, but from HOI. In the next verse (41:17), the prophet

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<sup>395</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:88; cf. p. 163. David Daube suggests translating it “recoverer” since the element of payment, though present in a few cases, is not an essential concept (*The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* [London: Faber and Faber, 1963], 27-28).

<sup>396</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 313.

<sup>397</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:89. John E. Hamlin suggests that the mountains represent idolatrous cultic centers—like the temple towers of Babylon (*ziggurat*). This new threshing sledge is not engaged in normal warfare. For in light of 42:1-4 where it is said that the Servant will not break a “cracked reed” nor extinguish a “smoking wick,” this is perhaps a reference to the destruction not of the nations themselves but of their gods and temples (“The Meaning of ‘Mountains and Hills’ in Isa. 41:14-16,” *JNES* 13 [1954]: 185-90).

<sup>398</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 233.

describes how Yahweh, HOI supplies the needs of the “afflicted and the needy” (הַעֲנִיִּים וְהָאֲבִיוֹנִים; cf. 29:19 where the same group gladly rejoices in HOI). This group is not merely in material need, but they are considered the devout ones who have endured suffering patiently, trusting in Yahweh (cf. Isa 32:7; Pss 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22; Jer 20:13; 22:16, etc.). These people are in a dry land looking for water, but there is none (striking assonance—**מֵיִם וְאֵין**) and their tongues are parched with thirst. In such a dire predicament, Yahweh answers them (**עֲנֶה**) personally. The people are in such a severe condition from which they cannot extricate themselves. Salvation must come to them from without. Beginning in v. 18 God initiates a complete reversal of conditions. Bare places will become fruitful: rivers are opened, valleys will have springs, and the wilderness will have pools of water.<sup>399</sup> The figure of water symbolizes life for the people dying in a dry land.<sup>400</sup> Furthermore, in places of barrenness, luxurious trees will also grow. The fact that these trees mentioned here would not typically be found together, enhances the idea of God’s marvelous work.<sup>401</sup>

In 41:20 the text explains why HOI will bring forth this salvation, namely to allow men to know that he is the true God. One may ask, who is the subject of the verbs in this verse?: “That they may see and recognize, and consider and gain insight as well, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.” Is it a general reference to all men, convincing them that Israel’s God is the God of creation? Or is it referring to the same subject addressed in v. 17? On this view, the purpose is to

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<sup>399</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:90-92.

<sup>400</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:92. Motyer states that the presence of waters involve three divine acts: innovation (water on barren heights), multiplication (more springs), and transformation (water-resistant areas are changed) (*Prophecy of Isaiah*, 314).

<sup>401</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 314: “Together” can also mean “all at once.”



convince the afflicted and the needy that Yahweh is their true God. Young says it is not possible to decide definitely on which interpretation is correct. But he considers it likely to be a general reference to all men, both Israelites and others. God's salvation and his true divinity will be known to all men.<sup>402</sup> However, it seems that when HOI is used, it specifically addresses God's own people and not other nations (e.g., no occurrence of HOI in chs. 13-23 [oracles to the nations], except in 17:7 which addresses Israel/Jacob). Therefore in v. 20 it seems more probable that it is the afflicted and the needy who will witness Yahweh's hand (i.e., his power) and rejoice in HOI's redemptive creation *again* (i.e., dwelling in their midst to restore order).

Young further notes that Isaiah uses a gradation of the verbs, from עשה to ברא, with the latter verb used to depict God's first work of creation (Gen 1:1). A work that was radically new and marvelous in character. The work that is promised here will also be marvelously new and exhibit Yahweh's power to redeem. As God declares what work he will do (that only God can accomplish), he then turns to the idols of paganism, asking them, "what power do they have to show?" (Isa 41:21-24).<sup>403</sup>

### 2.3.16 Isaiah 43:3

כי אני יהוה אלהיך קדוש ישראל מושיעך נתתי כפרך מצרים כוש וסבא תחתיד:  
 "For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you."

The community has experienced the terrifying defeat and deportation but has not understood its meaning because Yahweh's servant is blind and deaf (42:20-25).

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<sup>402</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:94.

<sup>403</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:94-95.

In 42:18-25 Yahweh acts as a defendant for the first time (not plaintiff) in another court scene.<sup>404</sup> Jacob-Israel accuses Yahweh of giving up his people to plunderers (v. 22). Yet Yahweh responds to his accusers, reminding them that he intended them to be a model community where the *torah* would be practiced before the world. But it was their own rejection of the law that necessitated their destruction and exile. HOI observed their “sin” against Yahweh (42:24) and their refusal to obey God’s righteous law. HOI was indignant at those who trusted in idols and worshiped molten images as their gods (42:17). All these practices are considered unholy before HOI. Therefore their guilt is self-inflicted. But once this confrontational declaration is made in vv. 18-25, Yahweh does not sentence them with additional punishment. HOI acknowledges that after he has purged them with the punishment of exile, he will bring his people back to himself. Consider the opening description of ch. 43, in which Yahweh’s grace reemerges with a “fear not” oracle (notice the participles in v. 1a and the perfect verbs of v. 1b that provide the theological reasons for it; cf. vv. 3a, 7).<sup>405</sup> It is illuminating to compare the similarities between the pair of “fear not” oracles (43:1-3a and 5-7) with the previous pair (41:8-13 and 14-16). But the message of 43:3b-4 (“I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Since you are precious in my sight, since you are honored and I love you, I will give men in your place and peoples in exchange for your life”) is uniquely different and has not been previously spoken (see discussion below). In vv. 5-7 God will do a new act of deliverance that exceeds the first (vv. 1-3).<sup>406</sup> HOI’s act of

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<sup>404</sup> Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 109.

<sup>405</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 245-46.

<sup>406</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 246: In 43:6, this is the only place in Scripture that God says “my daughters” (cf. 2 Cor 6:18 that refers to this passage). Women and men share in this familial relationship with God their

salvation is based on his holy nature of declaring himself as the one who has committed himself to Israel, reminding them that he is present with them in restoring justness to the nation.

In 43:1 Yahweh [HOI] specifies he is Jacob's Creator (ברא), who formed (יצר) Israel. About one third of the occurrences of ברא in the OT appear in Isa 40-55.<sup>407</sup> These concepts are repeated in 43:7: "Everyone who is called by my name, and whom I have created [ברא] for my glory, whom I have formed [יצר], even whom I have made [עשה]." Delitzsch states that these three synonyms highlight "the might, the freeness, and the riches of grace" with which Yahweh chose Israel to be his own. "They form a climax, for ברא signifies to produce as a new thing; יצר, to shape what has been produced; and עשה, to make it perfect or complete, hence *creavi, formavi, perfeci*."<sup>408</sup> Since the prophet addresses Yahweh as Creator of Israel, Schoors states, that through Israel's election (בחר) and calling (קרא) as mentioned in Isa 41:8-9, Yahweh made Israel. Thus the prophet's use of the term ברא indicates Yahweh's creation of the cosmos and the formation of Israel, and emphasizes the unity of God's act of creation and his salvation. It is only through Yahweh's universal creative power that he will be able to create a path of

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Father.

<sup>407</sup> Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Savior: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. xl-lv* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 69.

<sup>408</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (trans. James Martin; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884), 2:192. Motyer explains that the use of "create" (ברא) points to acts ascribed to God, produced out of his free will. "In creation itself, the Lord originates, maintains, controls, directs (37:15); his relationship with his people is the same." "Formed" (יצר) is more intimate (Gen 2:7), "indicating painstaking care whereby every circumstance of life is weighed and measured to give exactly the right pressure of the potter's hand so that the finished vessel will match his specifications." In addition, there is then the "crowning intimacy" of naming: "called you by name" 40:1; 40:26: "call by name" reflects the direct personal relationship entailing "a specific plan and place for the one named." In 43:7, Israel is "called by my name" (*Prophecy of Isaiah*, 330-31).

salvation for his people.<sup>409</sup> Once this connection as Israel's Creator is established, Isaiah uses the epithet HOI to remind Israel of the personal presence of their Holy One. Though he is the transcendent Holy One, he now comes to exert his holy power to bring life to his people (vv. 3-4).

As Israel's Creator, the suppliant can be certain that his prayer is heard because there exists a close relationship between Yahweh and his people.<sup>410</sup> For example, the self-presentation formula: "I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel" (43:3) is meant to express Yahweh's gracious turning of himself toward his people. God knows that the confidence of his people in him depends on the relationship between Creator and his creatures. Thus the terms **בְּרֵאךְ** and **יִצְרָךְ** provide the setting for the personal relation of "Creator-creature" or God and recipient. Moreover, what Yahweh says about himself in his salvation oracles affects that personal relationship.<sup>411</sup> HOI's initiative to relate with Israel is further indicated by the servant [Israel] he chose in v. 10. Oswalt states that not only did God give Israel her name, he has also incredibly given himself to Israel as seen by the emphasis on "your God, of Israel, your Savior"; thus "this reciprocity is what the covenant was all about."<sup>412</sup> Motyer rephrases this point as, "Your God is not 'the God you have chosen' but 'the God who has chosen you' (43:10)."<sup>413</sup>

HOI is also Israel's sole defender: "For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of

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<sup>409</sup> Schoors, *God Your Savior*, 69: Yahweh's acts of creation and "redemption" (**לְאַלֵּם**) are paralleled in Isa 44:24.

<sup>410</sup> Henning Reventlow, *Liturgie und Prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 30-37 cited in Schoors, *God Your Savior*, 70.

<sup>411</sup> Schoors, *God Your Savior*, 70.

<sup>412</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 139.

<sup>413</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 331.

Israel, your Savior [מושיעך]” (43:3). Here HOI is powerful to save. The idea of salvation goes back to the deliverance from Egypt (Exod 14:30). This Savior concept parallels with 43:11: “I, even I, am Yahweh, and there is no savior [מושיע] besides me.” The verb ישע and its substantives in chs. 40-66 are used to contrast with the gods of the nations that are unable to save themselves or their worshipers (cf. 46:7; 47:13, 15), with Yahweh who is able to save.<sup>414</sup> The “root idea of deliverance behind *Saviour* (cf. 25:9) [emphasizes] the message of comfort.”<sup>415</sup>

Regarding HOI’s statement in 43:3: Give Egypt as your “ransom,”<sup>416</sup> Cush and Seba in your place, Cush refers to the land south of Egypt (listed as the firstborn son of Ham in Gen 10:6, followed by Egypt). Seba (Cush’s firstborn) is not Sheba in S. Arabia (cf. Ps 72:1), but another African country. These three countries are listed in Isa 45:14; for Isaiah they represent the whole of Africa and it shows the high price God is willing to pay to redeem his people.<sup>417</sup> HOI then explains in v. 4 why he is willing to pay this high price to deliver his people: “Since you are precious [יקר]”<sup>418</sup> in my sight [בעיני], since you

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<sup>414</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 206: A variant reading in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has גואלך (“your redeemer”) inserted above the line instead of מושיעך, “your Savior.”

<sup>415</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 331: “For though holiness has blazed into wrath the relationship remains. If his holiness and their sinfulness did not militate against forming the relationship then it cannot militate against its continuance.”

<sup>416</sup> כפר (“a ransom”) is literally the covering—the gift that covers (protects) from misfortune that one is liable to or is threatened by; the atoning money is paid to exonerate one from guilt (Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (trans. J. S. Banks; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890), 2:179. The verb “atoned for” (*kipper*) means “to effect a *kōper*” or “ransom price,” the price which justice requires. When referring to money, the payment covers the debt, thus divine justice sufficiently covers the sinner’s debt (Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 78).

<sup>417</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 207.

<sup>418</sup> See 1 Sam 26:21: “Because my life was precious in your eyes this day”; 2 Kgs 1:14: “but now, let my life be precious in your sight.” The expression also appears in Akkadian: *ina īni aqāru* (“precious in my eyes,” CAD A/2:205-06) (Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 207).

are honored [כבוד]<sup>419</sup> and I love you [אהבתיך],<sup>420</sup> I will give men in your place [תחתך] and peoples in exchange [תחת]<sup>421</sup> for your life.” This phrase has not been spoken before (cf. Hos 11:1; Jer 31:20). It explains the love prompting Yahweh, HOI’s redemptive activity. “To be precious” in his sight shows Israel was given preferential treatment without any merit. HOI “placed upon that nation an esteem He did not show to other peoples. Love involves choice and exclusion.”<sup>422</sup> He loves them to the extent that he would be willing to sacrifice the lives of those from another continent. Compare this love with the Mesopotamian gods who only express their love to the monarch, but here God proclaims his love for an entire nation.<sup>423</sup> But this love established through grace is not to be trivialized. The special privilege given by God can become self-centered and turn lukewarm. It can lead to self-indulgence when people presume their status before God. Israel has often forgotten her call to be a witness on behalf of the justice and mercy that HOI demands. Therefore to restore a proper reverence before her Creator, HOI often resorts to divine judgment to awaken the rebellious through acts of deliverance that express God’s pure love. God’s love is not an imposition, but always invites a response

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<sup>419</sup> See Isa 49:5: “For I am honored in the sight of Yahweh.” Israel was honored not through their own works nor because of their own deserving, but because God regarded them (Young, *Isaiah*, 3:144).

<sup>420</sup> This love had been declared in Deut 4:33: “Because [Yahweh] loved [אהב] your fathers, therefore he chose their descendants after them. and he personally brought you from Egypt by His great power.”

<sup>421</sup> This term has a substitutionary meaning, carrying the sense of exact equivalence. See Gen 44:33: “Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead [תחת] of the boy”; Exod 21:23-25: “life for [תחת] life, eye for [תחת] eye.” Another instance of the parallel pair is seen in Prov 21:18: “The wicked is a ransom [כפר] for the righteous, and the faithless for [תחת] the upright.” An offering is substituted for the person: “So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son” (Gen 22:13); and a son takes his father’s throne: “in his stead” (1 Kgs 11:43) (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 332).

<sup>422</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:144.

<sup>423</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 207.

that can sometimes flourish into a fervent obedience to doing God's will.<sup>424</sup>

Earlier in 43:2, Israel's Savior emphasizes his absolute protection upon his people in their return journey to Israel. As Paul writes, the metaphorical merism is used (expressing all possible dangers to be encountered): HOI will be with them in water and fire and no ruin will befall them (cf. Ps 66:12: "We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us forth to a spacious place"; Isa 8:7-8 compares the Assyrians' destructive invasion to a great flood; 28:2; 17:12-13). HOI clearly states to his people because "you are Mine!" (43:1), I will therefore save you from drowning when you pass through<sup>425</sup> the water and no fire will scorch you; "For I am Yahweh your God" (כי אני יהוה אלהיך). This declaration is reminiscent of the opening phrase of the Decalogue in Exod 22:2: "I am Yahweh your God" (אנכי יהוה אלהיך), which is meant to comfort and encourage Israel; see Isa 41:13: "For I Yahweh am your God [כי אני יהוה אלהיך], who upholds your right hand, who says to you, 'Fear not, I will help you!'"<sup>426</sup>

### 2.3.17 Isaiah 43:14

כה־אמר יהוה גאלכם קדוש ישראל למענכם שלחתי בבלה והורדתי בריחים כלם  
וכשדים באניות רנתם:

"Thus says Yahweh your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, 'For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they took pride.'"

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 59-61.

<sup>425</sup> The imperfect verbs (e.g., תעבר, "you are passing through/you will pass through") in 43:2 reveal the "many difficult events the nation is going through rather than one specific event" (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66* [NAC 15B; Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009], 194); Goldingay comments that the reference to the water here suggests being taken to exile (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 190).

<sup>426</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 206.

In 43:8-13 the issue may at first seem to be a contest as to whether the idol-gods, like Yahweh, can predict and fulfill their predictions. But upon further reading, the text actually begins to deny this possibility by asking the most basic question of which gods can perform sovereign deeds and have the power to determine the future course of action (cf. 41:22-23). It is asserted that only Yahweh as Savior who is sovereign in power can deliver (vv. 11, 13). In fact, it is HOI the true and powerful Holy One (lofty and exalted) who comes to save his people (not a strange [god], 43:12).

So as the parties gather in court, one party consists of the blind and deaf (cf. 42:18), the other is an international group. The prophet acts like the court reporter who testifies to the presence of these witnesses. But what chance does Yahweh have to win the case if the testimony is given by the blind and deaf? (vv. 10, 12). Therefore Yahweh must present his own truthful testimony (vv. 10-11). It is disheartening to see that God's people are unable to live up to their dignified calling to be spiritual witnesses for God.<sup>427</sup>

Israel is God's witness because of her past experience with him. Yahweh asks "who among them can declare this and proclaim the former things?" (43:9). The *this/former* things may be explained if verse 3 refers to the past event of the Exodus. The redemption secured there was Yahweh's first act for Israel. Do the other false gods have any similar act to their credit? This sovereign ability to determine and complete one's plan is the evidence of a true deity. Israel is brought here to be a witness of this fact.<sup>428</sup>

Now a witness is usually called to give a testimony on behalf of another, and in this case, it is God on whose behalf the witness is supposed to be testifying. They are in

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<sup>427</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 333-334.

<sup>428</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 334.



possession of information that can rule in God's favor. But ironically Israel has to be told that this evidence is in their possession (Israel is deaf, but has ears!). Thus, as Seitz notes, "the possession of this testimony benefits not so much God as it does Israel itself." He takes seriously the fact that Israel's testimony allows her to reconnect with God which occurred when the previous generation had become blind to God's ways (Isa 6:8-10).<sup>429</sup> Hence to step up to be God's witness allows Israel to be brought to *know* the truth and to *believe* and come to *understand* that Yahweh is unique (43:10)—the only one God. He teaches Israel who he is by answering his own question directly: "Who among them can declare this?" (v.9). He replies, "I am the one" (v. 10; cf. "I am" of Exod 3:14). Yahweh the sovereign one takes responsibility for his own case. For the statement: "And there was no strange [זר]<sup>430</sup> [god] among you" (43:12) denies the possibility that any other agency, human or divine, brought forth this revelation, salvation, and proclamation to the people.<sup>431</sup> Israel had known many gods, but none of the gods like Marduk or Nebo or any others could generate a revelation. But it is only the "I am God" who can and has announced this profound truth in their midst ("among you").<sup>432</sup> It is HOI who exists from eternity (v. 13) who will act according to his *holy* nature. And when he acts, no one can reverse it.

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<sup>429</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40-66," *NIB* 6:377.

<sup>430</sup> Some understand זר as meaning that all Israelites understand Yahweh's oracular powers and can be a witness on his behalf. But it is more preferable to interpret this as an elliptical form of the expression אל זר ("foreign god") (cf. זרים, Deut 32:16; Jer 2:25; 3:13) (Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 212). Westermann views the "no strange god" as affirming that though God may be hidden (45:15), Israel knows him from history (*Isaiah 40-66*, 124).

<sup>431</sup> Cf. Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 335.

<sup>432</sup> Muilenburg, "Isaiah," *IB* 5:490.

In 43:14, Yahweh declares himself as “Redeemer”<sup>433</sup> and HOI who has drawn near to his people and takes notice of the needs of his special people. Out of HOI’s ethical perfect being, he will set out to do what is right; hence, “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and will bring them all down as fugitives.” Having declared the fall of Babylon as certain (39:3-6), the prophet mentions here their predicament again (43:14). All the Babylonians (including the Chaldeans<sup>434</sup>) who took pride in their ships (i.e., rejoicing over them), will have to board them like refugees when their city falls.<sup>435</sup> For no nation is ever a threat to HOI’s power to do what is right, but as HOI, he has done this sacred work specifically for Israel (e.g., because it was “for your sake” (למענכם, v. 14) because he belongs to Israel.

In the next verse (43:15), Yahweh is referred to as “your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your king.” This Holy One is the rightful “king” who has bound himself to Israel who was called to be a holy nation (cf. 6:3, 5). Here, the emphasis is on Yahweh as not merely a universal creator and universal king, but creator and king of Israel.<sup>436</sup> In 43:20 Israel is referred to as “my chosen people.” As the Creator of Israel (v. 15) he promises his continuing purposeful care, since the idea of creation entails maintaining life,

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<sup>433</sup> Two verbs for redeeming are “ransomed” (פדה) and “redeemed” (גאל). The term גאל first appears in 35:9 and is used twenty-four times in Isaiah. The term stresses the relationship that the redeemer has to the redeemed and his intervention on their behalf. The participle is the technical term for the next-of-kin who has the right to take responsibility for the needs of his own relatives (Lev 25:25; Num 5:8), and also used for the “avenger” of a murdered person. Here the substitutionary nature of the relationship is evidenced by the redeemer acting on behalf of the dead person (Num 35:12; Deut 19:6). In its classical usage, the redeemer had a right that no one dared to usurp. (Ruth 3:12; 4:1-6). “It was a right rather than an inescapable duty, calling for willingness” (Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 275).

<sup>434</sup> Known as a district south-east of Babylonia (Nabopolassar, the founder of the new Babylonia Empire was a Chaldean). In later times the name became synonymous with astrologers.

<sup>435</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 336.

<sup>436</sup> Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 207. This is contra C. Stuhlmueller who views the emphasis of Yahweh as “Creator “in ch. 40-55 as only a reference to Yahweh as creator of Israel but not as a cosmic creator (“Yahweh-King and Deutero-Isaiah,” *BR* 15 [1970]: 32-45, esp. 36-41).

controlling action and experience to fulfill his divine purposes.<sup>437</sup> As Isaiah experienced his own purification from the most Holy God in ch. 6 and was separated from his people to preach God's impending judgment against sin, the prophet too must remind his people that his holy God wants to purify Israel to become God's holy remnant.

The Holy One is not only Creator, but is also called Israel's personal King.<sup>438</sup> The image of God as king is the predominant relational metaphor used of God in the Bible. It appears more frequently than metaphors describing God as husband/lover (e.g., Jer 3; Ezek 16; Hos 2) or as father (Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; Jer 3:19). Many similar roles are noted in the OT between God as king and the Israelite king (e.g., ruler, judge, shepherd, etc.). But the metaphor does not simply apply Israelite royal qualities to God, but it stresses the "incomparability of God as divine king by adding superlatives to his royal qualities" (e.g., king of nations, eternal king, king of the heavens, etc.).<sup>439</sup> Here the superior king of Israel extends his sovereign reign over all the surrounding nations. This divine monarch who is ethically and morally perfect, administers judgment that is always just. In fact, it is HOI who is grieved at seeing the burdens of their sins and their iniquities (43:24). But it is also HOI who is serious about purging their evil ways, for only HOI is qualified to wipe out their "transgressions" and "will remember [their] sins no more" (43:25).

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<sup>437</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 336: The OT's fourfold doctrine of God the Creator: "God who *made* all, preserves all in being, controls all in operation and guides all to their appointed destiny" (281).

<sup>438</sup> Yahweh's intimate relationship with his people goes beyond their earthly ruler. Therefore when the "predominant accusation of the prophets against the kings was faithlessness to Yahweh," God's presence was a reminder that his covenant with his people antedated kingship (1 Kgs 16:2) (Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the God: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], 337-42; cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* [trans. John McHugh; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing and Dove Booksellers, 1971], 100-42).

<sup>439</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOTSup 76; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1989), 160-622.

2.3.18 *Isaiah 45:11*

כה־אמר יהוה קדוש ישראל ויצרו האתיות שאלוני על־בני ועל־פעל ידי תצוני:  
 “Thus says Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: ‘Ask me about the destiny of my children, and concerning the work of my hands, will you command me?’”

The message that the prophet brings to his people goes from one level to another. Earlier he announced that Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar would bring trouble to Israel because of her wrongdoing. Now he tells them that Yahweh will use a pagan emperor like Cyrus to bring a blessing to Israel as part of his promise to sustaining the Davidic king. Though the community may disagree with this proposal, Yahweh, nevertheless, exercises his power to make such decisions in regards to running the world.<sup>440</sup> More specifically, it is HOI who declares his sovereign holy authority to dictate such a *righteous* arrangement. HOI knows the best method to restore order to his people.

To those who may have wished for a homegrown savior like Moses to deliver them, Isaiah reprimands them for wanting to quarrel<sup>441</sup> with their Maker (45:9-10): He reiterates that God is the potter and Israel and Cyrus the pots. God is father or like a mother,<sup>442</sup> and Israel and Cyrus are only his children.<sup>443</sup> He is the maker of the earth, humanity, and heavens (vv. 11-12) who sovereignly uses Cyrus to bring restoration to

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<sup>440</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 263-64.

<sup>441</sup> For someone to contend with God (v. 9) is to argue with him for the purpose of proving that what he has promised will not come to pass (Young, *Isaiah*, 3:203).

<sup>442</sup> For אִמָּה to mean “mother” see Isa 49:15. For other metaphors comparing God to a woman, see 42:14; 46:3-4; 66:9, 13 (cf. Mayer I. Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992]).

<sup>443</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 260: Notice the polemical interjection הִיָּי (cf. 29:15-16) used only here in ch. 40-55 to castigate those who demand that the potter be accountable to the clay. See the similar polemical question posed in 10:15: “Does an axe boast over him who hews with it, or a saw magnify itself above him who wields it? Cf. the Aramaic proverb of Ahiqar: “Why does wood argue with the fire, meat with the meat cleaver, or a man with a king?” (See James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983], 87).

Jerusalem and the exiles in Babylon (v. 13). This restoration will be made without a price, meaning it is not purchased; Israel receives it entirely because of God's grace. HOI will graciously execute his holy plan and bring it to fruition (For it is only HOI who dwells in the "heavens above" who created this plan).

Anyone who contends against God's promises engages in, Young writes, the "baldest kind of rationalism." This omnipotent and omniscient Creator announces his gracious plan to usher in salvation and righteousness to earth (45:13). But the creature rejects this possibility. He relies on the dictates of his own mind, which is oblivious to God's possible acts.<sup>444</sup>

In 45:11 Yahweh begins his [ironic] reply in a stately and majestic tone. He does not merely give Israel permission to ask him, but he commands them to inquire him concerning the future.<sup>445</sup> As HOI, who is lofty and exalted, he calls forth his righteousness to descend upon the earth ("drip down, O heavens, from above...let the skies rain down צִרְק," v. 8), therefore, he wants his people to acknowledge the righteousness which he sends to earth, and to draw near to the Holy One who has set himself apart to help them. These titles emphasize Israel's unique relationship to her God.<sup>446</sup> Even though the Holy One describes his remoteness, yet his closeness to Israel is stressed by being their sovereign Maker (v. 11).<sup>447</sup> God formed Israel from the womb (Isa 44:2), and the word "Maker" (צִרְ) refers to Yahweh as both Israel's Creator (see 43:1;

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<sup>444</sup> Young, *Isaiah*, 3:204.

<sup>445</sup> Young, *Isaiah*, 3:205.

<sup>446</sup> Muilenburg, "Isaiah," *IB* 5:527.

<sup>447</sup> Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 235.

44:2, 24: “formed you from the womb”; 44:21) and its potter (cf. 41:25; 64:7). To a child who dares to boldly ask his father, “What are you begetting?” (45:10) would justify the “Woe!” pronouncement for his impertinent question. This also applies to him who remonstrates with his mother: “Why did you give birth?” (This mother experienced *חיל*, the verb denotes labor pangs [cf. 13:8]). Compare this to Deut 32:18: “You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth.” Therefore it is reprehensible for the people to express such a belittling attitude toward God. Like parents who beget and craftsmen who create, so too does Yahweh have full right to create the world and control its destiny.<sup>448</sup>

In v. 11 HOI emphatically poses the question of how someone would dare to instruct him on how he is to treat his children, the work of his hands (*פעל ידי*; Deut 33:11; cf. *מעשה ירך*, Isa 60:21; 64:7)? Yahweh responds to their inappropriate doubts of “What are you doing?” (v. 9) by further reiterating: “It was I, who made the earth [*אנכי עשיתי ארץ*; note the pronoun at the beginning of the verse for emphasis].” He is the only God who created nature, humanity, and the heavens (this amazing workmanship was made by “my hands” [*ידי*]) (v. 12). The work of God’s hands, Oswalt notes, is in contrast to the hands of human craftsman who made the idols in 44:9-20.<sup>449</sup>

More significant is the fact that, to be formed by God in a certain way, and for a certain purpose, means that Israel is not supposed to question how God’s plans are unfolding (see 29:16). But from 45:10, it is clear that Israel is not asking about its own

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<sup>448</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 260-61. Cf. Job 38:1-40:2, when God asks Job where he was when God created the earth’s foundation.

<sup>449</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 210.

form and purpose, but “the form and purpose of something else God has conceived. The work of God’s hands whom Israel is not to question is Cyrus.”<sup>450</sup> Therefore Israel is not in a position to ever question any of God’s directives.

### 2.3.19 *Isaiah 47:4*

גאלנו יהוה צבאות שמו קדוש ישראל:

“Our Redeemer, Yahweh Almighty is his name, is the Holy One of Israel.”

The book of Isaiah introduces Zion, the personified city, as being at one point abandoned and desolate (Isa 1:8). This fall to disgrace and experience of humiliation is described in Lamentations 1-2 where the people grieve and bewail the city’s fate. Now in Isaiah 47, the same fate is imposed on the agent of her suffering—Babylon.<sup>451</sup> “Queen Babylon becomes a common slave girl, forced to grind and mill, stripped, and humiliated.”<sup>452</sup> The command to “sit” is directed to the ground (אָרֶץ) and alludes to her downward descent to the netherworld, and then to the exposure of evils upon her (loss of children, widowhood, evils, disaster).<sup>453</sup> Her fall had been predicted in 14:12, where Babylon is cut to the ground (אָרֶץ). Now the city that is portrayed as a woman of power and refinement will soon become an ordinary working woman, fulfilling undignified tasks. Her splendor and luxurious status will soon disappear. This act of dethronement is made possible by—

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<sup>450</sup> Seitz, “Book of Isaiah 40-66,” *NIB* 6:400: The phrase: “inquire of me about the things to come, about my children” is related to God’s accomplishment through Cyrus, whom he formed.

<sup>451</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 270.

<sup>452</sup> Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40-66,” *NIB* 6:411.

<sup>453</sup> Chris A. Franke, “The Function of the Satiric Lament Over Babylon in Second Isaiah (XLVII),” *VT* 41 (1991): 408-18, esp. 414.

Israel's Redeemer, HOI (47:4).<sup>454</sup> It is his holiness that focuses on purging the shameful effects of Babylon.

In this transitional verse where Yahweh is praised, "Redeemer" may be either the subject of the predicate HOI or be interpreted as the predicate. The phrase **שמו יהוה צבאות** would then be viewed as parenthetical.<sup>455</sup> But based on Isa 54:5, which has all three epithets together, it is better to view "Redeemer" as the subject and HOI as the predicate. In either case, this Redeemer, Yahweh almighty who has unimaginable power, is the Holy One of Israel who will humiliate Babylon and take vengeance (v. 3). Babylon is accused of "extremely cruel behavior toward Israel and of excessive hubris."<sup>456</sup> Therefore the people rejoice as they hear about HOI's impending vengeance. HOI draws near to administer his morally and ethically perfect holiness against Babylon. In fact, it is the holiness of HOI that purifies Babylon's wanton behavior and her sorceries (47:8-9, 12), for HOI advocates holiness and desires **צדקה** (46:12) in this world. The vengeance declared by HOI against Babylon is also reported by Jeremiah (50:28-29), where she is repaid for her arrogance and wrongdoings (cf. 51:24). Yahweh's vengeance reveals he has set himself apart for the care and protection of his people.<sup>457</sup>

Mendenhall makes a helpful distinction concerning this term **נקם** ("vengeance" or "divine retribution")<sup>458</sup> in regards to Israel's covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Early

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<sup>454</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 271.

<sup>455</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 308: LXX has "He who redeemed you is Lord Sabaoth, His name is [*sic*] Holy One of Israel."

<sup>456</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 287, 291.

<sup>457</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:150.

<sup>458</sup> HALOT 2:721; For God as avenger, see Deut 32:35: "Vengeance is mine and recompense";



Israel functioned as a social organism under Yahweh's domain and received constant "feedback" from Yahweh through his divine action and through their religious obligations.<sup>459</sup> Therefore in Israel's context, the use of the root נקם does not suggest a wrathful blood vengeance, but speaks about *legitimate* power to act. It occurs "in situations calling for the exercise of force in contexts that the normal legal institutions of society cannot handle. It refers to executive rather than the judicial action"<sup>460</sup> and acknowledges "the use of force by legitimate sovereign authority" for defensive or punitive purposes. (The rescue of any one party in a conflict inevitably will often entail the use of force against the attacker. The sovereign can use legitimate force to "repel illicit challenges to his authority" such as when those under the sovereign's protection are attacked. Thus if the situation involves hostility between a sovereign and enemy, the term can mean "defeat" or "punish"; if it concerns a relationship between sovereign and faithful subject, the same act is considered to "rescue" or "deliver."").<sup>461</sup>

The reasons for HOI's vengeance or just punishment are given in vv. 5-11; Leupold explains how Babylon defied God's purposes for his people. Israel had lived an unworthy life, neglecting to fulfill God's plan for the nation. Their willful disobedience evoked God's just anger. He intervened and by so doing "profaned his heritage [i.e.,

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Mic 5:14 [15]: "In anger and wrath I will execute vengeance upon the nations."

<sup>459</sup> George E. Mendenhall, "The 'Vengeance' of Yahweh," in *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 69-104, esp. 72.

<sup>460</sup> Mendenhall, "The 'Vengeance' of Yahweh," 75. Indeed, any political sovereignty that attempted to compete with God himself would receive divine condemnation (100).

<sup>461</sup> Mendenhall, "The 'Vengeance' of Yahweh," 83-85, 89-90. In Isaiah 34-36 and 40-66 the term does entail punitive vindication (e.g., Babylon, 47:3; or Edom, 34:8, 63:4), but it also seems to receive an expanded meaning. Yahweh's action on behalf of his people is not so much hostility against enemies, but is to give "redress, relief, comfort, and restoration after a long period of suffering." Redress refers to the setting right of an unjust situation (cf. Isa 35:4, where there is no satisfaction in seeing oppressors punished or exterminated) (99-100).

Israel]” (47:6).<sup>462</sup> In other words, he allowed them to be “polluted” and “defiled.”<sup>463</sup> He therefore turned over his prized possession to their enemies who plundered them (“I gave them into your hands,” **אתנם בידך**). The almighty Yahweh controls what befalls nations in their conflict with one another. So Babylon conquered Judah. But as she gained possession of her captives, she did not provide humane treatment of the vanquished. As the victor, she let her passions rage against the nations she overcame in war. Babylon acted arbitrarily; she “showed them no mercy” (v. 6); One example is given by the prophet of such unpardonable behavior: “even upon the old men you made the yoke press very heavily.” Babylon let her basest and cruelest passion rule unrestrained. Eventually Babylon thought her perpetual success was to be her destiny.<sup>464</sup> She wanted to be “queen forever”<sup>465</sup> (47:7). She forgot that her bad behavior would require her to answer to God himself.<sup>466</sup>

Another reason given of Babylon’s deserved punishment was due to her own unseemly pride. Oswalt asserts that Babylon exalted herself to the position that Yahweh

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<sup>462</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:151.

<sup>463</sup> Paul explains that the Hebrew **חלל** (“to defile, to profane”) is the antonym of **קדש** (“to make holy”) (cf. Isa 43:28: “So I profaned the holy princes”); Ezek 22:26: “They have profaned what is sacred to me. They have not distinguished between the sacred and the profane” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 293).

<sup>464</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:151.

<sup>465</sup> This reading can be interpreted as “to eternity I am, a lady always” or as here “a queen forever, so that” (i.e., placement of *athnaq* results in **עו** to mean “so that” [e.g., MT, NKJ, NRS, NASB] instead of “until, always” [e.g., Duhm, *BHS*]) (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 243 n. 16; cf. David N. Freedman, “Mistress Forever: A Note on Isaiah 47:7,” *Bib* 51 [1970]: 538).

<sup>466</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:151-52. Franke states that there is an irony to all her claims: She claimed to be queen forever, queen of kingdoms, she asserted, “I am and there is no other,” that she would never become a widow or lose her children, and no one would see her wicked deeds; she thought her wisdom would evoke awe, she relied on her spells and sorceries to keep her safe—but in all these, she was wrong. For Yahweh is the incomparable one (Isa 46:9) who exerts pre-eminence and power (48:12-13) (“Satiric Lament Over Babylon,” 414-15).

alone deserves.<sup>467</sup> She had declared twice: “I am and there is none besides me”<sup>468</sup> (v. 8, 10). It should be noted that this is the language that is reserved for Yahweh himself (cf. 45:5, 21; 46:9). This amounts to self-deification.<sup>469</sup> Therefore anyone who attempts to usurp God’s authority will face an “unequal contest” that leads to “either surrender or destruction.”<sup>470</sup> HOI is indeed involved in both redemption and judgment.

### 2.3.20 *Isaiah 48:17*

כה־אמר יהוה גאלך קדוש ישראל אני יהוה אלהיך מלמדך להועיל מדריךך  
בדרך תלך:

“Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, ‘I am<sup>471</sup> Yahweh your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.’”

As a people, Israel was obstinate (48:4) and not practicing “righteousness” (48:1).

Yahweh had been trying to catch their attention, but was unsuccessful. In spite of what Yahweh had done, and the evidence he had given that he was the real God (vv. 3-6), the people had closed their ears and did not listen to their God. Verse 8 states: “you have not

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<sup>467</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 242.

<sup>468</sup> Paul explains that this megalomaniacal declaration reveals her pride that is grounded in her wisdom and expertise in sorcery and magic. The Babylonians were renowned magicians and diviners, so much so that even during the Greek period, stargazers were referred to as “Chaldeans.” The prophet had previously ridiculed Babylon’s chief gods (ch. 46) because they cannot save her from devastation (*Isaiah 40-66*, 287). Here in v. 10, her pride is in vain when confronted with the true wisdom (חכמה) and knowledge (דעת) of Yahweh, HOI.

<sup>469</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:153.

<sup>470</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 242.

<sup>471</sup> Baltzer offers an interesting interpretation where a new message is found when the “I” is stressed. He reads “The Holy One of Israel am I!” “Yahweh, your God, who teaches you...” He notes also that if the introduction is omitted (“Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer”) then the Hebrew here consists of exactly ten words. This is just as Moses wrote about in Exod 34:28: “on the tablets the words of the covenant, ten words.” Thus he suggests a possible covenant renewal is being made here just as when the covenant had been renewed after the golden calf incident (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 298). This alternative reading would certainly enhance the emphasis placed on HOI’s role as Israel’s teacher, however as Baltzer himself admits, it is contrary to the division in the MT.

heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open.”<sup>472</sup> Thus we see that in 48:12-19, Isaiah exhorts Israel to “listen.” In 48:14<sup>473</sup> the people are invited to assemble as an important disclosure is made once again: “the impotence of the idols to disclose the future” (cf. 41:21-24; 45:21).<sup>474</sup> Throughout the previous chapter, the inability of idol-gods to predict the future was exposed in order to emphasize their impotence and acknowledge Yahweh as the only true deity. Here God’s professing people are addressed to give them a renewed basis of faith in the Lord’s predictive ability.<sup>475</sup> The “them” in 48:14 likely refers to the idols and the expression “Yahweh loves him” most probably refers to Cyrus or, though not necessarily, the man who will accomplish God’s purpose for him. But the main point is that God has the right to choose whom he will.<sup>476</sup> His “purpose” (רָצוֹן) is the Lord’s pleasure (cf. 53:10) of fulfilling his divine will. Verse 15 affirms that it was Yahweh who brought Cyrus into the scene and prospered his efforts. The following verse (48:16) calls the nation to draw near and give heed to the claim that Yahweh is the revealer of things and is the one who pre-existed all things. The evidence showing that God is able to predict [e.g., bringing Cyrus and overthrowing Babylon] is now irrefutable.<sup>477</sup> The last line is a crux for interpreters (“And now the Lord Yahweh has sent me, and his Spirit,” Isa 48:16), for who the speaker is

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<sup>472</sup> See Hallvard Hagelia, *Coram Deo: Spirituality in the Book of Isaiah with Particular Attention to Faith in Yahweh* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 289.

<sup>473</sup> “Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? Yahweh loves him; he will carry out his purpose on Babylon, and his arm [will be against] the Chaldeans.”

<sup>474</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:168.

<sup>475</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 380.

<sup>476</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 276.

<sup>477</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:169.

here.<sup>478</sup> But an interpretation with some diffidence is offered. The prophet affirms that his mission is God-ordained as he has been endowed with God's Spirit,<sup>479</sup> like the Spirit that would come with power to God's own people in 44:3. Thus the prophet is sent as a herald concerning Cyrus's victorious mission.<sup>480</sup>

Now any possible criticism regarding a kindly disposed God allowing his people to go into captivity is offset by God's reassurance in vv. 17-19. He asserts that he is still their "Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."<sup>481</sup> In this text, what HOI wants to teach is closely defined as that "which helps" (הוֹעִיל, to profit), and it is Yahweh alone who teaches Israel what profits them, and he is the converse to the gods who are unable to help.<sup>482</sup> Furthermore the commandments that Yahweh gives are his "way." Here the prophet is using the theme of 40:3-5 again; "way" expresses the possibility of a return, but also the way of life that will lead to salvation.<sup>483</sup> Here HOI (who is morally and ethically perfect) is concerned about restoring holiness to his people. HOI notes in 48:1 that his people, swear by his name but are not doing so "in truth nor in righteousness" (לֹא בִאֱמֶת וְלֹא בַצְדָקָה). These people consider themselves as representing the "holy

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<sup>478</sup> See Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 335-36: It may be Cyrus, Messiah, or the prophet Isaiah.

<sup>479</sup> Cf. The prophetic mission is mentioned in Zech 7:12: "They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which Yahweh almighty had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets." If Cyrus is the speaker it would not affect the meaning of the passage since he is the instrument of deliverance, and the result would be the same since it is primarily the deliverance that is personified (Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 336). However, Isaiah 61:1 is interpreted as referring to the Messiah (Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:318-19; Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 562-63); For a discussion on the nature of the Spirit's witness, see John Goldingay, "Was the Holy Spirit Active in Old Testament Times? What Was New About the Christian Experience of God?" *ExAud* 12 (1996): 14-28.

<sup>480</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:169; cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 278.

<sup>481</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:170.

<sup>482</sup> H. D. Preuss, "יֵעֵל," *TDOT* 6:144-47, esp. 146.

<sup>483</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 297.

city” (48:2), yet they do not behave as such. Thus a key function of HOI is to assist Israel to become a holy people/city. It is only HOI who can lead his people in the profitable way of righteousness. HOI also wants to wean them off of their close relationships with their unholy idols (48:5).

In the next verse (48:18), HOI speaks his wish, “If only [optative לִּי] you had paid attention to my commandments!”<sup>484</sup> The statement “if only” reveals HOI’s extraordinary concern for Israel. If they had followed God’s instructions, they would have received שְׁלוֹמִים (well-being, blessedness) and צְדָקָה (righteousness) as HOI’s divine gifts (48:18). Thus he confronts their rebellious behavior with an expression of grief (cf. Ps 78:37-41, where Israel pained HOI). Godly parents desire to see their children walk in the ways of holiness. The reality of parenting from the Holy God’s perspective is discussed by Goldingay:

The book called Isaiah often portrays Yahweh as a God of huge power. Indeed, this very section has done so. When Yahweh speaks, the very heavens stand at attention (v. 13). When Yahweh decides to do something, it happens. Yet Yahweh’s relationship with Jacob-Israel is the exception to this rule. Other peoples may occasionally resist Yahweh’s purpose, though they then soon pay the penalty (as the previous chapter declared). The people of God (Israel or the church) is able to continue resisting God over the centuries with some degree of impunity. It does lose in the short term, failing to find the promises to Abraham fulfilled in its life (v. 19a). Indeed Yahweh looks over the precipice of its ultimate destruction, and invites Jacob-Israel to do so (v. 19b). But we have again and again heard how impossible it would be for Yahweh to go back on the commitment to achieving a purpose in the world through this people. We heard this most recently in verses 9-11, in all their toughness. This commitment to Jacob-Israel reduces Yahweh to an “if only” before its recalcitrance, like that of parents angry and grieved at their (adult) children’s waywardness and their consequent unhappiness, but unable to force them to live the way the parents would wish, and unable to cease being their parents.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> The לִּי with the perfect expresses a wish that has not been realized, when an apodosis is absent (Young, *Isaiah*, 3:260); Since God reveals himself through his authoritative commandments, the recipient must listen and obey his words (3:261).

As a parent, Yahweh gives his promise, “your descendents would have been like the sand, and your offspring of your body like its grains; his name would never be cut off or destroyed from my presence” (48:19). Unfortunately, this great promise is not the reality experienced. The reason for this discrepancy is a “breach in the relationship with God.”<sup>486</sup> The breach must, therefore, be mended and will require a redemptive intervention. Thus it will be administered by HOI, who has drawn himself near to help Israel and who by his holy nature will do the right thing. Hence, we see in the final injunction (vv. 20-21) a call to leave Babylon and the Chaldeans behind while inviting the whole world to participate in a joyful praise for God’s redemption. Blenkinsopp writes that the reference to the motif of wandering in the wilderness echoes 40:3-4 and is repeated here as a reference to the Exodus traditions. In 48:20, the first of the six imperatives **צֵא** (“go out”) is a key word in the Exodus narratives (Exod 11:8; 12:41; 13:3-4; 16:1, etc.) and the Psalter (e.g., Ps 114:1). The second verb **בָּרַח** (“take flight”) is used for sudden departure or “in haste” (Isa 52:11-12) and can be found in the Exodus story (Exod 12:11; Deut 16:3; 14:5). The Exodus was perceived as the “paradigmatic redemptive act of God” where he redeems and sets his people free (e.g., Exod 15:3).<sup>487</sup> A similar trek will again be made possible by their “Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (48:17) who seeks to bring Israel unto himself to learn his moral good (“righteousness,” **צִדְקָה**, v. 18).

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<sup>485</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 277.

<sup>486</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 299. Young writes that the prophet laments at Israel’s sinful history of apostasy and rebellion against Yahweh. The impending punishment will entail exile and the “cessation of the theocracy.” The reality of Israel’s unfaithfulness is in stark contrast to God’s faithfulness to his people (*Isaiah*, 3:261).

<sup>487</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 295-96.

2.3.21 *Isaiah 49:7*

כה אמר־יהוה גאל ישראל קדושו לבזה־נפש למתעב גוי לעבד משלים מלכים יראו  
וקמו שרים וישתחוו למען יהוה אשר נאמן קדש ישראל ויבחרך:

“Thus says Yahweh, Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to the despised one, to the one abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers, Kings will see and arise, Princes will bow down, because of Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you.”

The focus in Isa 49:1-6<sup>488</sup> turns from Jacob-Israel to Jerusalem-Zion. Yahweh had previously announced Babylon’s fall and the end of people’s exile, now the concern is on restoring the city. But the restoration goes beyond their physical captivity, for it also focuses on the possibility of a restored relationship between Israel and their Holy One (v. 5: “To bring Jacob back to him, so that Israel might be gathered to him.”).

However this task of restoration cannot be done through a collective Israel nor any human prophet. It is the role of an ideal Servant<sup>489</sup> who will bring salvation to Israel and the world and this is discussed in Isa 49:1-7 (also in vv. 8-13). The servant called to this salvific task is an individual (49:1-2). But it may seem like v. 3 identifies the servant

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<sup>488</sup> This is the second of the so-called “Servant Songs,” the others being 42:1-4; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12. Theories regarding the identity of the servant are: an individual person, or the prophet himself, a group like Israel (or a part of Israel), or a messianic figure; see Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); A. Phillips, “The Servant—Symbol of Divine Powerlessness,” *ExpTim* 90 (1978): 370-74; Arvid Kapelrud, “Second Isaiah and the Suffering Servant,” in *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* (ed. André Caquot and Marc Philonenko; Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1971), 297-303; H. Kosmala, “Form and Structure in Ancient Hebrew Poetry,” *VT* 16 (1966): 152-80; Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, “Israel und der Gottesknecht bei Deuterocesaja,” *ZTK* 79 (1982): 1-24; Rosario P. Merendino, “Jes 49:1-6: Ein Gottesknechtslied?” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 236-48; Harry M. Orlinsky, “‘A Light to the Nation’: A Problem in Biblical Theology,” *JQR* 57 (1967): 409-28; Odil H. Steck, “Aspekte des Gottesknechts in Deuterocesajas ‘Ebed-Jahwe-Liedern,’” *ZAW* 96 (1984): 372-90; H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 3-88; E. J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 103-41; Peter Wilcox and David Paton-Williams, “The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,” *JSOT* 42 (1988): 79-102.

<sup>489</sup> As Oswalt notes, two kinds of servant are discussed in chs. 40-55. The first is nameless and is a humble responsive servant of God who will bring God’s light to the world (42:1-9). The second servant who appears in chs. 40-48 is blind, deaf, and unbelieving Israel. Beginning in chs. 49-55 the nameless servant of ch. 42 who has an incredible task comes to center stage. Israel as a servant nation is mentioned in ch. 43-48 and 54:17. But here it is the ideal Servant (first introduced in ch. 42) who will complete the prominent work [of reconciliation/salvation of God’s people and the world to himself] (*Isaiah 40-66*, 287 n. 14).



as Israel.<sup>490</sup> Yet as Whybray observes, “the servant who is given the task of bringing Israel back to Yahweh... must be distinct from the nation.”<sup>491</sup> In fact, Oswalt notes, this servant will be for Israel and the world, what Israel could not be (to restore Jacob, and gather Israel; to be God’s salvation to the world and not merely the means). He will also be a “covenant to the people” (i.e., Israel, v. 8) who have broken God’s covenant repeatedly and will restore their land. Thus the term “Israel” in v. 3 need not be used as a name (since it parallels servant), but is designating that the “Servant is going to function as Israel.” This ideal Servant was called by God and equipped by him to bring justice to the world. The Servant acknowledged that he was honored in Yahweh’s sight and strengthened by God (v. 5). Thus he “knew who he was and whose he was, and that he trusted God.”<sup>492</sup>

The Holy One then speaks encouragement to him who is “despised” [בִּזְוֵה] and “abhorred” [תִּעֲבָב] by the nations (49:7). This may be a reference to the servant’s earlier acknowledgement of the disappointing results of his work (49:4: “I have toiled in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.”). Hence, it is this Servant alone who will

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<sup>490</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 321-28; Otto Eissfeldt, “The Ebed-Jahwe in xl.-lv. In the Light of the Israelite Conceptions of the Community and the Individual, the Ideal and the Real,” *ExpTim* 44 (1933): 264-65.

<sup>491</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (London: Oliphants, 1975), 135-36: He argues, however, that the servant here is the prophet himself. Michael E. W. Thompson believes the servant in 49:1-6 is Israel. He states that since Israel is regarded as the servant in v. 3, she can first proclaim the news of God to people around her first before going out to the nations, calling her own to return to God (*Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* [London: Epworth Press, 2001], 76-77). However, see Oswalt’s statement in the following sentence above.

<sup>492</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 291-98: The Servant cannot be a collective understanding of Israel since Israel cannot restore itself to a right relationship with God, and neither can it be a human prophet [so Wilcox and Paton-Williams, “The Servant Songs,” 92] who can become God’s salvation to the ends of the earth (293). Cf. Christopher R. Seitz sees the servant here as a prophetic agent/servant who is a witness to the voice/spirit of Isaiah according to God’s prophetic purposes (“How is the Prophet Isaiah Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40-66 within the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 115 [1996]: 219-40). His view introduces multiple voices of the ancient prophet that are all conveniently subsumed as God’s servant (cf. 238).

understand the depth of his inner pain for the lack of his success. But as Yahweh had mentioned in the previous verse that the task previously assigned to his Servant of restoring Israel to himself was not a large enough task for this Servant. Thus based on his nature, calling, and preparation, he is to be given a more astounding task of saving the world [to be the light to the nations]. Therefore neither collective Israel nor any human prophet could perform this monumental task.<sup>493</sup> As Leupold observes, it is through the “Redeemer of Israel” that the work of salvation is achieved and it is the “Holy One” who performs judgment (to sanctify Israel). In other words, when HOI rescues his own, he also severely punishes the oppressors. The Servant will then be honored by “kings” and “princes” who prostrate themselves before him and revere HOI, who chose him (49:7). Something will have happened to elicit such act of adoration. It would not be the resilience of the nation Israel in establishing a political comeback. It is Yahweh who promises that he will prove himself “faithful” to his word, and it is HOI who is with Israel and will not abandon his people (cf. Hos 11:9; Isa 5:16).<sup>494</sup> HOI also desires to extend his glory (v. 3) as the manifestation of his holiness to the nations (v. 6) and his people through his chosen Servant.

### 2.3.22 *Isaiah 54:5*

כי בעליך עשׂיך יהוה צבאות שמו וגאלך קדוש ישראל אלהי כל-הארץ יקרא:  
 “For your Maker is your husband, Yahweh Almighty is his name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, he is called the God of all the earth.”

Chapter 54 continues the theme of comfort and restoration as it relates to Jerusalem and its people. From his saving work (53:4-12), the Servant will have removed sin, and

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<sup>493</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 293-94.

<sup>494</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:181.

established righteousness. Therefore the way is opened for creating a family. Thus the childless woman will have abundant children, which will require the tent to be enlarged (54:1-3). The blessing to the barren woman is because Yahweh has acted through his Servant with the effect that his “seed” (53:11) will become her sons. The story of Sarah, the barren woman who bears a miracle child and produces a family with numerous children, provides a background to this text (Gen 11:30; 16:1; Isa 51:2).<sup>495</sup>

In Isa 54:4 the experience of shame [בוש], humiliation [כלם<sup>496</sup>], and disgrace [חפר] of the wife, and the reproach [חרפה] of the widow<sup>497</sup> will be removed. The memory of their shame will all be forgotten and erased by Yahweh. Here Yahweh Almighty, who has “supramundane resources...power irresistible”<sup>498</sup> and has “lordship over the heavenly powers (cf. 40: 26),”<sup>499</sup> is described as Israel’s “husband” (בעל)<sup>500</sup> and “Maker” (עשה).<sup>501</sup> This verse can be translated as “He who marries you is your Creator.”

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<sup>495</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445.

<sup>496</sup> See how the personified Jerusalem is portrayed as כלמה (“humiliation, disgrace”) in Ezek 16:52: “be ashamed and bear your disgrace.”

<sup>497</sup> “In Biblical Hebrew the word *almanah* has a completely negative nuance. It means a woman who has been divested of her male protector (husbands, sons, often also brothers). As a person without living relatives, money, or influence, the widow is often mentioned together with the orphan,...the sojourner,...the poor” (H. A. Hoffner, “אַלְמָנָה,” *TDOT* 1:287-91, esp. 288). In the book of Lamentations, Jerusalem is also described as a widow: “How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow [אַלְמָנָה], she that was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!” (1:1).

<sup>498</sup> G. W. Wade, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: With Introduction and Notes* (London: Methuen, 1911), 5; cf. Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 21: “Lord of Hosts” is predominant over all the other gods.

<sup>499</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 442.

<sup>500</sup> The verb means “possess, control” and “to take someone into possession as betrothed or wife, thus initiating marriage” (cf. Deut 21:13; 24:1; Isa 62:5; Mal 2:11 (*HALOT* 1:142)).

<sup>501</sup> As Maker of Israel, he knows her intimately and has “the affection that only a Creator could have for his creation. Beyond that, he who made the world has the power to remake it” (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*,

However, Beuken's alternative reading provides a different emphasis. He (following Köhler<sup>502</sup>) suggests that "husband" and "redeemer" are predicates and "Maker" and "the Holy One of Israel" are subjects. Thus he reads: "'For your Maker is your husband, . . . and the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer.'" This reading emphasizes the quality of the subjects, Creator of Israel will be her husband and because he is her Holy One, he will act as her kinsman."<sup>503</sup> When speaking of Yahweh as Israel's Creator [Maker], von Rad adds that the prophet remembers that Yahweh is Israel's creator because he chose and redeemed Israel from Egypt. Thus the terms "creator [maker]" and "redeemer" are viewed by the prophet as synonymous because "to create [make]" and "to redeem" were not viewed as two separate activities, but one single act.<sup>504</sup> It is HOI's holiness that removes the shame and humiliation and disgrace of his people. As ch. 53 has shown, their iniquities and sin have been purged by the Servant (vv. 5, 11-12). As the text mentioned earlier, it is God's desire to bring salvation to his people (52:7), and it will be done when he bares "his *holy arm* in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of [their] God" (52:10). Thus as the tent is enlarged and the descendants multiply, they too will spread out and possess nations and resettle in the desolate cities (54:2-3). It is HOI who belongs to Israel (here as her husband) who will also restore her dignity.

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<sup>502</sup> Ludwig Köhler, *Deuterocesaja (Jesaja 40-55): Stilkritisch Untersucht* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1923).

<sup>503</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "Isaiah LIV: The Multiple Identity of the Person Addressed," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis* (ed. James Barr; OTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 29-70, esp. 44-45: But he adds that these subjects are to some degree predicative as well since they present the attributive quality of God (46); Schoors, *I Am God Your Savior*, 83.

<sup>504</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 2:241.

To be Israel's husband is elaborated in the following verse: "For Yahweh has called you, like a wife forsaken<sup>505</sup> and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of youth when she is rejected" (cf. 54:6; Hos 3:1; Jer 2:1). The one who is "calling"<sup>506</sup> his spouse back is Israel's "Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa 54:5). As **גאל**, Yahweh had previously liberated Israel from the debt of slavery during the exodus. Now in a context of husband-wife, Yahweh as **גאל** reestablishes a lost familial relationship. This is not a purchase of strange goods, but he is actually regaining what has always belonged to him since the time of Abraham.<sup>507</sup> In this sense, the woman's original status with her husband is restored and she is "whole" and "redeemed," reflecting the state of "wholeness" and "salvation." This is another instance of HOI as Israel's personal redeemer. He desires to sanctify them so they can partake in his holiness, his saving power. This God who is God of the whole earth and embraces the heavenly sphere (v. 5a) is also active in the earthly

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<sup>505</sup> **אשה עזובה** is closely related to divorce. **עזב** in Isa 60:15 parallels "hated" (**שנאה**) which in marriage contracts represents a technical term for divorce (cf. Gen 29:31; Deut 21:15-17; 24:3; Judg 14:16; 2 Sam 13:15; Jer 12:8; Prov 30:28; Y. Zakovitch, "The Woman's Rights in the Biblical Law of Divorce," *JLA* 4 [1981]: 28-46). In an Elephantine marriage contract it states: "**שנאתי**: 'I divorce (literally 'hate, take a dislike to') my wife' is a fixed phrase to formalize the divorce (Emil G. Kraeling, ed., "Papyrus 2 [Brooklyn 47.218.89]," *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953], 148); H.-P. Stähli ("**עזב**," *TLOT* 2:867) has a different view and does not see it as a fixed legal term for divorce. See E. Gerstenberger "**עזב**," who states: "The diverse uses of 'עזב' in the legal sphere show that the word refers in a neutral sense to leaving a relationship of solidarity; the context determines the nature of each individual case" (*TDOT* 10:584-92, esp. 590).

<sup>506</sup> As Baltzer writes, a comparison with Isa 62:1-5 suggests that this is a calling by a new name ("You are called by a new name"). Isaiah 62:4 states: "they will no more call you 'Forsaken'...but you shall be called 'My Delight is in Her.'" Thus the context shows that a marriage relationship has subsequently been restored. The calling by name between two partners is a fundamental act in a marriage contract to establish the marital relationship. Here in ch. 54 the woman remains "the wife of [her husband's] youth," and this text presents the problem of remarriage with the previous husband. But Deut 24:1-4 excludes such an option. But here in Isaiah a remarriage is made possible as an act of God's free grace and expression of his love. His love for even "the one forsaken" is the very opposite of "repudiation" [rejected, **נאס**, v. 6b] (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 444).

<sup>507</sup> See J. J. Stamm, "**גאל**," *TLOT* 1:288-96, esp. 294.

realm (v. 5b) as Israel's Redeemer.<sup>508</sup> In other words, as Oswalt states, HOI expresses "the absolute transcendence of God and his unbelievable condescension."<sup>509</sup> Motyer adds, "Within the divine nature there is no tension between the utter holiness that constitutes his being and his committed nearness to his people. It is in his holiness that he affirms his next-of-kinship...[accomplishing] a holy redemption."<sup>510</sup> This holy redemption by HOI is focused on establishing righteousness in Israel ("in צדקה you will be established," v. 14). It is also important to note that it is one thing to want to redeem, but it is another thing to have the power to do so. Yet, Yahweh, as the God of all the earth, is able to do both.<sup>511</sup> Verse 5 sums up the prophet's theology of HOI: "God is Lord of the universe high above and different from man, graciously entering into fellowship with his chosen people for the redemption of the entire human race."<sup>512</sup>

Baltzer comments that the phrases "do not be afraid" and "do not be ashamed [feel humiliated, כָּלַם]" (54:4) are already indication of the reality of a salvific message. It is the negating of a disaster, and the making of good.<sup>513</sup> Hence there can be fearlessness in the people as they face the future because of God's direct word of encouragement.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 442.

<sup>509</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 419.

<sup>510</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446: This marriage denotes a "deliberately formed relationship, designed for perpetuity (50:1ff.)."

<sup>511</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 420.

<sup>512</sup> Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66," *IB* 5:635.

<sup>513</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 438: In verse 4 the prophet gives five variations on the theme of "shame, disgrace" that address the "active and passive diminution of quality of life. It calls into question reputation, dignity, and honor...a person's standing within a social group" (438). Ezekiel comments that this "disgrace" can be forgotten by Yahweh's forgiveness: "'so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,' the Lord Yahweh declares" (16:63).

But to understand HOI as Redeemer in v. 5, one only needs to look down to v. 8: ““In an outburst of anger I hid my face from you for a moment,<sup>515</sup> but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,’ says Yahweh your Redeemer.” HOI’s compassion is also mentioned in v. 7, where the brevity of alienation is contrasted with the great news of reconciliation. God who was offended reaches out to his beloved again. This regathering<sup>516</sup> is based on his “great compassion,” an overflowing love (cf. 1 Kgs 3:26: “she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, ‘O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!’”). He shows his lovingkindness (חסד) as evidence of his unfailing love that remains loyal to its pledge, “love as a settled disposition.”<sup>517</sup> This is the nature of Israel’s נאל who willingly strives to rescue his people. HOI in his zealous love for his people destroys her enemies and is the Ruler of all the world.<sup>518</sup>

### 2.3.23 Isaiah 55:5

הן גוי לא־תדע תקרא וגוי לא־ידעוך אליך ירוצו למען יהוה אלהיך  
ולקדוש ישראל כי פארך:

“Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of Yahweh your God, and the Holy One of Israel, for he has beautified you.”

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<sup>514</sup> See H. -P. Stähli, “ירא” *TLOT* 2:568-78, esp. 573.

<sup>515</sup> In Yahweh’s momentary fit of anger, he fulfilled his threat of Deut 31:17: “Then my anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them”; cf. Ps 27:9) (Paul, *Isaiah* 40-66, 423-24).

<sup>516</sup> This קבץ is seen in Isa 43:5: “from the west I will gather you”; 56:8: “who gathers the dispersed of Israel.”

<sup>517</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 448; also Deut 7:9: “The faithful God who keeps his covenant and his lovingkindness [והחסד] with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousandth generation.”

<sup>518</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 465.

In ch. 55 Yahweh invites the world to receive his love and pardon. His love has already been extended earlier to those he had promised to establish in righteousness. They will not be oppressed and will no longer experience fear or terror. All attacks upon God's people will fail, and those who accuse them will be condemned (54:14-17). This is the work of HOI (54:5).

Now HOI extends his purifying holiness (i.e., forgiveness, which he extended to Isaiah in ch. 6) to the "wicked" and the "unrighteous man," whom HOI will abundantly pardon (כִּי־רַבָּה לְסִלּוּחַ) (55:7). The passage opens with the imagery of an abundant feast. Three times the imperative "come" appears in v. 1, which signifies the "urgent, impassioned appeals...of life in its fullness is awaiting...this blessing"<sup>519</sup> of God. Motyer notes that each one highlights a distinct aspect of what is offered: (1) *Come* to the waters<sup>520</sup> emphasizes the provision of water for the thirsty; (2) *Come* buy and eat (those who have no money) speaks to those in poverty, as the person with no money is a welcomed customer who will eat for free; and (3) *Come* buy wine and milk (not just water) without money highlights the richness of the free commodity. Alongside this emphasis of freeness is the verb *buy* that is repeated.<sup>521</sup> There is a purchase price, but the

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<sup>519</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah*, 282: It is an invitation of God's salvation.

<sup>520</sup> H. C. Spykerboer explains that the renewed Zion/Jerusalem will become a source of abundant water and food [cf. Isa 12:3; 33:20-22; Ezek 47; Joel 4:18; Zech 13:1; 14:8-10; Ps 46:4] ("Isaiah 55:1-5: The Climax of Deutero-Isaiah: An Invitation to Come to Jerusalem," in *The Book of Isaiah* [ed. J. Vermeylen; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1989], 357-59, esp. 357 cited in U. Berges, "Zion and the Kingship of Yahweh in Isaiah 40-55," in "*Enlarge the Site of Your Tent*": *The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah* (ed. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Annemarieke van der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 95-119, esp. 118; cf. H. Eising, "גִּיחוֹן," *TDOT* 2:466-68: If the Gihon spring of Jerusalem can be identified with the Gihon River of Gen 2:10-14, it would help to explain the source of the abundance of water found in the city [cf. Isa 51:3 Zion will be like the garden of Eden].

<sup>521</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 452-53. Blenkinsopp views this invitation pericope as echoing the invitation of lady Wisdom in Prov 9:1-6 who invites the simple to her banquet to receive her inestimable



payment has already been “gratuitously bestowed”<sup>522</sup> by God. It is now up to the individual to receive the gift; for the vocative “all you who are thirsty” is singular and the imperative “come” is plural. Thus “there is enough for all but each must personally respond.”<sup>523</sup>

Beginning in Isa 55:3, the focus of the call is relating to Yahweh [HOI] personally, as evidenced by the command “come to me,” along with the plea to listen (vv. 2, 3). The drawing near to God will enable them to “eat what is good” (true food) that will satisfy their “soul” (v. 2) and allow their “soul to live” (v. 3). This life is to be found within the blessings of an “everlasting covenant” (made with you [plural]), which is defined as the Davidic promises.<sup>524</sup> But the focus is not on restoring the Davidic dynasty. The promise made to the listeners is that they too can experience the same “tokens of God’s faithful love” (חסדִים, a rare plural form of חסד) that God had shown David in previous times. The reference is not to the deeds that David performed for his people, but to God’s

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gift of wisdom (*Isaiah 40-55*, 369; proposed by Joachim Begrich, *Studien Zu Deuterocesaja* [München: C. Kaiser, 1963], 59-60). However, “wisdom” is used in Isa 40-55 in a negative sense ascribing to Babylon’s wisdom and knowledge (47:10), and the verb is related to making idols (40:20; 44:25). The wisdom of Proverbs has, in Isaiah, been equated to the Torah (51:4). It is therefore improbable that in this passage, lady wisdom is appearing in personified form (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 467). Baltzer argues that it is Zion/Jerusalem that is calling the people to come in vv. 1-3a (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 468). But this reading goes against the divine speech that he states only begins in v. 3b. Richard J. Clifford sees this text as an invitation to living in holy Zion that is associated with Yahweh (based on Ugaritic studies where one draws near to a deity in the deity’s shrine—a sacred place that is an extension of the divine world (“Isaiah 55: Invitation to a Feast,” in *The Word Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* [ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; Philadelphia: Eisenbrauns, 1983], 27-35, esp. 30, 33). But based on Isaiah 55:1, what merchant would give out his merchandise for free (“without price,” thus already paid for)? Only God himself can furnish life (cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 436).

<sup>522</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 369.

<sup>523</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 453: The inclining of the ear (to listen) in v. 3 also implies a deliberate choice to respond.

<sup>524</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 453.

“gratuitous acts of favor toward David.”<sup>525</sup> As God has kept his promises to David, says Oswalt, Israel will be able to participate in the blessings of God’s חסד (“covenant love”). In fact, Israel can continue in covenant with God through the life and work of a Davidic Messiah. The ministry of the Servant in chs. 40-55 will coincide with the work of the Messiah who will bring justice on the earth (9:6 [7]; 11:4-5, 10; 16:5; 42:1-4; 49:5-9). The work of the Servant (Messiah) will usher in a new covenant that will be a renewal of the Davidic covenant.<sup>526</sup> Hence the Davidic covenant has not been transferred to the people<sup>527</sup> nor have the royal promises been democratized.<sup>528</sup> God will maintain his promises to King David by providing a prophetic Servant (42:1-4; 49:2-3; 50:4) to fulfill the role of the Davidic witness to the world. The true remnant that listens to this Servant’s voice will see him reign as the “divinely nominated king.”<sup>529</sup> In Isa 55:4 a reference is made to the historical David as a witness for God,<sup>530</sup> but in v. 5 it is an

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<sup>525</sup> In other words חסדו דוד (“graces of David”) can be translated as either a subjective genitive (“David’s demonstration of grace”) or as an objective genitive (the demonstration of grace to David”). Either translation can be made (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 470). But the latter is preferred as it is the “faithfulness” of what God has done for David that is being stressed. See also H. G. M. Williamson, “‘The Sure Mercies of David’: Subjective or Objective Genitive,” *JSS* 23 (1978): 31-49; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 370.

<sup>526</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 438.

<sup>527</sup> O. Eissfeldt views the covenant of David has been transferred to Israel. He states that though Ps 89 shows close similarities with the Isa 55:1-5 passage, but the former focuses on a continued Davidic dynasty, while the latter focuses on the validity of the promise as carried on through Israel’s mission to the world (“The Promises of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1-5,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* [ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson; London: SCM, 1962], 196-207).

<sup>528</sup> So Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 284: E.g., the laments concerning the fall of the Davidic line expressed in Ps 89 would redirect the promises to the people. Blenkinsopp disagrees with this democratizing view since the prophet would not have used this analogy unless he was persuaded of the permanent validity of Yahweh’s commitment to David (*Isaiah 40-55*, 370).

<sup>529</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 455: In 49:7 he is noted as the appointed Servant and here he is the appointed King.

<sup>530</sup> Clifford notes, for example, Psalm 18 witnesses the king giving thanks to God for rescuing him in battle. This victory testifies to Yahweh’s power over the enemies’ gods. The Davidic king acts as

individual Servant, the Davidic Messiah who is being addressed.<sup>531</sup> Some may view it as Israel,<sup>532</sup> but it is the Servant Messiah who will bring a glorious light to the nations and draw them to God (cf. Isa 11:10; 42:4; 49:6-7; 51:4-5; 66:18). This does not deny that Israel will also play a role as well, but only insofar as she accepts this Servant Messiah.<sup>533</sup> As the Messiah calls all nations to himself, the nations will then come to Israel to learn God's ways (2:3; 42:4; 66:18, 21). Israel will also be a witness to the power of God who is able to deliver all people from sin. As God glorifies himself through this Servant, Israel will also receive glory.<sup>534</sup> Thus HOI draws his people and the nations to his sacred holiness.

#### 2.3.24 Isaiah 60:9

כִּי־לִי אַיִים יִקְווּ וְאַנְיוֹת תַּרְשִׁישׁ בְּרֵאשִׁנָּה לְהַבְיֵא בְנִיךָ מֵרְחוֹק כֶּסֶפֶם וְזָהָבָם אִתָּם  
לְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְקָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי פֶאֶרְךָ:

“Surely the coastlands will wait for me; and the ships of Tarshish [will come] first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel because he has beautified you.”

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Yahweh's earthly regent by witnessing to Yahweh's superiority in the heavenly world. Ps 89:6-19 affirms the “cosmogonic victory of Yahweh” which is granted to the earthly king. The Davidic ruler “possesses power directly proportionate to the divine power.” For example, Yahweh made king David the “highest [עליון] of the kings of the earth” (Ps 89:28 [27]). His status among earthly kings reflects Yahweh's own position among heavenly deities (Clifford, “Isaiah 55: Invitation to a Feast,” 27-35, esp. 32).

<sup>531</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 483-86; Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 439: Notice the shift from plural number in vv. 1-3 to the singular in v. 5.

<sup>532</sup> E.g., J. Muilenburg, R. N. Whybray, and Richard J. Clifford who state that as David had been chosen as God's leader and commander to “witness” for Yahweh (55:4), Israel too has been called to testify on behalf of Yahweh as being the only true deity who keeps his promises (Isa 43:9-10; 44:8-9). Her prosperity will testify to Yahweh's superiority and confirm Israel's exalted position among the nations as a light. Thus “the same glory that once surrounded the Davidic king, making him *elyōn*, ‘most high’ among the kings of the earth, is now imparted to obedient Israel. Yahweh has imparted his glory (*pē'ēr*, v 5) to Israel” (Clifford, “Isaiah 55: Invitation to a Feast,” 32-33).

<sup>533</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 439; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 455.

<sup>534</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 440. Cf. Isa 46:13: “I will grant salvation in Zion, my glory for Israel [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ]”; 44:23: “For Yahweh has redeemed Jacob and in Israel he shows forth his glory [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ].”

2.3.25 *Isaiah 60:14*

והלכו אליך שחוח בני מעניך והשתחוו על-כפות רגליך כל-מנאצריך  
וקראו לך עיר יהוה ציון קדוש ישראל:

“They will walk to you bowed down, the sons of those who oppressed you, and all those who despised you will prostrate themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of Yahweh, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Chapter 60 is a vision of a transformed city where experiences of afflictions are redressed.

As sons and daughters return to Jerusalem from scattered places (60: 4, 9) their servitude is reversed. Instead of serving the nations, the city is served by the nations. Instead of despising the city, they honor it (v. 14). The nations will bring wealth to Jerusalem and the city will be made wondrously splendid again, even exceeding its original magnificence (vv. 11, 13). The nations arrive to pay respect to the name of Yahweh, but also to acknowledge HOI who has glorified his people and the city with his holiness. As Goldingay notes, the city, instead of being assailed by violence and destruction, will know *שלום* and *צדקה*. It will also be protected by salvation and praise (60:17-18). The people will then recognize Yahweh as Savior and Redeemer.<sup>535</sup>

In Isa 60:1 (“Arise [*קום*], shine [*אור*] , for your light [*אור*] has come, and the glory [*כבוד*] of the Yahweh has risen [*זרח*] upon you.”) Yahweh appears in splendor. The “light” (*אור*) that has come parallels “glory” (*כבוד*) and implies a supernatural brightness [*ננה*, v. 3] that draws people away from the surrounding darkness. Hulster notes that *זרח* “to rise” is often used to describe the rise of the sun and *ננה* is characteristically caused by *זרח*.<sup>536</sup> Thus the city is enabled to stand and shine out to

<sup>535</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 339-40.

<sup>536</sup> Izaak J. de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (FAT 36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

reflect HOI's light [cf. vv. 19-20, Have Yahweh as the everlasting light]. This city that has been sanctified by HOI, now displays his glorious holiness. Consider this privileged status in contrast to the sinful condition discussed in the previous chapter (59). There the people's unholy ways separated them from God (e.g., iniquities, sins, falsehood, wickedness, lies, mischief, violence, and evil; no peace, no justice, no righteousness, and no truth; but only transgressions, 59:2-15).

Here Zion is summoned to enter into the light ("Arise, shine," v. 1a; "lift up...and look," v. 4a) that is now hers and observe the nations that are gathering to this same light.<sup>537</sup> It is the Lord's glory<sup>538</sup> that will attract the nations to come to "your light" (cf. Isa 2:5) and "your brightness/dawn."<sup>539</sup> When they come they will bring abundant goods and services. Camels arrive from Midian, Ephah, and Sheba bringing gold and frankincense (v. 6). Flocks and rams are delivered from Kedar and Nebaioth (v. 7).<sup>540</sup> A question is posed in v. 8 ("Who are these who fly like a cloud and like the doves to their lattices?") that is formally answered in v. 9. The reason for the haste described in v. 8

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2009), 173-74. See Deut 33:2: "Yahweh came [בא] from Sinai and shone [זרח] upon them from Seir"; Ezek 43:2: "behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory."

<sup>537</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 494: Isaiah is the only prophet to use the metaphor of "light" extensively (2:5; 5:20; 9:2 [1]; 10:17; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4). Jeremiah only uses it once (13:16; cf. Hosea 6:5; Amos 5:18, 20; Micah 7:8-9). This light is not merely for Zion, it is also directed to a world that needs it.

<sup>538</sup> "Glory (כבוד) of Yahweh" signifies Yahweh's visible divine presence. It is associated with either "movement" or "appearance" and does not represent his attribute (like mercy and love which cannot be seen or moved). Here in ch. 60, Zion is transformed as it bears Yahweh's glory and gathers in the nations. Zion is not only the bearer of glory, but also its instrument that allows the nations to enjoy Yahweh's presence (Carey C. Newman, "Glory, Glorify," *NIDB* 2:576-78).

<sup>539</sup> Regarding the theme of salvation, through Zion's salvation, the world is also saved. Though missionary outreach is mentioned in the OT, the more typical manner of outreach occurs through the "magnetic quality of the Lord and of the people among whom he is found" (e.g., Deut 4:5-8; Josh 2:10 [Rahab]; 2 Kgs 5 [Naaman]) (Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 494).

<sup>540</sup> "All the flocks" represent the total of their chief possessions and the rams stand for the best of their land has to offer like the שפעת נמלים ("multitude of camels") and בכרי ("young camels") in v. 6 (Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 580).

represents a lively faith. The coastlands of the Mediterranean are waiting for God; the ships of Tarshish<sup>541</sup> are waiting for God's order to bring the sons from far away back to Zion. In addition, they will also bring silver and gold to the name of Yahweh, HOI who has glorified (פאר) Zion.<sup>542</sup> These gentiles come with Zion's children to bring their own treasures to acknowledge Zion's God as the one true God, HOI who jealously defends Israel against her enemies and crowns her with divine glory.<sup>543</sup> When they come to revere HOI, foreigners will build up the city's walls (v. 10). As Motyer notes, the words "rebuild" and "serve" do not reflect a menial status, but are rather evidence of "a true zeal to play a citizen's part now that they are citizens."<sup>544</sup> They come freely and willingly (not under compulsion) just as they brought their other possessions to honor Yahweh [HOI] in the sanctuary (cf. v. 7 שרת, "minister to" denotes an honorable, usually volunteer service, whereas עבדה is used to denote forced service).<sup>545</sup>

Yahweh's nature is revealed in v. 10: for his anger (קצף) was real to Zion ("I struck you"), but through his compassion (רחם), he extends his "favor" (רצון). This favor (רצון) is also extended when offerings are accepted on God's altar in v. 7. These

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<sup>541</sup>The figure of speech represents the inhabitants themselves as Isa 23:1 uses the same figure of speech to speak about the residents of Tyre: "Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for it [Tyre] is destroyed." Likewise here the ships of Tarshish represent their owners, the personified isles. Isaiah always refers to the gentiles of the west as the isles (Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 583-84).

<sup>542</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:449. This reflects the plundering of the Egyptians when God brought Israel out of bondage.

<sup>543</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 586.

<sup>544</sup> *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 496.

<sup>545</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 586.

offerings from the nations will help to beautify God's "glorious"<sup>546</sup> house (בֵּית תְּפָאֲרָתִי) as part of the process of beautifying the city (פֶּאֶר, v. 9). Gates will be opened continuously for all who willingly come to bring their wealth (v. 11). Costly lumber (cypress, pine, box-tree, cf. 41:19) is delivered (v. 13) to beautify the Temple (the place of God's feet, cf. 1 Chr 28:2, "footstool").

This theme of light that is associated with the glory of Yahweh is a fulfillment of the promise that his glory will later be revealed (40:5). For the prophet, Yahweh's holy glory was first experienced in Isaiah's heavenly vision of "the king, Yahweh of hosts" (6:3-5). As Blenkinsopp notes, Yahweh's glory is revealed when his "kingdom is established and his kingship proclaimed." The rebuilding of the temple is an essential precondition to the manifestation of Yahweh's glory.<sup>547</sup> It is, therefore, HOI who establishes it to become a city of righteousness.

Yahweh thus reveals his ultimate commitment to Jerusalem as he honors Zion. Even the former oppressors and despisers will come to bow down<sup>548</sup> before her. They are humbled and express their complete devotion and supplication. Their worship and adoration is not directed to Zion herself, but to Yahweh who reigns in her midst, in the city that belongs to HOI.<sup>549</sup> The holiness of HOI will cause this city and its people to become an "everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation" (60:15).

In sum, we may say that when the title HOI references Yahweh, it expresses his

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<sup>546</sup> The root פֶּאֶר "is related to God's glory but not directly to light, rather to jewellery or clothing" (de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis*, 174).

<sup>547</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 211.

<sup>548</sup> In Isa 51:23 the description of the tormentors of Israel who commanded her: "Bow down [שָׁחָה] that we may walk over you; and you have made your back like the ground" is now reversed.

<sup>549</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:452.

transcendental attributes, or his “Godhead.” But the term connotes more than the abstract concept of Godhead alone, for it consists of the manifestation of any attributes associated with this Godhead that reveals his holiness<sup>550</sup> (e.g., transcendent majesty, glory, greatness, power, righteousness), which aims to purge all that is unholy. With this theological understanding of God’s holy identity, one can now understand better the significance of Isaiah’s use of the epithet (addressing Yahweh as “the Holy One of Israel” and not as the “Righteous One of Israel”). The prophet desires to emphasize that this Holy One, who is high and lofty, and does what is right, is with his people. HOI graciously extends his holiness to his people through his immanent presence. HOI, who belongs to Israel, seeks to be in her midst. The use of this epithet is to remind the people of HOI’s present reality with them.<sup>551</sup> Therefore, how can they rebel against the Holy One who wants to draw near to sanctify (e.g., Isa 6:5-10) his holy people?

We shall discuss a few of the attributes closely associated with HOI in the next chapter (e.g., HOI is sovereign and powerful, unique and incomparable, glorious, faithful, merciful, and righteous) and then examine how HOI relates to Israel through his holiness. For as Muilenburg notes, “holiness” expresses the essential nature of the divine and it is “not as one attribute among other attributes, but as the innermost reality to which all others are related. Even the sum of all the attributes and activities of ‘the holy’ is insufficient to exhaust its meaning... While it often denotes a state or condition, it is for

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<sup>550</sup> Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 155; J. R. Jaeggli describes it as Yahweh bringing forth “all of His unique attributes into the realm of human experience for the benefit of Israel” (“An Historical-Theological Analysis of The Holy One of Israel in Isaiah 40-66,” *BV* 21 [1987]: 49-55, esp. 54).

<sup>551</sup> I.e., Though the Holy One is invisible and seems distant, to Isaiah, he is real and close-by. He comes as the Holy One of Israel to show himself holy whenever he administers his righteousness (e.g., Isa 5:16).



ancient Israel primarily an activity and a speaking which eventuate in relationship.”<sup>552</sup>

Thus HOI manifests his holiness in the context of his relationship with Israel.

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<sup>552</sup> J. Muilenburg, “Holiness,” *IDB* 2:616-17.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHARACTER OF YAHWEH AS THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

In this chapter, we will discuss Yahweh's character as revealed in the use of the term HOI. In the book of Isaiah, HOI is portrayed as sovereign and powerful, unique and incomparable, glorious, faithful, merciful, and righteous.

#### 3.1 Sovereign and Powerful

As sovereign Creator of the world, Yahweh was present at the beginning of history. This master of history, the transcendent and eternal HOI, has supreme knowledge and authority regarding the past and the future. His knowledge is able to predict the future and his authority encompasses his ability to fulfill his holy purposes.

##### 3.1.1 Transcendent and a Discontinuous<sup>553</sup> God

In Isa 57:15,<sup>554</sup> Yahweh, the Holy One is described as “the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity” (cf. 6:1). These two adjectives, “high and lofty” affirm Holy One's transcendence. At the same time, HOI<sup>555</sup> also declares “I am He; I am the first, and I am the last. Indeed my hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand has

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<sup>553</sup> See J. N. Oswalt's discussion on Continuity and Transcendence (*The Bible Among the Myths*, 47-84).

<sup>554</sup> Verses that are closely associated with HOI are underlined. An underline beneath a hyphen represents an occurrence of the epithet HOI within the range of verses.

<sup>555</sup> Isa 48:17; 41:14, 16, 20.

stretched out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand up together” (48:12-13; 41:4; cf. 44:6; 46:4, 10). Yahweh knows the beginning from the end as expressed in 41:4. This statement testifies that Yahweh, HOI is a God who resides outside of time and this cosmos system. He is the truly “other” transcendent and discontinuous God. Paganism, however, views its gods as continuous with the world, states Oswalt. The gods do not know the origin or the end of the cosmos. In this system of process, there is no beginning or end. Existence is an endless cycle. The gods do not know the meaning, purpose, or duration of the process. The forces of the cosmos are a system created by humans to explain life.<sup>556</sup>

Isaiah, however, knows that the transcendent HOI (lofty and exalted) is discontinuous with the world and cannot be manipulated through the physical world. Yahweh, HOI is unlike the pagan gods who are part of the cosmic system. Pagans would attempt to placate their gods through sacrifices and rituals, but Yahweh is not a part of this system and is not affected by rituals done in the system.<sup>557</sup> This reveals that the pagans’ gods are not gods because they are capable of being controlled by human beings, which denies the essence of being a true Holy God. Yahweh, HOI, however, is above all and is the source of all forces in the cosmos.

### 3.1.2 Eternal

Westermann claims this phrase (48:12): “I am He; I am the first, and I am the last,” reflects the author’s theology of history. It refers to God’s “activity that embraces the totality of universal history”; God’s existence preceded all actions in history and will also

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<sup>556</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 461-62.

<sup>557</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 492.

terminate them all.<sup>558</sup> This means that the *eternal* God (HOI, 48:17) is not bounded by any human time-frame. Therefore, the God who was present in the beginning will also be present at the end. A similar statement is made in 44:6: “I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.” “The first and the last” here indicates Yahweh’s “relation to history and the life of men...and He is present in all its movements.”<sup>559</sup> In 44:6, the emphatic “I” elevates Yahweh as uniquely different, for there is no other god who “encompasses all of existence from start to finish, and no other can compete with him.”<sup>560</sup> Thus when the prophet speaks of HOI (45:11), he is calling attention to the fact that this eternal God who has been with his people in the past, is also with them in the present and in the future.

### 3.1.3 Supreme Knowledge

Since Yahweh is eternal, he knows the future,<sup>561</sup> and sees the beginning and the end of human history. Because HOI knows the future, he can direct and guide the world’s future and even predict judgment and salvation. However, some would question the way God operates in this world. This is shown in Isa 45:11, “Thus says Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands, please command me!” This phrase is an ironic rebuke for those who dare to question HOI about his deeds. It is improper to keep interjecting into the affairs of Yahweh, HOI. The hidden things shall be revealed in God’s timing. There is comfort,

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<sup>558</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 65.

<sup>559</sup> Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 165.

<sup>560</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 171.

<sup>561</sup> Isa 45:11, 21; 48:3, 5, 6, “even hidden things”; 41:22; 44:7, 8.

however, in knowing that one's place is secure in the care of God's sovereignty.<sup>562</sup>

In chs. 40-55, God's sovereignty to make "advance announcements" is highlighted by his ability to predict the future. He assures that what he decrees will transpire.<sup>563</sup> Beginning in 40:12, the Holy One's<sup>564</sup> sovereignty is affirmed through a series of rhetorical questions that expect the answer, "No one but Yahweh!" He alone created the world. Unlike the Babylonian god Marduk who received advice from Ea (the god of wisdom) when he created the world, Yahweh, the Holy One (who is lofty and exalted) consulted no one's advice (40:13-14); his wisdom and power were sufficient.<sup>565</sup>

With Yahweh's wisdom of creating the universe, does he know and is he able to tell Isaiah all things about Israel's future? Certainly the person (or persons) responsible for the final form of this book believes that God, the creator of the universe, can tell what will happen in the future. For example, the Cyrus (45:1-8) predictions affirm Yahweh's lordship of history.<sup>566</sup> This portion of the book (chs. 40-55) has repeatedly insisted that God can tell the future.<sup>567</sup> HOI (45:11) knew Cyrus even before he was born<sup>568</sup> because

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<sup>562</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 362.

<sup>563</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook of the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 92-93.

<sup>564</sup> In Isa 40:25, it is not HOI, but the Holy One.

<sup>565</sup> See R. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counselor in Isaiah xl 13-14: A Study of the Sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 64-77. Westermann sees in the parallel of 40:13b to 40:13a the acting of a person (Yahweh) who measures and weighs and has no need of a counselor. God's reality is a kind that does not correspond to the heavens or the sea. He is an active person who engages in immeasurable planning. And no one measures up to his divine incomparability; nor can anyone give him advice about how he ought to act (*Isaiah 40-66*, 50-51).

<sup>566</sup> Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 192, 196-97; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 355-56; Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:192.

<sup>567</sup> See 41:21-24, 26-27; 43:12; 44:7, 26; 45:20-21; 46:10; 48:3.

<sup>568</sup> Cf. Ps 139: "you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb," "you know when I sit and when I rise...my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely" (vv. 2-4, 13; emphasis mine).

he is the unique God who rules the world of time and space. Because he is the maker of the cosmos, nothing on earth occurs without his involvement (45:7); and for the prophet, he knows HOI (45:11) is personally involved with his people.

Nevertheless, did not the ancient Near Eastern people also believe that their gods could predict future events? For example, could not the Persians claim their gods decreed Cyrus's victories? Yes, but Yahweh, HOI (41:20; 45:11) is unique from the gods of the nations in that he prophesied Cyrus's victories in advance (41:25-29; 44:6-8; 45:20-21). This prediction was part of God's sovereign plan (41:22-24; 42:1-4; 44:6-8; 45:9-13), which would eventually result in an exilic return (42:9-10, 21-25, 43:18-21).<sup>569</sup>

In Israel's environment of worshipping a plethora of gods, what truly sets HOI apart from these other polytheistic religions? Mesopotamians believed that individual gods operated in a unified system of reality where universal fate defines the nature of things and mandates their operative laws. In this discovery of fate, both the gods and humans can use divination and magic to identify the "inner, rational harmony of the universal order, of which fate is the pervasive glue and the gods but the keepers."<sup>570</sup> This fate consists of predictable laws and recurring patterns of order (e.g., the Egyptian principle of order, *Ma'at*<sup>571</sup> is a less impersonal equivalent of fate). In contrast, such a predictable pattern cannot be ascribed to Israel's Holy God, who is free to dictate his own volition and has a specific "will"<sup>572</sup> for each occasion and has the power to bring his

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<sup>569</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 84.

<sup>570</sup> Giorgio Buccellati, "Ethics and Piety in the Ancient Near East," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; 4 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 3:1686-88.

<sup>571</sup> John A. Wilson describes "*Ma'at*" as "the cosmic force of harmony, order, stability, and security, coming down from the first creation as the organizing quality of created phenomena and reaffirmed at the accession of each god-king of Egypt" (*The Burden of Egypt* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951], 48).

plans to fruition. Unlike the “inert dimension of fate,” Yahweh communicates the details of his decisions for humans to discover and accept.<sup>573</sup> HOI (30:11, 12, 15) desires to reveal his profitable ways to his people, if they would only consult him (e.g., Isa 30:2; 48:17). Thus it is this difference between acceptance (of HOI’s will) versus discovery (via divination) that distinguishes the two religions.

The worshiper of Yahweh believed that his divine will was sovereign and governs all and was the cause of all being. For example, this is reflected in Job’s full surrender to Yahweh with an attitude that rejected the easy agnosticism of Babylonian thinking, but trusted rather in a just judge who had the providence to rule.<sup>574</sup> On the other hand, the world of paganism involved myth and magic that sought out the uncertain, which was transcended by a primordial realm that was prior to the gods and above them. The mythological gods were born out of it (whether from chaos or a primal god is immaterial)

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<sup>572</sup> The aNE gods also had a “will” of purposeful divine actions that directed historical events; but for Yahweh, the difference lies in the fact that the historical events happen from a definite point of view involving a divine purpose with a longer perspective (rather than a general and temporal purpose), such that an “entire sequence of occurrences” follow a higher order; and the content or message of Yahweh’s revelations contain hope for the future (cf. Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and Israel* [Lund: Gleerup, 1967], 53-114).

<sup>573</sup> Buccellati, “Ethics,” 3:1688. H. W. F. Saggs notes that it would be wrong to conclude that in Mesopotamia, there were no personal communications from deities (concerning their intentions or will) to humans. Divine beings would address future events through dreams (to bring a message, advice, or encouragement) or oracles (given through divinely inspired individuals [e.g., Assyrian *ragintu*, “one who calls out”; or Mari’s *muh□h□um* or *aāpilum*]). However, though the mechanism in which the messages were conveyed are similar (through an inspired person), the Old Testament prophecies were unique in terms of the nature of their messages. Their prophecies were not “bounded” by “time, subject-matter, and personalia,” but included eschatological time, non-royal issues, and for all mankind, particularly regarding behavior demanded of men based on the nature of God (*The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* [JLCS 12; London: Athlone Press, 1978], 138-52). For a further discussion on Mari oracles, see A. Malamat, “Prophetic Revelations in New Documents from Mari and the Bible,” VTSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1966): 207-27; idem, “A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick Miller, Paul Hanson, and S. Dean McBride, Jr.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 33-52; W. L. Moran, “New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy,” *Bib* 50 (1969): 15-56.

<sup>574</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 187. Job refers to Yahweh as the Holy One in 6:10.

and even the “primal god” was perceived only as a “father” of the gods and the world, whose ruling power of the universe was limited. These gods have no control over the nature and the destinies of their offspring. For even the son can dethrone or murder his father and replace him. The gods are subject to death and resurrection, some are young, and others old. They have physical needs like drinking, eating as means of subsistence and can get sick and require healing.<sup>575</sup> These divine weaknesses reflect a human’s perspective and understanding and reveal that these gods are man-made and do not control the future.<sup>576</sup>

In sum, as the eternal Holy God, there is continuity between God’s promises and his actions. Yahweh, unlike Marduk or other foreign gods whose pretensions to divinity are baseless, is a God who can make advance announcements because only this one God Yahweh can create, control world-history, and deliver his people after their downfall.<sup>577</sup> Therefore, in chapter 41, Yahweh (HOI, 41:20) turns to challenge the pagan gods to prove their divine character and ability to predict events (41:21-23). If they are sovereign, they should be able to identify past predictions that have been fulfilled and provide new predictions for the future. But these gods lack substance and can do nothing (41:24, 29). They are in contrast with Yahweh, HOI who is “active in history.”<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>575</sup> Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 22-23.

<sup>576</sup> See also Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, 63-107.

<sup>577</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 16-17.

<sup>578</sup> Chisholm Jr., *Prophets*, 98.



### 3.1.4 Supreme Authority<sup>579</sup>

#### 3.1.4.1 All Powerful

##### 3.1.4.1.1 “Yahweh Almighty”<sup>580</sup> (יהוה צבאות<sup>581</sup>)

HOI is closely associated with Yahweh Almighty as witnessed in Isa 6:3: “Holy One, Holy One, Holy One is Yahweh Almighty” (see also 5:24; 54:5; cf. 10:16-17; 17:3-7; 31:1-4). HOI’s sovereign supreme authority as the high and lofty one reflects his power to accomplish his plans. In 10:26, HOI<sup>582</sup> mentions two experiences concerning the Midianite troops (Judg 7:25) and the Egypt’s army (Exod 14:26; 15:4) that remind Israel of Yahweh’s unmatched power in human affairs (cf. 45:11-13). As “Yahweh [Almighty],” he has access to countless heavenly hosts to do his work at any time.<sup>583</sup> But the almightiness of Yahweh must manifest itself in the context of a relationship. A recipient is needed to display the effects of this supreme and holy power.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> E.g., HOI (55:5) who is present with his people declares in Isa 55:8-9: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says Yahweh, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

<sup>580</sup> For a discussion on the name “Yahweh Almighty/of Hosts,” see note 254.

<sup>581</sup> **צבאות** occurs as a divine epithet 285 times in the OT and Isaiah uses it 62 times (6x chs. 40-55, 0x in ch. 56-66). The divine epithet does not appear in the Pentateuch, Josh, Judg, Ezek, Ezra, and Nehemiah; it is also not found in Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, and 2 Chr. It appears in Jer (82x), Hag (14x), Zech (53x), and Malachi (24x) (van der Woude, *TLOT* 2:1040-41; cf. Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, 49). Interestingly, the unique title **יהוה צבאות** (“the Lord Yahweh Almighty”) occurs only five times in the OT and all in the book of Isaiah (cf. note 186).

<sup>582</sup> Isa 10:20; cf. 10:17, “their Holy One.”

<sup>583</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 92: He interprets it as “Yahweh of Hosts.”

<sup>584</sup> E.g., “The Holy One” (40:25) who has great might (**רב אונים**) and mighty strength (**אמין כח**) (40:26) also gives strength (**כח**) to the weary and increases the power (**עצמה**) to those who have no might (**אונים**) (40:29; 41:1). It is only “those who wait (**נקוה**) upon the Holy One who will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become

### 3.1.4.1.2 Creator

In addition to being Israel's Creator (e.g., 43:15), Yahweh, alone (as the Holy One, 40:25-26, 28) is Creator<sup>585</sup> and controller of all things.<sup>586</sup> For example, in 40:12, the verbs—measured, marked off, calculated, and weighed—ascertain the total magnitude of God's created universe. These verbs emphasize how the heavens, the earth, the sea and the mountains are immeasurably made by God.<sup>587</sup> Unlike the polytheistic Canaanites who assigned a special god(s) to various elements of the universe (e.g., sun, moon, planets, and stars) and viewed them as the source or controller of rain, vegetation, death, disease, fertility, health, love, etc., the Israelites did not personify Yahweh as such because he was the sole creator and controller of these “beneficent ordering and ruling of the world.”<sup>588</sup> His nature encompassed all characteristics of the Canaanite specialty gods.

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weary” (40:31). When the Holy One comes with might (גִּבּוֹר) (40:10), it is this kind of might that the nations desire and seek for their people (41:6), but HOI knows that they cannot find it through their idols. It can only be found when HOI comes in person and displays his “righteous right hand” (41:10, 13-14, 20).

<sup>585</sup> Creator, while it includes transcendence is not limited to transcendence (i.e., it also expresses his immanence, e.g., God's role as Israel's Creator and personal king, see pp. 113-14).

<sup>586</sup> In speaking about making the wilderness fertile and beautiful, HOI declares in 41:20: “the hand of Yahweh has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.” In 45:24, Isaiah affirms that God's strength maintains all living things. HOI (45:11) is closely related to the life of the universe. Even Job describes how Yahweh knows about everything in the world. He has access to the mysterious Sheol, and keeps the earth in suspension and gathers the waters into clouds and separates light from darkness. He reveals his power of churning the seas and no one can understand his mighty thunder (Job 26). His glance reaches to the ends of the earth, he weighs the wind and measures out the boundless water, he sets the law for rain and thunder; thus he founded the world (Job 28:23-26; also 37; Pss 24:1-2; 33:6; 65) (Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture III-IV* [London: Oxford University Press, 1940], 616).

<sup>587</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 50.

<sup>588</sup> G. E. Wright, “How Did Early Israel Differ From Her Neighbors?” *BA* 6 (1943): 6-7. Yahweh's control could even reach the lowest level of the underworld (*šē'ōl*), if he wished (Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* [New York: Continuum, 2001], 664); cf. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175: “The depiction of Baal's conflict with Yamm (CAT 1.2 IV) is discernibly more anthropomorphic than any biblical descriptions of Yahweh's conflict against cosmic enemies.”

In fact, as יהוה צבאות, Yahweh created the heavens,<sup>589</sup> the earth,<sup>590</sup> and mankind (45:12). He also forms the light, creates darkness, brings prosperity, and creates disaster (45:7).<sup>591</sup> Here in 45:7, the good and evil are not two eternally coexistent principles battling in the universe. There is only one first principle—God who permits darkness and evil to exist, which is made possible only by an almighty Creator.<sup>592</sup> And it is the high and lofty HOI (45:11) who being morally perfect, creates righteousness (45:8) on earth.

### 3.1.4.2 Accomplishes His Desires

Regarding the things he proclaimed from his mouth long ago, HOI (55:5; 48:15-17) acts to make them come to pass (48:3; 31:1-2) and achieve (צלח) what he sent them to do (55:11).<sup>593</sup>

#### 3.1.4.2.1 Irrevocable Word<sup>594</sup>

One of God's unique strengths is displayed by his word (דבר). With his word, he created this world, and its power still exists in the universe due to its irrevocability in fulfilling his purposes. The wise words of HOI are sacred and cannot be retracted, but can even

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<sup>589</sup> Isa 40:23, 25-26; 45:11-12, 18; cf. Isa 42:5; 66:1.

<sup>590</sup> “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,” 40:22; and the “holy one” (40:25) is the “creator of the ends of the earth,” 40:28; 45:11-12, 18; “God of all the earth,” 54:5; 42:5; 44:24b; “the nations,” 54:3.

<sup>591</sup> Ulrich E. Simon, *A Theology of Salvation: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (London: SPCK, 1953), 130-31.

<sup>592</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 513; idem, *Isaiah 40-66*, 203-05.

<sup>593</sup> דפיץ, Isa 55:11; 46:10.

<sup>594</sup> “Will not return empty” (שוב, Isa 55:11; 45:23).

bring forth disaster against evildoers (30:1-2). In Isa 55:11, Yahweh's word goes out from his mouth to accomplish Yahweh's divine purpose (cf. 46:11, What Yahweh has "spoken" he will bring to pass). The concept here in 55:10-13 corresponds closely with the Holy One's statement that the "Word of our God stands for ever" (40:8). His word does not return void, but achieves his work, and expands on the thought that God's word is abiding.<sup>595</sup> When HOI's righteous word goes out (45:11, 19, 21, 23), it is "a dynamic word that will not be deflected," for "in *dabhar* Jahveh makes his essence known."<sup>596</sup> HOI's (55:5) higher thoughts and ways will invite the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, by granting them pardon (55:7). His word will also bring forth joy and peace (55:11-12). In Isa 29:18-19, it is the "words of a book" that the deaf will hear and the neediest people will rejoice at the presence of HOI (cf. 30:10, 11, 12).

#### 3.1.4.2.2 Fulfills His Counsel/Purposes<sup>597</sup>

Israel's God is able to accomplish his purposes: "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the purpose [עצה] of Yahweh will stand" (Prov 19:21); Ps 33:6-11: "by the *word* of Yahweh the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses...For He spoke,

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<sup>595</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 42-43: Westermann notes that the statement in Isa 40:6b-7 ("all people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it; surely the people are grass") sounds familiar because they represent a well-established form found in the Psalter (39, 49, 90) and Job. He sees it as addressing the exiles' greatest concern—national extinction. Just as many other nations have been destroyed, Israel is a nation that will also perish: "all flesh is as grass." And this lament reveals Israel's utter resignation or despair (41-42).

<sup>596</sup> Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (trans. Jules L. Moreau; London: SCM Press, 1960), 61-67, esp. 67; cf. H. Ringgren, "Hypostasen," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (ed. Kurt Galling; 3d ed.; 7 vols. Tübingen: Mohr, 1959), 3:504b.

<sup>597</sup> עצה, "counsel," Isa 11:2; 46:10, 11; "counselor," יועץ, Isa 9:5 [6]

and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. Yahweh nullifies the counsel [עצה] of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel [עצה] of Yahweh stands forever.”

Yahweh is determined (עשה, 37:26; 41:20) and makes plans (יצר, 46:11; 37:26; 22:11) that he brings to pass.<sup>598</sup> Consider how HOI’s authority to execute holiness is illustrated by the controlling actions of the Axe/Saw (club/rod 10:15) metaphors; cf. where Yahweh himself created the blacksmith and the weapon (54:16). However, unlike the pagan gods who are fickle and unpredictable, HOI knows what is best for this world. Thus, his plans and purposes always bring about righteous results; indeed, even if they do not seem good to a human’s understanding.

#### 3.1.4.2.3 Executes Salvation

One of Yahweh’s most significant purposes for humanity is his plan and ability to perform salvation. When he makes such salvific predictions, he alone is able to fulfill them. We see this in Isa 44:26, where he “confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the predictions of his messengers.” In ch. 44, Yahweh adamantly emphasizes that the career of Cyrus is completely the result of God’s hand working in human history. In fact it is HOI who says, “I have called him, I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way” (48:15-17). It is not the work of any idols or people, but it happened because God called him, just as he did with Israel (48:12) and just as he did with the stars (48:13), that Cyrus

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<sup>598</sup> See Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 297.

was chosen to deliver God's people.<sup>599</sup> Likewise, salvation is established by HOI (45:11) when he summons righteousness to rain down from the heavens. With divine imperative ("Shower, O heavens"), even the heaven and earth respond obediently to his initiatives (Isa 45:8).<sup>600</sup>

From the above discussion concerning Yahweh, HOI in the book of Isaiah, we learn that the HOI is the transcendent God, sovereign and powerful, who possesses superior divine knowledge, and authority to administer his independent divine will to bring forth righteous results. In the following section, we will examine why HOI is the only true God, incomparable and superior to all other deities.

### 3.2 Unique and Incomparable

As the eternal God who accomplishes all things through his word, HOI (43:14; who is highly exalted, but is with Israel), proclaims himself as the only true God: "Before me no god was formed, and there will be none after me" (43:10b).<sup>601</sup> Here the prophet rejects theogony<sup>602</sup> (e.g., *Enuma Elish* [I 9-20]) to affirm that Yahweh is the cosmic Creator and he is the first and the last (41:4; 44:6; 48:12),<sup>603</sup> and is the only genuine God (HOI in 41:14; 48:17).<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 277.

<sup>600</sup> Samuel E. Balentine, "Isaiah 45: God's 'I am,' Israel's 'You Are,'" *HBT* 16 (1994): 106.

<sup>601</sup> "There is no other" (Isa 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22; 37:20; 40:25; cf. "no God besides me," 44:6, 8; 46:1-2, 9; Jer 49:19).

<sup>602</sup> Not generated within a family of gods.

<sup>603</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 107. The catchwords "first" and "last" were first used in 41:4 and the divine identity affirms that God is always the same even in the misfortunes of his people (cf. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 289).

<sup>604</sup> The presence of monotheism is a topic too complicated to cover here, but see Nathan MacDonald,

In 41:1-5, the background is a judicial lawsuit<sup>605</sup> presented as proof against the foreign gods' claim to divinity. It is not a criminal case dealing with offense and punishment, but a civil one that admits or dismisses Yahweh's claim to divinity as true; between the claims made by both the foreign gods and by Yahweh, only one can be valid.<sup>606</sup> Here the false gods are unable to speak. Thus Yahweh speaks as the one party in the suit and has to answer his own questions that he raises to his opponent: "Who stirred up one from the east?" (41:2a) and "Who performs and does this?" (41:4a): "I, Yahweh" (41:4b).<sup>607</sup> Therefore, in 41:22-23a, and 26, HOI (41:20) declares: "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds... Who told of this from the beginning... or beforehand... no one told of this, no one foretold it." Again, because the idols cannot tell the future, they are all "false" (41:29).<sup>608</sup>

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*Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism"* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, and Bill T. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 391-420, esp. 405-11.

<sup>605</sup> John N. Oswalt notes, "chapters 40-48...utilizing a series of court cases in which God conclusively demonstrates his superiority over the Babylonian idol gods" ("Isaiah 52:13-53:12: Servant of All," *CTJ* 40 [2005]: 87); Robert Vasholz, "Isaiah Versus 'The Gods': A Case for Unity," *WTJ* 42 (1980): 389-90.

<sup>606</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 63.

<sup>607</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 64. "I am Yahweh" (41:13; 43:3; 45:5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 21; 48:17; 49:23, 26; 60:16) in 45:6 stresses that only Yahweh is the true God who actually brings about things. For example, HOI is Israel's true almighty redeemer who takes vengeance on Babylon (47:1-4); cf. Exod 6: 2, 6, "I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment" (see also Exod 20:2; 29:46).

<sup>608</sup> The purpose of Yahweh making these true predictions regarding future events was to prevent people from giving credit to the idols ("My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molten image have commanded them," 48:5). Yahweh declares that it was his actions that brought them forth since he had proclaimed these things from long ago. And it is HOI who, personally is in their midst, wants to lead Israel in the right way to go (48:17-18).

Thus, in Isa 40:25, the “Holy One” who is the true and unique God can thus rightfully ask: Who is comparable to him? As 40:12-17 focuses on God’s immeasurability, 40:18-24 and 40:25-26 focus on his *incomparability*. The Holy One is the one who created the heavenly bodies (stars) and calls them all by name. By his great power and mighty strength not one is missing (40:25-26). He is the one who does not become weary or tired and his understanding is inscrutable (40:28).

Furthermore, Isa 40:16 reiterates God’s *unparalleled superiority* by declaring God’s greatness in that no sacrifice given could match the honor Yahweh deserves. In Isa 45, the use of a series of bi-polar contrasts asserts God’s superiority extending beyond the imaginable boundaries: 45:6, east-west, “place of sunrise,” “its setting place”; 45:7a: “light-darkness”; and 7b: “well-being” and “calamity.” This last pair of opposites affirms that all things belong to God, and there is no other besides him (45:5, 6).<sup>609</sup> Moreover, it is HOI who affirms that the well-being of his people will be brought about through his incomparable salvation (45:8, 11).

Regarding the idol making process described in 40:19-20 and 41:6-7, notice how the pagan gods come into existence and their numerous genealogies are all contrary to Israel’s teaching and understanding about the Decalogue’s second commandment.<sup>610</sup> The

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<sup>609</sup> Balentine, “Isaiah 45: God’s ‘I am,’ Israel’s ‘You Are,’” 106.

<sup>610</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 66. Yehezkel Kaufmann notes that the pagans viewed gods as powerful beings embodied in nature and residing in the universe. They dwell in the natural phenomena and are conceived to control nature (There are gods of the sky, earth, mountains, rivers, forests, life, love, fertility, death, destruction; also of light, darkness, thunder and lightning, wind, rain, fire and water). Myths speak of the gods’ wars, romances, hatreds related to each other and to humans. These mythic heroes are deified by building temples, monuments and images for them. Material objects can be natural or manufactured to symbolize the deity or bear its divine power and presence. Homage is made by caring for the deity’s image. Kaufmann further states that though the Bible is familiar with these pagan national gods (Baal, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcolm, Bel, Nebo, Amon, etc.), it is “remarkable that not a single biblical passage hints at the natural or mythological qualities of any of these named gods.” However, the Bible does speak much about the cults that worship these fetish-like images (*The Religion of Israel*, 8-9).



prophet states clearly that it is impossible to make a likeness of Yahweh [the Holy One, 40:25] because he is the creator of all that exists (40:21).<sup>611</sup> Furthermore, the text notes that even the nations are incomparable to Israel's "high and exalted" Holy God. The author, momentarily, is the first to use the term "nothing" as an absolute or as a noun (40:17, 23; 41:11, 12, 24; cf. Hag 2:3; Pss 39:6 [5]; 73:2) to reflect a determinative concept. He thus boldly mocks the foreign nations as all being "nothing" when compared to God.<sup>612</sup> HOI will administer righteous judgment upon these nations and idol worshipers.

In the midst of tense political threats and alliances, each nation is represented by its own deity. For Israel, Yahweh is their God who is a rival to all other pagan gods and their respective nations. However, for Isaiah, the worship of HOI does not mean that the God of Israel is simply another deity among many pagan religions. It is incorrect to claim that as the Canaanites worship Baal, the Moabites worship Chemosh, and the Edomites worship Qaus, so too the Israelites worship Yahweh. The equating of Yahweh with other deities<sup>613</sup> was how ancient Assyria viewed the God of Israel. The king of Assyria taunts the people of Jerusalem concerning their God Yahweh (Isa 36:16-20, cf. 37:10-13) and does not distinguish this Yahweh as being different or in a "class all by Himself" as "the Holy One of Israel."<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 53.

<sup>612</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 53.

<sup>613</sup> Cf. The Arameans, who wanted to attack King Ahab of Israel, viewed Israel's God as only "a god of the mountains." But Yahweh declared himself as being neither the God of the mountains nor the valleys—he was (and is) Yahweh ("I am Yahweh," כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה, 1 Kgs 20:28). Therefore, in order to convince the Arameans to recognize this truth, Yahweh delivered their army into Israel's hands.

<sup>614</sup> Paul R. Raabe, "Look to the Holy One of Israel, All You Nations: The Oracles about the Nations Still Speak Today," *Concordia Journal* 30 (2004): 336-49, esp. 336-37.

In Isa 37:16-20, Hezekiah acknowledges Yahweh alone as the true living God. Hezekiah prayed that Yahweh would deliver Israel from the threat of Assyria's king Sennacherib. By doing so, Yahweh could show the nations that *he alone was God* (37:20). In response, Yahweh reassured Hezekiah that when Assyria was reproaching Zion, it was in fact blaspheming HOI who is lofty and exalted (37:23), and who does what is right. Yahweh, therefore, answers Hezekiah's prayer by striking down the Assyrian army. Though the Assyrian king was victorious over the other nations' gods, they were destroyed because they were only man-made idols. They were not of the same caliber as Israel's true almighty [Holy] God.<sup>615</sup>

In sum, we see that the Holy One's incomparable greatness (40:16) is infinitely superior to the man-made metal and wooden pagan idols (40:18-20). In the presence of the real sovereign and powerful Yahweh, no nation, king, or deities can thwart the HOI's superior and righteous purposes.

### 3.3 Glorious<sup>616</sup>

*Kabod* (כבוד, majesty and honor),<sup>617</sup> the content of Yahweh's nature reflects his weighty honor. His honor or *kabod* is determined by his power and activity.<sup>618</sup> The term *kabod* is

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<sup>615</sup> Raabe, "Look to the Holy One," 337. As Daniel C. Snell writes concerning the great Mesopotamian gods: "They were powerful but not all powerful, long-lived but not necessarily immortal, knowledgeable but not omniscient" (*Religions of the Ancient Near East* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 17, 26).

<sup>616</sup> Isa 43:7; 48:11; 60:1, 2.

<sup>617</sup> *Kabod* also connotes wealth, fame, possession, honor, worth, majesty, power and status. Another similar term to *kabod* is פאר where HOI also glorifies (פאר) Israel and endows her with splendor (פאר, 60:9) in order to glorify himself (פאר, 60:7, 21; 44:23) (Gammie, *Holiness*, 87).

<sup>618</sup> Pedersen, *Israel: III-IV*, 615-16, 619.

synonymous (i.e., overlapping<sup>619</sup>) to *qodesh* (“in the sense of the burning Splendor of the Presence of the Lord”), where his holiness is being manifested.<sup>620</sup> In Exod 29:43, Yahweh meets with the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting that is described, “and it shall be sanctified [נִקְדָּשׁ] by my glory [כְּבוֹדִי].” This honorable presence of HOI is seen in Isa 6:3, where it elaborates further an aspect of Yahweh’s holiness: “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory (*kabod*).” Where HOI (60:14) places his feet, there is his glory (60:13). (E.g., In Ezekiel, the word *kabod* is used seventeen times [1:28; 3:23; etc.] to indicate the Lord’s presence [cf. Pss 26:8; 113:4]).<sup>621</sup>

Moreover, HOI himself and his sanctuary are Israel’s glory and are not to be exchanged for another or shared with other gods (Isa 48:11; 42:8; 6:3). HOI says, “For how can my *name* be profaned? And my glory I will not give to another” (48:11). This unique glory is due to the maker of heaven and earth, which declare his glory (Pss. 19:2; 104:31). Conversely, God’s holy people are to reflect his glory because he made them and called Israel by his name (Isa 43:7). Even though Israel is deemed unworthy, she is nevertheless upheld because of the reputation of Yahweh’s holy name and glory. In fact, all his ways or *mishpat* constitute his glory which he performs for the benefit of his people.<sup>622</sup> It is also Yahweh’s plan to use Israel to extend HOI’s glory to the whole earth (6:3), as a light (60:1) to bring brightness into the dark world. Therefore, כְּבוֹד helps one

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<sup>619</sup> See Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 121-29.

<sup>620</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 48: Such an interpretation is supported when one cites the root *q-d-sh* as a derivative from the Akkadian *quddushu* (bright, clear?) (See also Lev 10:3, Exod 29:43, and Isa 6:3 for a connection between the two).

<sup>621</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 48.

<sup>622</sup> Pedersen, *Israel: III-IV*, 615-16, 619.

to see how God’s holiness is active and not static. “It is therefore not enough to say that the word [*qodesh*] stands for a relation, nor even to say that it stands for the separation between God and man. It comes to stand for the positive activity of that Personal Other.”<sup>623</sup> Thus the prophet is acknowledging the presence of the gloriously exalted Holy One in his people’s midst when he uses the epithet—HOI.

### 3.4 Faithful<sup>624</sup>

In Isa 49:7, “Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel,” is described as being faithful because he keeps his promise and abides with his people. He promises to restore his people through his chosen servant (49:1-8). This servant of Yahweh will not only restore the preserved of Israel, but he will also become a light to the nations who brings God’s salvation to the ends of the earth. His holy redemption will result in the leaders of the nations who despised the servant to bow down in humility. They will respect the once despised servant whose status is now honored as the chosen One. As Oswalt states, “The Servant will not serve his own glory; he will always point to Another. But it will be because the Holy One does not break his word; he will keep faith with his Servant, and all the world will be awed at that kind of absolute reliability in a God.”<sup>625</sup> Thus God has been faithful throughout history in maintaining his holiness and in his choice of his Servant.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 49.

<sup>624</sup> אֱמֵן, Isa 49:7; 55:3; cf. 25:1; 65:16.

<sup>625</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 295.

<sup>626</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 390.

### 3.5 Merciful<sup>627</sup>

In Isa 54:5-10, HOI identifies himself as Israel's redeemer (54:5, 8) who is reaching out to Israel. As her husband and maker, HOI expresses his everlasting lovingkindness (בחסד עולם, Isa 54:8) to his wife. Despite HOI's momentary surge of anger against Israel's rebellion, his חסד ("mercy" or "lovingkindness") will eventually exhibit irrevocable compassion (רחם) to his people (54:10; cf. Jer 31:20).

The book of Isaiah notes that Yahweh demonstrates unconditional grace (i.e., חסד) to his people as he did earlier through the Noachian promise (54:8-9), which was an "everlasting covenant" (ברית עולם, Gen 9:16) that God "conceived, devised, and disclosed" (Gen 6:8; 9:9, 11; cf. Isa 54:9-10). The covenant had been "sanctioned wholly by God, because of its sign, the rainbow (9:12-14), is produced by conditions over which God alone has control, and the primary reference of which is Godward (to 'remind' Him, not men; vv. 15, 16),"<sup>628</sup> as an expression of his unconditioned grace. Thus "in full view of man's ineradicable tendency to do wrong," God extends "a unilateral and unconditional commitment"<sup>629</sup> to preserve humanity (not destroying them), because of his חסד character. Moreover, in the next chapter, HOI (55:5) affirms that his redemption will bring life to their souls (55:3) as he extends his "everlasting covenant" from David to the people (plural suffix in 55:3b, לכם). HOI will honor the Messiah (55:5) and extend compassionate forgiveness to the wicked and the unrighteous (55:7). Yahweh's

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<sup>627</sup> חסד, 54:8, 10; 63:7; 16:5; cf. Exod 34:6b-7.

<sup>628</sup> J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 94.

<sup>629</sup> David N. Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation," *Int* 18 (1964): 426.

“salvation is not grounded on the behavior of the people or upon historical contingencies but solely on a covenant of commitment.”<sup>630</sup> Andersen says, the “constancy of Yahweh’s *hesed*” is initiated from “the side of God” and brings consolation (40:1-2) to a people born blind, insensitive, and rebellious (48:8). “[H]is *hesed* is not bound by what men have a right to expect or what they regard as possible.”<sup>631</sup> This understanding of God’s faithfulness is at least implicit in Exod 34:6-7, where Yahweh is described as “keeping lovingkindness [רַחֲמִים] for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin” and this is preceded by the expressions “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness [רַחֲמִים] and faithfulness.”<sup>632</sup> Katharine Sakenfeld suggests that *hesed* means “so great in faithfulness that [Yahweh] is willing even to forgive breach of relationship.”<sup>633</sup> Such forgiveness is reiterated by Israel’s Redeemer and Creator—HOI (43:14, 15) who comes into his people’s midst and declares, “It is I, I who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (43:25). Thus for Isaiah, HOI’s commitment to Israel (because he is merciful and “belongs to Israel”) is made unilaterally and unconditionally (like the everlasting covenant made with Noah). This is the special grace of HOI that reveals God’s

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<sup>630</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, “Exodus and Covenant in Second Isaiah and Prophetic Tradition,” in *Magnalia Dei, the Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (ed. Frank M. Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1976), 348.

<sup>631</sup> Anderson, “Exodus and Covenant,” 355.

<sup>632</sup> Anderson, “Exodus and Covenant,” 355: He notes that Israel’s history bears witness to God’s faithfulness as expressed by his forgiveness to provide a new “historical possibility which exceeds all human expectation or merit.” Such a “new thing” (Isa 43:18-19) was anticipated by the prophet as another new salvation from HOI (357).

<sup>633</sup> Katharine D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (HSM 17; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 119.

commitment to Israel, which goes beyond any national disaster.<sup>634</sup> Therefore, Israel only needs to return to HOI to experience his lovingkindness.

Such divine **כבוד** is in stark contrast to humanity's superficial glory. Consider 40:6-8: "All people are like grass, and all their *glory* [**כבוד**] is like the flowers of the field...the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." Verses 6-8 contrast the frailty of humans and their unreliable promises with the trustworthy word of the Lord and his faithfulness (see earlier discussion). All humans' "glory" here is a translation from the Hebrew **כבוד**, which means "faithfulness, devotion, loyalty, commitment." This reiterates that humanity's faithfulness is short-lived in contrast to God's eternal promises. Notably, here the promise refers to the Lord's return (40:5, 10-11).<sup>635</sup>

In this context, the prophet announces the construction of a processional highway for Yahweh who will be returning victoriously to Jerusalem (40:3, 10). When the Lord returns, he will come with his exiled people (40:11; 35:4-10) and then his glory will be revealed (40:5; cf. 24:23; 35:2; 60:1). This return is confirmed by God himself: "for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken" (40:5). As a result of this return, the prophet proclaims about Yahweh's future redemption in 63:7: "I will tell of the kindnesses (**כבוד**) of Yahweh, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all Yahweh has done for

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<sup>634</sup> Freedman discusses how God's unconditional commitment does not negate the necessity of human obligation and obedience to God's covenant. However, God knows the "practical impossibility of maintaining the Covenant by human effort." Thus it is through the empowerment of his spirit that he will "transform people's minds and wills, so that henceforth they would will to obey." This special grace of God resolves the "two apparently incompatible covenants between the same parties: a covenant of divine commitment involving an unconditional and irrevocable promise to his people on the part of God, and a covenant of human obligation in which the continuity of the relationship depends upon the behavior of the human party" ("Divine Commitment and Human Obligation," 429-31).

<sup>635</sup> Chisholm Jr., *Prophets*, 94-95.

us—yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses (חסד).” HOI’s “compassion” also forgives the wicked who forsake his ways and return to him (55:5-7).

Another similar word that expresses God’s “lovingkindness,” (חסד) is “love” (אהב). In Isa 43:4, HOI (43:3) declares, “you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.”<sup>636</sup> God singled them out for his “particular attention.”<sup>637</sup> Hence he has given men for their ransom (43:3-4). Israel is also referred to as a descendant of Abraham, who is a “friend” [אהבני] of God (loved by him, 41:8). Other terms that reflect aspects of HOI’s lovingkindness are: Gracious (חנן, 30:18, 19), patient (חכה, 30:18), forgiving (כפר, 6:7; סלח, 55:7), compassionate (רחם, 30:18; 49:10, 13; 54:7, 8, 10; 55:7; 60:10; 63:7; 9:16), and comforting (40:1).

### 3.6 Righteous<sup>638</sup>

The uses of צדק<sup>639</sup> and צדקה in the Old Testament have a wide range of meanings, which depends much on the context (e.g., “vindication” [Ps 103:6; Jer 51:10],

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<sup>636</sup> The phrase ואני אהבתיך “and I myself love you” is an emphatic statement affirming God’s commitment.

<sup>637</sup> Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 3:144.

<sup>638</sup> צדק, 41:10; 45:13, 21, 24; “righteousness,” צדקה, 5:16; 10:22; 45:8; 46:13. For a discussion on God’s נשפט (e.g., 30:18) see Thomas L. Leclerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

<sup>639</sup> The verb צדק can be translated as “to be righteous,” “to be just,” “to be in the right,” and the *hip‘il* form הצדיק can be rendered “to justify,” “to declare righteous,” and צדיק is the adjective meaning “just,” or “righteous” (E. R. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the OT,” *IDB* 4:80). צדק can be used to refer to both humans and God.



“deliverance” [Isa 46:12], “saving deeds” [1 Sam 12:7], “salvation” [Job 33:26], “uprightness” [Jer 4:2], “victory” [Ps 48:10], and “prosperity” [Prov 8:18].<sup>640</sup> In Isaiah, when the term צדק refers to God, it describes his intention to do what is right as an expression of his holiness (5:16), and this is evident when HOI desires to bring Israel to her destiny. The words (צדק and צדקה) have appeared in earlier chapters, but are used more commonly in chs. 40-55 in connection with HOI delivering Israel from exile and exalting her before the nations. The means to fulfill this purpose may entail military aggression, thus צדק can be rendered “righteousness” or “victory,” albeit not a precise translation. The former minimizes the word’s dynamism, the latter undervalues its theological emphasis. More specifically, “neither makes clear the essentially relational nature of the basis on which Yahweh does the right thing by the people, and on which people do the right thing by each other.”<sup>641</sup> This concept reiterates the importance of “relationship and that he who is righteous has fulfilled the demands laid upon him by the relationship in which he stands.”<sup>642</sup> Adalbert Rebić explains that in the Old Testament, when צדקה refers to God, it denotes above all God’s relationship with his people (e.g., his grace, goodness, salvation, victory, and faithfulness); and for Isaiah, *zedakah* represents God’s future salvation where his goodness will spread and all evil will be vanquished.<sup>643</sup> God’s righteousness is more than a distributive justice (rewarding good

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<sup>640</sup> Achtemeier, “Righteousness,” 4:80.

<sup>641</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 231.

<sup>642</sup> Achtemeier, “Righteousness,” 4:80.

<sup>643</sup> “Righteousness in the Old Testament,” *TD* 39 (Summer 1992): 140-41: God’s righteousness is revealed in his actions “on behalf of the covenant’s community’s well-being” (139). The parallel idea of justice and righteousness often presents good order for community faithfulness (e.g., 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kg 10:9; Jer 22:3, 15; 23:5; 33:15). “Righteousness” also speaks about God’s saving actions for his people (Gen 7:1;

and punishing evil), but it is one that centers on his fulfillment of his covenantal promises with his people. His righteous judgments will bring “deliverance” and vindication.<sup>644</sup> We see this theme in many of the prophets who emphasize the future; Hosea speaks of צדקה as new salvation (Hos 2:20-25), and Isaiah anticipates a righteous savior who will wipe out all evildoers (Isa 9:6; 11:4-9; 16:5; 32:1), and Jeremiah refers to a messianic ruler (Jer 23:5),<sup>645</sup> and a rededicated Zion (31:23; 50:5). Therefore, Yahweh’s salvific actions (restoring what is just) can be expressed as “righteousness.”

The next chapter will discuss Yahweh’s relationship with Israel through his role as HOI as used in the book of Isaiah. It will be shown that though Israel rebels against the Holy One, he nevertheless desires to sanctify his people. Thus he will rebuke them of their unholy behaviors, while at the same time, redeem Israel from their helpless condition, in order to restore her to become a holy remnant.

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18:22b-33; 38:26; Exod 9:27) who “preserved community with God and others,” and for those who have been loyal to God (Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 24:18; 2 Sam 4:9-11; 8:15; 1 Kgs 3:6-9) (140).

<sup>644</sup> Achtemeier, “Righteousness,” 4:82-83.

<sup>645</sup> Jeremiah develops Isaiah’s idea of the ideal king (Jer 23:5-6), the name of the future king is Yahweh צדקנו, a deliberate adaptation of the name of Judah’s king, Zedekiah, which means “Yahweh is righteousness” (Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996], 46).

## CHAPTER 4

### YAHWEH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL AS THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

In this chapter, we will discuss Yahweh's relationship with Israel as revealed in the use of the term HOI. We will examine: (a) Yahweh's roles as personal God, Creator, Husband, King, Father, and Redeemer and Savior; (b) Failure of Israel to relate to HOI; and (c) HOI's response to Israel's failures.

#### 4.1 Roles of the Holy One of Israel

##### 4.1.1 Personal God

HOI (43:3) is the prophet's special epithet for God, which is combining the reality of God's divine holiness with his genuine relationship to Israel.<sup>646</sup> As Oswalt explains well, "He who has named Israel now gives his own names to Israel [e.g., Yahweh, HOI, Savior] as indicators of the character that will support his people through whatever may come on them in years ahead....As much as Israel is the Lord's, just so much is the Lord Israel's."<sup>647</sup> Declaring these names to Israel proves God himself is willing to be bound by this relationship. This is the reason he made the covenant with Israel alone. More specifically, he is, indeed, Israel's Holy One. Pieper analyzes Isa 43:3 as follows:

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<sup>646</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 331.

<sup>647</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 139.

It is worthy of note that these names correspond in reverse order to the three statements in the final clause of verse 1: “The Lord your God” to “You are Mine”; “The Holy One of Israel” to “I call you by your name”; “Your Redeemer” to “I redeem you.” The name of God which most clearly corresponds to the proper names of God’s people, Jacob and Israel [v.1], is “The Holy One of Israel.” Jacob is God’s Israel, that is, God’s holy people, loved and treasured by Him above all things; and the Lord is the Holy One of Israel, to be revered and loved by Israel above all things.<sup>648</sup>

In short, in terms of naming, v. 3 corresponds to v. 1 in three ways:

- |                               |   |                                  |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| v. 3 “The Lord your God”      | → | v. 1 “You are Mine”              |
| v. 3 “The Holy One of Israel” | → | v. 1 “I have called you by name” |
| v. 3 “Your Savior [מושיע]”    | → | v. 1 “I have redeemed [גאל] you” |

These three paired statements are crucial to understanding the function of HOI as discussed throughout this study. Israel is in a particular sacred (holy) relationship, a marriage covenant, with HOI, who is willing to be her God and saves her regardless of her circumstances. This righteous redeemer, HOI is the transcendent, yet personal God of *Israel* who calls her by name and is *with his* people (cf. עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים, Isa 7:14; 44:5).

For instance, in Isa 57:15, Yahweh, the Holy One is described as “the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy.” These two adjectives, “high and lofty” suggest transcendence, but when this God is called “holy,” it also emphasizes God’s personal contact with his people. For in the same verse the Holy One says he abides with the contrite and lowly of spirit.

In the ancient Near East, a personal relationship of love and devotion was not commonly found with divine beings. The gods or forces of existence were only wearing

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<sup>648</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 213.

human-like masks and are fundamentally “impersonal.”<sup>649</sup> With their multiple personalities, these divine beings were considered “grandiose, inaccessible, dominating, and to be feared...[they] frightened and paralyzed.”<sup>650</sup> These gods were viewed as unpredictable and terrible (“alternately protective, and cruel, sustaining or harmful [who] might reward good behavior or they might be exploitative, indifferent, or capricious”).<sup>651</sup> The gods were pursued out of a person’s need to seek the gods’ protection, but not with the desire to establish a personal relationship.<sup>652</sup> There were hymns that called for the presence of a god (e.g., moon god’s splendid lamp in the night) that reflect an admiration

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<sup>649</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 461-62.

<sup>650</sup> Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 37: This is seen in the Epic of Gilgamesh, where the hero has a terrifying nightmare that he attributes to a passing god. One particular attribute about the gods stands out when depicting their nature. The Sumerian word *melammu* (i.e., “incandescent,” “power”) described their supernatural luminous being that emanated a marvelous yet terrible light. This splendor representing their “ontological density” would force humans to kneel before the strong ray of brilliant energy that evoked fear and horror (38).

<sup>651</sup> Benjamin R. Foster, “Mesopotamia,” in *A Handbook of Ancient Religions* (ed. John R. Hinnells; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 186. For example, Victor A. Hurowitz argues that the gods in the Babylonian *Theodicy* are actually named “Slander” or “Liar.” He argues that the friend of the sufferer acknowledges that the gods are malevolent. The gods Narru, Zulummar, and Mami who created man also instilled in him perverse speech and lies rather than truth. An insightful point that most translators have missed is the significance of the meaning of the rare names of the Narru, Zulummar, and Mami who created man, but instilled in him perversity. Most scholars only comment that the names are simply rare surnames or replace the names with common names without further comment, but the names actually coincide with their context. For example, <sup>d</sup>Narru is a *hapax legomenon* used in *Malku šarru* I 88, and *CAD* N/1, 362b translates it “wrongdoer, criminal,” and *AHW* translates it “Verbrecher?” But the Akkadian synonym is *sa-a/ar-ru*, which means “liar.” <sup>d</sup>Sulummar is a Sumerian word written KA SAG.DU and can be explained by its Akkadian translation *tupullu*, which means lie. Thus the gods that are responsible for designing man to lie, flatter, and slander are likewise named “Lie” and “Slander” (“<sup>d</sup>Narru and <sup>d</sup>Zulummar in the Babylonian *Theodicy* (*BWL* 88: 276-77),” *JAOS* 124 [2004]: 777-78). Consider also *The Creation Epic* (*Enūma-eliš*) story that attests to a barbaric side of the gods. Beginning in creation, there exists a brood of chaotic and cowardly gods, and Marduk (the hero of the conflict) creates man out of clay and a dragon’s blood. The divine beings may be powerful, but they also are capricious, and amoral; and thus their religion is not one of love, but of fear (*COS* 1:111: 392-402).

<sup>652</sup> Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 37. For example, even though many of the gods in the myths were sometimes portrayed as being impotent or disgraced, this did not affect one’s worship of them. The multiplicity of gods affirmed their limitations as imperfect beings, but since the gods were viewed as the only ones having access to the world of absolute values and to the fate that controlled nature and destiny, they were worshipped (Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel*, 123).

but not the desire to get affectionately closer to him—“in a true form of love.”<sup>653</sup> In the book of Isaiah, however, the transcendent HOI is discontinuous with the world, is very *personal* and *approachable*. As Buccellati notes, Israel’s religious experience, brings to fruition a piety that polytheistic piety sought to experience but could not. The pagan gods were the personal links to the power of fate, but in Israel, their personal God was the single sovereign one and incorporated fate to his own volition. He portrayed himself as the *living* God who was the absolute, yet full interaction with this divine source was possible.<sup>654</sup> In fact, Yahweh *personally* cared and protected each individual Israelite.<sup>655</sup> Thus Israelite piety can be viewed as the crowning quintessence of the polytheistic experience sought.<sup>656</sup> In other words, it is only through the worship of the true sovereign Holy One, who turns himself toward Israel, that one can experience a genuine and deep relationship with the true eternal God (e.g., Isa 17:7; 29:19; 30:12, 15; 31:1; 41:14; 48:17; 54:5; 55:5-6; 57:15).

Oswalt notes that though the Bible’s view of God as transcendent is not unique nor is its claim that God is personal with human-like qualities of care and compassion, what is unique about Yahweh is that he is *both* and no other religious or philosophical thought possesses this combination.<sup>657</sup> In the book of Isaiah, HOI is a transcendent Creator who deeply cares for his creation and even reaches out to his people as a personal redeemer (see discussion below). As Snaith reminds us, “Transcendence does not mean

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<sup>653</sup> Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 37.

<sup>654</sup> Buccellati, “Ethics,” 3:1694.

<sup>655</sup> Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel*, 123.

<sup>656</sup> Buccellati, “Ethics,” 3:1694.

<sup>657</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 485.

remoteness. It means otherness.”<sup>658</sup> It becomes remote when its relational aspect becomes secondary to speculative religion and ethical emphasis. Yahweh is an active God who is not static nor isolated from the world. He is seeking, as Snaith notes, to be in the midst of his people:

The Hebrew does not say that Jehovah *is*, or that Jehovah *exists*, but that He *does*. . . .the Hebrew verb *hayah* does not mean “to be”, so much as “to come to be”. Hebrew has no real verb of “being”, but one of “becoming”. The verb is active and not static. . . .Jehovah is known by what He does in the world. The whole of the religion is therefore concerned with the relationship of God and man. It is not, however, the relationship which is Holiness, but the God who is known only in the relationship.<sup>659</sup>

Therefore, this *qodesh* God who seems to be “wholly-other” is actually a “Personal Other.”<sup>660</sup> The epithet HOI expresses the combination of transcendence and personal relation in a most effective way.

In fact, this Holy One is the sacred God who commits himself to Israel. Consider Snaith’s explanation concerning the root *q-d-sh* as originally meaning “separation,” or “separation from, withdrawal” as “it deals with the things that belong to the gods as distinct from men.”<sup>661</sup> Snaith, however, notes that the term needs to be qualified when it is used in the Old Testament. A thing or person that is called *q-d-sh* has become separated because it belongs to God. But the term *q-d-sh* emphasizes that which it is “separated *to*” rather than of “separated *from*.” “The reference is not primarily to the act of separation, but rather to the fact that the object has now come into the category of the Separate. . . .[and] the emphasis is on the destination of the object and not on its initial

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<sup>658</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 47.

<sup>659</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 48.

<sup>660</sup> Cf. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 49.

<sup>661</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 24-30.

character.”<sup>662</sup> Now if a thing or person is considered to be in a Separate state when it is called *q-d-sh*, meaning it belongs to God, then grammatically, it may be possible to view God as being set apart to his own people when he describes himself as the *q-d-sh* of Israel. Yahweh, as the Holy One, keeps close to his people (i.e., does not abandon them). As Procksch observes, through this personal reconciliation with Yahweh and esteemed understanding of the holy God (as one who reaches out to restore his people), Isaiah begins to address Yahweh as HOI. His frequent use of this epithet acknowledges Yahweh as the Holy One who “binds Himself to Israel” because the goal of their relationship is to enable Israel to become a עַם קְדוֹשׁ (cf. Isa 4:3).<sup>663</sup> Now the construct of the title HOI (קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) may cause one to ask what kind of genitive this is: a) Is “of Israel” the objective genitive where “the Holy One” becomes the source of Israel’s holiness and desires to share himself with Israel? b) Or is the genitive a subject of the construct, where “the Holy One” would be Israel’s Holy One (e.g., the king of Israel = Israel’s king)? Jacob supports the former and explains that HOI does not mean that “the holy one belongs to Israel” or that Israel possesses Yahweh (though the grammar would permit such a translation), but that Yahweh has consecrated Israel to himself and she can be holy only because of this consecration to Yahweh.<sup>664</sup> However, Steinmann designates “of

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<sup>662</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 30.

<sup>663</sup> Procksch, *TDNT* 1:93. In speaking about *qadoš*, Walther Eichrodt explains the essence of this word [when applied to man], for “the concept of holiness is shown to be that of belonging to God—not that of separation, which is secondary—but holiness itself, from being a relational concept, becomes a condition, a personal quality” whose nature will form to the holy God (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:137). But this same condition or personal quality is also exhibited by Yahweh to his own people when he desires to impart his holiness to them (How else will Israel “be holy, because [Yahweh] is holy”?). It is, therefore, his connection with Israel that will enable them to live as a holy nation. Thus for Isaiah, when the transcendent and morally perfect Holy One “comes” to Israel, he brings his holiness to his people.

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 89.



Israel” as a genitive of relation that serves in a subjective role, which means that “Israel has a relationship with the Holy One.”<sup>665</sup> Waltke and O’Connor also state, “the Holy One of Israel” is a genitive of relation; “the Holy One” is qualified by “of Israel” (they also note “the Holy One of Israel” as a possessed-possessor genitive).<sup>666</sup> Young clarifies the discussion by stating that the phrase means, “‘the Holy One who is Israel’s God,’ rather than ‘the God who is Israel’s holiness.’”<sup>667</sup> Therefore, this epithet is claiming the amazing fact that “the Holy One” belongs to Israel. But it must be remembered that both (a and b) classifications are, in some sense, correct because the second cannot occur without the first, and so both are closely linked. For example, for “the Holy One” to belong to Israel, it requires “the Holy One” to turn first to Israel (to make her holy).<sup>668</sup> Yahweh did not need to do this, but he chose to set himself apart “unto” Israel. Yahweh’s holiness is “not for himself and by himself, meaning he is exalted over and separated from the world and humanity; rather, he is ‘holy in your (=Israel’s) midst’ (Hos 11:9), that is, he is the ‘Holy One of Israel’ ... The holiness of YHWH determines both the existence and continuation of his people.”<sup>669</sup> Pieper adds that קדוש ישראל means the Holy One has “joined Himself to this people” for their salvation.<sup>670</sup> Delitzsch states that

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<sup>665</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: A Reference Grammar with Charts and Exercises* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 36.

<sup>666</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 137 c., 145.

<sup>667</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:47.

<sup>668</sup> In other words, it was Yahweh who first chose Israel to become his treasured possession (Exod 19:5).

<sup>669</sup> Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume I* (trans. Leo G. Perdue; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 240. It is Yahweh’s connection with Israel that enables them to live as a holy nation.

<sup>670</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 159.

HOI “has set Himself to be the Sanctifier of Israel” [objective genitive] because he is the holiness of Israel and who also seeks to be sanctified by Israel (Lev 19:2).<sup>671</sup> But once the Holy One commits himself to Israel, he then belongs to her: he becomes Israel’s Holy One (The Holy One whom Israel worships; [possessed genitive]). As Oswalt explains, “the Holy One of Israel” is not only the morally perfect transcendent Godhead, but is also Yahweh who seeks to be on intimate terms with his people—the *transcendent* “Holy One” is consecrated to Israel (“*belongs to*” her).<sup>672</sup> In fact, Yahweh keeps close to his people because Yahweh is the personal name of Israel’s God (Exod 3:14). The name is related to the Hebrew verb “to be” and the most common translation is: “I am who I am/I am who I will be.”<sup>673</sup> The emphasis, Terence E. Fretheim notes, is not simply “that God is or is present, but that God will be faithfully God for them in the history that is to follow” (cf. Exod 3:16-17). God who is dependable and not capricious, will be with his people at all times.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (1872) 1:81. Gerhard von Rad adds that the Holy One relates on a intimate and personal level (Hos 11:9; Isa 6:3-5). Yahweh’s holiness is often expressed by a zeal (e.g., Josh 24:19) that desires to penetrate the whole of humanity and into the whole realm of the secular (e.g., Zech 14:19-21). He cares for not only a human’s soul but he has also sanctified things, places, times to claim them as his own. And all that comes in contact with Yahweh derives its holiness from him (*Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions* [vol. 1; trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper and Row, 1962], 1:204-07).

<sup>672</sup> Cf. Oswalt, “Key Themes in the Book of Isaiah,” 76.

<sup>673</sup> Other possible translations include: “I will be who I will be”; “I will cause to be what I will cause to be.” G. H. Parke-Taylor argues that if the name of Yahweh represents the third person singular causative form of the verb “to be” (“he causes to be”), then what Yahweh causes to be is—his own people (*Yahweh: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), 60-61). But the *hip’il* form is not attested in the OT or in Northwest Semitic texts. Cf. Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 150-52.

<sup>674</sup> “God, OT View of,” *NIDB* 2:607; Allan Coppedge notes that Yahweh’s name (“I am who I am,” Exod 3:14) intimately reflects his primary nature of holiness. In Lev 11:44, 45 God describes himself: “I am Yahweh” and “I am holy.” These two phrases are used interchangeably throughout the book and can be seen as synonymous (Leviticus 19:2-4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30-31, 34, 36, 37; 20:7, 8, 24, 26, 21:8, 15, 23; 22:2-3, 8-9, 16, 30-33). His name is described as holy in Lev 20:3. This adjective characterizes his name most frequently in the Old Testament. There are five references to God’s name as “glorious” and four

It is helpful to remember that God's holiness (or separate quality), according to Eichrodt, is not to be conceived impersonally, where access to him is by ritual only like the ancient Near Eastern religions. Israel's God, the Holy One, is dynamic and active and relationship with him involves "a personal element into the theory of holiness, which raises it out of the sphere of merely naturalistic power and the cultus of a non-personal reality on to a higher spiritual plane."<sup>675</sup> He later concludes, "The uniqueness of the Old Testament definition of holiness lies not in its elevated moral standard, but in the personal quality of the God to which it refers."<sup>676</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Creator

Not only is Yahweh the creator of the world, the prophet also speaks of HOI as Israel's Creator because he brought Israel into existence as a people of the Exodus. HOI *formed* (יָצַר, 43:1, 7, 21; 45:11; 44:2, 21, 24), *created* (בָּרָא, 43:1, 7, 15), *made* (עָשָׂה, 43:7; 54:5; 57:16; 44:2), and *established* [שָׁמַר] his ancient people (44:7).<sup>677</sup> HOI (29:19) is also described as the Potter who molds Israel as his clay (29:15-16; 64:8), and planted Israel as his branch, the work of his hands (60:21). As James Kelso writes, the God who is the Creator of the universe (e.g., earth, planet and stars) deems his creative act as always purposeful and exact. "There is no element of chance" like the "repeating cycles of nature"

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references as "great," but twenty-three refer to his "holy name" (*Portraits of God: A Biblical Theology of Holiness* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 43).

<sup>675</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:271-76, esp. 272.

<sup>676</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:276.

<sup>677</sup> Cf. Paul D. Brassey, *Metaphor and the Incomparable God in Isaiah 40-55* (North Richland Hills, Tex.: BIBAL Press, 2001), 90.

as found in the ancient Near Eastern religions. With God, “matter is fashioned into various forms, performs certain functions with everything related and nothing isolated.” Furthermore, God’s creation of man exceeds the category of biology. For he made humans with a personality to be like God, so that a person made in God’s image is viewed in terms of that person’s relationship with God.<sup>678</sup> Fretheim adds, “The human being, with all its capacities for relationships, is believed to be the only appropriate image of God in the life of the world.”<sup>679</sup> This God who is in relationship with humanity is even more specific in his relationship with Israel, being their personal Holy God. For God has revealed his abiding presence to his chosen people, because he is “the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker” (45:11).

#### 4.1.3 Husband<sup>680</sup>

As elsewhere in the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah uses marriage as a metaphor for Israel’s relationship with HOI. This is the God who earlier had declared to the Israelites through Moses, “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7); “Yahweh is your God...you are his people” (Deut 26:17-18). When God makes such a claim, he is summarizing his covenant<sup>681</sup> and giving himself to his people. God’s relation with Israel is analogous to a marriage metaphor symbolizing Yahweh’s commitment to

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<sup>678</sup> James L. Kelso, *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament: The Christian’s God of the Old Testament vs. Canaanite Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 23-24.

<sup>679</sup> “God, OT View of,” 610.

<sup>680</sup> Isa 54:5: “For your Maker is your husband, Yahweh of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.”

<sup>681</sup> See R. Smend, *Die Bundesformel* (Zurich: EVZ-Verlag, 1963); K. Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1960).

Israel as his beloved bride (Isa 54:5, 6; 62:5; 49:18; 50:1; 61:10; 62:5).<sup>682</sup>

This marital relationship that Yahweh and Israel shared can be aptly expressed by the covenant (ברית) that was established at Mount Sinai, following the Exodus.<sup>683</sup>

Jeremiah understood the Sinai covenant to be the marriage ceremony, where Israel is portrayed as the bride of Yahweh (cf. Ezek 16:8):

“Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them [אנכי בעלתי בם],” declares Yahweh. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares Yahweh, “I will put my law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jer 31:31-33)

When referring to the ancient Near Eastern covenants, most scholars view them as a bilateral suzerainty form. However, W. G. Most views these as being restricted to

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<sup>682</sup> Other family metaphors are also used to describe Israel’s relationship with Yahweh (e.g., sonship), see below.

<sup>683</sup> The relationship between the Lord and Israel is often understood as a covenant relationship between a divine Suzerain and his human vassals based on the covenant formula, “I will be your God and you will be my people” לעם ויהייתי לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי (Lev 26:12; Exod 6:7; Deut 29:13; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23) (N. Lohfink, “Dt 26, 17-19 und die ‘Bundesformel,’” ZKT 91 [1969]: 533-53; D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* [AnBib 21A; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978], 184). Seock-Tae Sohn studied the marriage formula of the ancient Near East and argues that the covenant formula “I will be your God and you will be my people” follows the descriptive formula of marriage (“‘I Will Be Your God and You Will Be My People’: The Origin and Background of the Covenant Formula,” in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* [ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 355-72). In other words, a better way to understand this formula is to see it as resembling an ancient marriage formula, “I will be your husband, and you shall be my wife” (Daniel I. Block, “The Privilege of Calling: The Mosaic Paradigm for Missions [Deut. 26:16-19],” *BSac* 162 [2005]: 396). In these marital formulas, the term “my people” is used instead of the term for wife. Interestingly, divine marriage in other aNE religion is mainly a chief god with his female counterpart, the goddess (e.g., Canaan Baal with Asherah, Ugarit-Baal with Anat), but Hosea notes divine marriage with Yahweh is different. He never speaks about a goddess as Yahweh’s wife or sister of Yahweh, but a matrimony between him and his people Israel alone; Hos 2:9, “go to my first husband” where Israel alone is Yahweh’s wife (Gunnar Östborn, *Yahweh and Baal: Studies in the Book of Hosea and Related Documents* [Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1956], 79-80).

resultant obligations.<sup>684</sup> However, a “marital” covenant with Yahweh must consider Yahweh’s initiation of this special covenant. Jakob Jocz notes that “[t]he one-sided nature of the covenant relationship is decisive for a theological understanding of the Bible.”<sup>685</sup> Yahweh’s one-sided giving of himself is illustrated in his covenantal ritual with Abraham in Gen 15:17-18 where Yahweh is represented by the “flaming torch” that passed through the offerings to symbolize God alone is the one who would receive punishment if he broke his promise. Throughout Israel’s history, this transcendent Yahweh has been revealing himself as Israel’s Savior, as a “husband,” and as a self-giving God, who lays down his life for his people (e.g., Suffering Servant, etc.). In a similar manner, Isaiah understands the depth of Yahweh’s marital covenant<sup>686</sup> relationship with Israel when he addresses Yahweh with this special epithet—“the Holy One of Israel.”

For the Israelites to hear Isaiah’s proclaiming this epithet HOI is to hear the prophet reminding his people that this God, Yahweh, *belongs to them* (i.e., He is ours.). In fact, following the Exodus, Yahweh had called Moses to bring Israel before him at Mount Sinai in order for God’s people to be “consecrated” (קִדְּשׁוּ, 19:10, 22) to him (to

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<sup>684</sup> W. G. Most, “A Biblical Theology of Redemption in a Covenant Framework,” *CBQ* 29 (1967): 3.

<sup>685</sup> Jakob Jocz, *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 31.

<sup>686</sup> Hanson notes that scholars often debate when “covenant” (בְּרִית) entered Israel’s thought world. However, for the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries, the earlier traditions of the covenant played a central role in their worldview. Though there may be limited use of the term בְּרִית, one should consider “the matter substantively, by taking into consideration all traditions in which the *notion* of a covenantal relation between God and people forms an indispensable part of the conceptual background” [italics his]. Hanson adds that Isaiah understood that Israel’s nationhood was made possible only by her relationship with HOI that was established by a covenant (“Covenant and Politics,” 205-33, esp. 213-18; cf. S. Dean McBride Jr., “Polity of the Covenant People: The Book of Deuteronomy,” in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride Jr.* [ed. John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 17-33).

become a “holy nation,” Exod 19:6; “a holy people,” Deut 7:6; 14:21, etc.). Their self-dedication to Yahweh reflects Isaiah’s own thought about Yahweh, who as קדוש ישראל, is also the Holy One who *offers himself* to his people faithfully.

HOI (43:14-15) often refers to Israel as his people. He says: “To *my people*, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise” (43:20-21). R. K. Harrison rightly states: “God has associated Himself in a special way with the Hebrew People.”<sup>687</sup> It is this ברית<sup>688</sup> that establishes the bond between God and his people and grounds the people’s sense of identity as “God’s own people.”<sup>689</sup> It unites the people in a common purpose and psychic communion.<sup>690</sup> And Van Wijk-Bos explains that Israel became “His people” (49:13) after the Exodus, when she experienced Yahweh’s liberating act of rescuing his people from political, socio-economical, physical, and psychological oppression. The people who were delivered from this bondage were also brought into living a life in God’s presence: “And how I carried you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself” (Exod 19:4b). Furthermore, Yahweh states: “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7). God’s intimate bond with his people already existed before Sinai. Therefore, the Sinai covenant did not so much create a bond as much as formalize a previously existing one. Through the covenant, the people of God are “constituted as a community and are given the task to conduct their life as a

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<sup>687</sup> Harrison, *Old Testament*, 796.

<sup>688</sup> See also D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1969); idem, “Bērît □ ām ‘Emancipation of the People,’” *JBL* 97 (1978): 175-82.

<sup>689</sup> Johanna W. H. Van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 19.

<sup>690</sup> Pedersen, *Israel: III-IV*, 612.

community marked by its belonging to God.”<sup>691</sup> Israel belongs to Yahweh, but Yahweh has also reiterated his commitment to them. This is the unique emphasis that Isaiah makes whenever he uses the epithet—HOI (cf. Isa 1:2-4; 54:5, etc.). For instance, in Isa 43:1-7,<sup>692</sup> we see the pronouns “I” and “you” used repeatedly. The Holy One assures his people that “I am/will be with you” (vv. 2, 5) and refers to himself as “Yahweh, *your* God, the Holy One of Israel, *your* Savior” (v. 3). Yahweh, who though being the Creator of the universe, has given himself to be with *his people*, because Israel is precious (יָקָר), honored (כָּבֵד) and loved (אָהַב) (43:4) by HOI.

In addition, when HOI refers to Israel as “my people” this signifies his “chosen” people. He says: “To *my people*, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise” (43:20-21). The prophet frequently uses the term “chosen”<sup>693</sup> to emphasize God’s election of Israel from so many other peoples to be his “treasured possession” (סְגֻלָּה)<sup>694</sup> and “holy people” (Isa 62:12). At Mount Sinai, this “people” were called to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19: 5-6; cf. Isa 4:3). As his designated treasure, Israel belongs to God as a “realm of priests” and a “holy/dedicated nation.” As priests, they will have access to God and make God accessible to others. As a mediating priest, Israel is to minister to the nations of the world and bring them to God. This was God’s intention since the call of Abraham (Gen 12:3) and is prophesied more

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<sup>691</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise*, 16.

<sup>692</sup> As noted earlier, the underline beneath the hyphen represents an occurrence of the epithet HOI within the range of verses.

<sup>693</sup> Isa 41:8, 9; 43:10; עַמִּי בַחִירִי, 43:20; 44:1; 45:4; 49:7. Moreover HOI (41:14; 48:17) also called (קָרָא, 48:12), taken (חָזַק) and had not rejected (בָּאֵס) (41:9) Israel.

<sup>694</sup> Cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18.



specifically in the book of Isaiah (2:2-4; 56:6-7; 60:3-9, 10-14; 61:6; 66:20-21). This mediation would be accomplished when the Israelites, who are priests that are set apart (*qdš*), are made into a holy nation; and this demand to be holy is because God himself is holy (e.g., Lev. 19:2). Yahweh who is separated from sin and immorality is the standard of righteousness. Therefore his people are to be righteous.<sup>695</sup> Furthermore, when Yahweh presents himself to Israel, his people is able to know the holy God, receive “His influence,” and imitate his holiness when Yahweh specifically “hallows” Israel with his attributes (cf. Exod 31:13, “so you may know that I am Yahweh, who makes you holy”) at his “mount of hallowing [holy mountain]” (Isa 11:9).<sup>696</sup> Thus HOI manifests his presence with Israel through his holiness.

#### 4.1.4 King<sup>697</sup>

In 6:1 Isaiah recognized Yahweh’s kingship when he saw the most holy one seated on his heavenly throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple. Even the earthly king submits to the authority of the Holy One of Israel (Ps 89:19 [18]). The basis of Yahweh’s kingship (Isa 52:7) is “the creation of the world as an act of divine

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<sup>695</sup> William Sanford LaSor, “The Prophets During the Monarchy: Turning Points in Israel’s Decline,” in *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (ed. Avraham Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 61-62.

<sup>696</sup> Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 128-29.

<sup>697</sup> “Yahweh your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, ... I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King (מֶלֶךְ),” 43:14-15; 41:21; cf. 6:5; 33:17, 22; 19:4; 32:1; 33:17, 22; 44:6. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger notes that Isa 52:7-10 proclaims Yahweh as king and v. 10 reads: “Yahweh has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations.” His “holy arm” distinguishes him from a merely human king who reigns in a limited a geographical region (“In Search of the Hidden Structure: YHWH as King in Isaiah 40-55,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; 2 vols.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:143-54.

sovereignty.”<sup>698</sup> HOI is addressed as King (43:14-15; 41:20-21; cf. 6:5) who is enthroned above all, eternal (“from ancient time,” Ps. 93:2) and deathless, unlike other earthly monarchs. Israel’s king—HOI (10:20) is the “Mighty God” (Isa 10:21; 9:5 [6]) who in Ps 89:6-19 has affirmed his victories over the forces of chaos (e.g., waters, sea, dragons, Leviathan, Rahab, etc.).<sup>699</sup> This sovereign king also happens to be titled the “king of Jacob” (Isa 41:20-21), affirming Yahweh as the rightful ruler of his covenant people (see discussion below).<sup>700</sup>

As the divine royal ruler of Israel, the Holy God also calls Israel his servant (עֶבֶד, 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 54:17; 65:9, 15).<sup>701</sup> In 45:4, Yahweh, HOI (45:11) summons Israel as his servant and bestows upon her a title of honor, yet she does not acknowledge Yahweh calling Israel to come into his presence. Westermann notes the word for “servant” denotes “a balance between the idea of belonging to someone who protects and gives security and that of standing under someone, being subordinate to him.”<sup>702</sup> In Isa 41:8-9 (“my servant”), Israel is clearly marked as belonging to HOI (41:14) and thus being Yahweh’s servant entails security, trust, honor, and protection (see e.g.,

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<sup>698</sup> Mettinger, “In Search of the Hidden Structure,” 149.

<sup>699</sup> Mettinger, “In Search of the Hidden Structure,” 145: Mettinger refers to Yahweh’s kingship in Isa 52:7 as representing “the new victory of the Divine Warrior, namely the deliverance from Babylon as a repetition of what happened at the first Exodus, which in turn is a new manifestation of that victory of YHWH’s that resulted in the Creation of the world” (cf. Isa 42:13, “mighty man [גִּבּוֹרִים], like a man of war [אִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת]) (149-50).

<sup>700</sup> Cf. Brettler, *God is King*.

<sup>701</sup> HOI (41:14) addresses his servant Israel (41:8); HOI (43:14) speaks to Israel as “my servant” (43:10) who is to be his witness; HOI (45:11) summons Jacob his servant (45:4) by name; and HOI (48:17), as redeemer, will redeem his servant Jacob (48:20).

<sup>702</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 70.

Abraham's servant in Gen 24).<sup>703</sup>

In addition, עֶבֶד does not necessarily imply a menial position of a slave,<sup>704</sup> but when applied to Israel reveals “a person attached to Yahweh by a very special, personal bond, not one of merely legal possession, but of mercy and love.”<sup>705</sup> The concept of a “servant” is, Oswalt comments, not like the plantation slavery of the American south. It resembles a form of an indentured servant (e.g., Lev 25:39-41), but it also includes an element of voluntary service to others. Even high government officials were “servants” to the king. Thus for God to call someone his servant does not refer to doing difficult and demeaning work, but it recognizes that the servants perform an essential service to one whom they gladly recognize as their master or savior. The servant enjoys his relationship with his master because he provides protection and resources to his servant. The servant then becomes a key agent in accomplishing his master's work.<sup>706</sup> In essence, the task of servanthood under Yahweh is a position of high honor.<sup>707</sup> Isaiah understands that he (20:3) and Israel (43:10) are servants of the most Holy God (43:14-15).

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<sup>703</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 70.

<sup>704</sup> It can be one who addresses the king, a nobleman of honor, or a notable man who executes God's plans (e.g., Israel) (Franz Zorell, *Lexicon Hebraicum et Aramaicum Veteris Testamenti* [Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947], 1:564-65; cf. C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant*, 139).

<sup>705</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (AnBib 43; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 108.

<sup>706</sup> Regarding a survey of the identity of the “servant” in Isaiah (e.g., various biblical figures, or a collective Israel, etc.), see C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant*; Diethelm Michel, “Deuterijosaja,” *TRE* 8:510-30, esp. 521-28. N. K. Gottwald, however, shifts the attention away from the quest to identify the servant to focusing on the servant's function. He says, it is “not *Who* is the servant? But rather *What* does the servant do in relation to all that is to occur in the deliverance of Israel? Or *How* does the servant function in relation to the other imaginatively developed figures? Or even *Which* of the things that God and Israel and the nations are about to do are to be done by the servant?” (*The Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Literary Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 497).

<sup>707</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 549.

## 4.1.5 Father

Moving beyond the servanthood title, there is an even more intimate image used to describe Israel's relationship with Yahweh. The sonship by adoption metaphor is also used to describe Israel's filial relationship with HOI as the parent ("sons I have reared up," Isa 1:2).<sup>708</sup> As Yahweh's firstborn son (Exod 4:22), the Israelites are his children.<sup>709</sup> Yahweh remembers them like a mother who never forgets her nursing child (Isa 49:15; cf. 45:10), whom God has "upheld since conception, and carried since birth" (Isa 46:3).<sup>710</sup> God's people are the "seed" (זרע) of Abraham, depicted as his children, his family (Isa 41:8; cf. 51:2; 63:16; Jer 33:26). Zion (who belongs to HOI, 60:14) is called "daughter (of) Zion"<sup>711</sup> in Isa 1:8<sup>712</sup> as an expression of the familial relation with Yahweh. Zion as the "seat of the Davidic dynasty and the royal temple" is thus under the protective care of her father, who elected this community to be his "daughter (of) my people" (22:4).

In ancient Israelite patriarchal family, the children belonged to the father. He has the right to arrange marriage partners or to sell his children as domestic servants (Exod

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<sup>708</sup> Cf. Melnyk, "When Israel was a Child: Ancient Near Eastern Adoption Formulas and the Relationship between God and Israel," 245-59.

<sup>709</sup> Also 1:4; 43:1-7; 45:10-11; 47:8-9; 49:15, 20, 25; 54:1, 13; 60:9; cf. 44:2, 24; 46:3; 50:1; 51:18, 20; 63:16; 64:7; 65:23; 66:8.

<sup>710</sup> Cf. "The Holy One" (40:25) as a *shepherd* who nurtures his flock and gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart (40:11).

<sup>711</sup> It is a mistranslation to render the phrase as "daughter of Zion" since, "Zion *herself* is addressed and not someone or something that belongs to her" (J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992], 165).

<sup>712</sup> Antje Labahn argues that "daughter of Zion" refers to its people and not to the city ("Metaphor and Intertextuality: 'Daughter of Zion' as a Test Case," *SJOT* 17 (2003): 49-67. But other examples do affirm that "daughter" refers to the city itself, since both words appear together as synonyms (cf. 62:11-12). Kathleen O'Conner adds that the "[w]ife and daughter are the same literary character. Wife describes her relationship with YHWH and daughter identifies her with the city of Jerusalem ("Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem: Second Isaiah's Reception and Use of Daughter Zion," *PSB* 20 (1999): 284.

21:7) and overrule a daughter's vow (Num 30).<sup>713</sup> As daughters are defenseless and unable to protect themselves, the father becomes their paternal protector.

These family metaphors and kinship relationships are important as they express the children's duties of loyalty and obedience in response to the tender care of a father. This unconditional love is evident especially, as it relates to a father being responsible for his family. For example, in the Old Testament world, the kinsman is responsible for redeeming an enslaved relative. Thus Yahweh, acting as Israel's father, is their next of kin (kinsman-redeemer, גַּאֵל, Exod 6:6; 15:13), who redeems Israel from a tyrant who has enslaved them.<sup>714</sup> When Yahweh redeems, he is often referred to as HOI (see discussion below), who comes in holiness to restore a right order in his relationship with Israel.<sup>715</sup> Another aspect of Yahweh's fatherhood involves his discipline of Israel like a father disciplines a child with loving intentions (see discussion below).<sup>716</sup>

#### 4.1.6 Redeemer and Savior

Yahweh's close relationship to Israel is affirmed by his role as her "redeemer" (גַּאֵל).<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> Carol L. Delaney associates the ownership of children to Israelite's understanding of monogenesis: that descendants are derived biologically from their fathers. It is the male seed placed in the woman's womb that produces offspring. This father's ownership is also evident in male oriented biblical genealogies (*Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998], 18).

<sup>714</sup> W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Exeter, Devon: Paternoster Press, 1984), 100.

<sup>715</sup> God's children or people entail a "family" or "clan" living together in community. This meaning fits well with the term "redeem" which is related to family law and to Israel's special relationship with Yahweh (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 50-51; N. Lohfink, "Beobachtungen zur Geschichte des Ausdrucks עַם יְהוָה," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70 Geburtstag* [München: C. Kaiser, 1971], 275-305; J. J. Stamm, "Berît 'am bei Deuterojesaja," in idem, 510-24).

<sup>716</sup> MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism,"* 101.

<sup>717</sup> Isa 41:14; 43:1, 14, 15; 44:6, 23, 24; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7; 54:5, 8; 60:16; cf. 63:16, etc. Also the

In chapters 40 through 66, “the Holy One of Israel” is used thirteen times (41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14). Among these verses, the apposition of two phrases (לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ, “your Redeemer” and “the Holy one of Israel”) appears six times (41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5).<sup>718</sup> The concept that God was a person’s or nation’s ultimate redeemer-rescuer from adversity was deeply entrenched in Israelite thought.<sup>719</sup> Redeemer (לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ) conveys a key idea where the action is designed to restore a situation that has gone awry. Where a person has been deprived of their rights because of circumstances or others’ wrongdoings;<sup>720</sup> for example, that the classic need when in poverty and debt is to sell yourself into slavery (indentured labor) and commit to work for your creditor until the debt is paid. The next-of-kin thus provides his own assets as payment. But in other circumstances, the next-of-kin may offer to marry a single and vulnerable person (e.g., story of Ruth) or administer justice when someone is murdered (Num 35). In this instance, the purpose of redemption is to restore the “community’s equilibrium that enslavement, poverty, aloneness, and bloodshed all threaten.”<sup>721</sup>

HOI is also Israel’s Savior.<sup>722</sup> When HOI brings salvation, the verb יִשְׁעֵהוּ denotes

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redeeming HOI (29:19, 23) ransoms Israel (יִפְדֶּהוּ, 29:22).

<sup>718</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 75.

<sup>719</sup> Jeremiah Unterman, “Redemption, Old Testament,” *ABD* 5:652-54.

<sup>720</sup> John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 116.

<sup>721</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 233-34.

<sup>722</sup> As Savior (43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16), HOI he brings salvation (יִשְׁעֵהוּ, 12:2, 3; 17:10; 41:8-18; 43:1-7; 44:1-5; 45:8, 17, 20; 49:6, 8; 51:8; 52:7; 56:1; 59:17; cf. 25:9; Pss 78:22; 89:27); also “a righteous God and a Savior” (45:21): The first epithet here stresses God’s faithfulness and reliability and the second, God’s personal involvement as Israel’s savior (Balentine, “Isaiah 45: God’s ‘I am,’ Israel’s ‘You Are,’” 113).

his “intervention...to save [Israel] threatened by an oppressor, [who] obtains this help by virtue of the relationship based on protection and dependency existing between him and the stronger or more powerful person who saves [Israel] in [her] hour of need.”<sup>723</sup> The text emphasizes that HOI is their personal Holy God (thus this theologically important description of Yahweh as Savior is placed next to the epithet, 43:3; his acts of salvation reaffirm HOI as Israel’s primary “redeemer”). HOI is different from the other gods, who either do not want to or are not able to redeem, nor are they dependable. Therefore, those gods do not deserve to be called *holy*. Only Yahweh is truly holy because he is “truly Other” in all circumstances and whatever he chooses to do is right.<sup>724</sup> Moreover, as Israel’s personal redeemer, the HOI reminds his people of his near presence.

## 4.2 Failure of Israel to Relate to the Holy One of Israel

In this section we will examine Israel’s rebellion against HOI: 1) Israel rebels against HOI; 2) Israel repudiates HOI’s law and counsel; 3) Israel relies on idolatry and divination; and 4) Israel rejects her true King.

### 4.2.1 Israel Rebels Against the Holy One of Israel

Throughout the book of Isaiah, Israel rebels against HOI.<sup>725</sup> In Isa 1:2, HOI (1:4) declares,

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<sup>723</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures,” 104.

<sup>724</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 94.

<sup>725</sup> This theme appears in the beginning and the end of the book (1:2; 66:24). Rebellious Israel is also described as being: recalcitrant (5:18-19), obstinate (מרי, 30:9), untruthful (כחש, 30:9), stubborn (קשה) with a neck like iron, and a bronze forehead (48:4), unrepentant (מאן, 1:20), quarrelsome (ריב, 45:9), rebellious (פשע, 43:27; 46: 8; 48:8; 57:4), and abandons (עיב, 1:4, 28), spurns (נאץ, 1:4), alienates (זר, 1:4), questions (שאל, 45:11), forgets (שכח, 17:10) and does not remember (זכר, 17:10), nor look (שערה, 31:1) and seek (דרש, 31:1) HOI. It is HOI who also comforts the Servant of the Lord who is

“Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled<sup>726</sup> [פִּשְׁעַ] against me.” What would have caused such a privileged nation as Israel to rebel against her God in all areas of her life? The fact is, this nation that was called to be holy (Exod 19:6) became a sinning nation (Isa 1:4; 43:27). Because of its sin Israel was described as “unclean” (64:5-7). The people became heavy with iniquity (עוֹן), which means a “corruption of character and nature rather than an element in behaviour.”<sup>727</sup> This nature of sin made Israel prone to turn away from her God—Yahweh, HOI. Two sins that are singled out for special condemnation are pride and unbelief in God’s presence (e.g., in 2:6-22; 7:1-9). This happens when God’s people exhibit a self-sufficient attitude by trusting in other gods or turning to other nations for help. Vriezen states this is why Isaiah aimed his severe message of judgment at Israel’s sin. His people revolted against HOI (1:2, 4), showing contempt for Yahweh (3:8-9; 5:4, 7, 8-12, 18-24; 8:6; 28:12; 29:15-16; 30:9-13, 15) and derision of HOI (5:18-19). Words like *sārar* (1:23; 30:1) and *sārâ* (1:5; [31:6]), “rebellion” and “being rebellious” characterize the attitude of his people. Other charges include: neglecting Yahweh (17:10; 22:11), pride (2:7ff.; 3:16ff.; 9:8ff.; 10:5ff.;

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despised (בִּזְיָה) and abhorred (תִּעַב by the nation(s) (49:7).

<sup>726</sup> Snaith notes that the sin of Israel is often referred to as “transgressions” (פִּשְׁעַ) against God, but this word should be better translated as “rebellions.” For example, here in Isa 1:2, Israel is described as rebelling against HOI (cf. Amos 1:3, etc.). However, rendering it as “transgressions” is misleading because it can give the impression that the prophets are referring to a transgression against a law [as opposed to a person]. This idea is evident in much of the Latin based Bibles (from fifth century to the Reformation period) that translate the word as *scelus* (crime). Certainly such a word may rightly express a severely heinous sin, but it does not fully portray the underlying “rebellion” of such sin. The term פִּשְׁעַ, Snaith suggests, should always be translated as “rebellion” (e.g., this meaning is used in 2 Kgs 1:1 to describe Moab’s revolt against Israel). Even in the LXX, the translators when dealing with the eighth-century prophets translated all except one (Isa 1:28) by *asebeia* (noun) and *asebeo* (verb) that mean “contrary to God” (*Distinctive Ideas*, 61-65; cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920], 44).

<sup>727</sup> Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 43.



22:15ff.; 28:1ff., 14ff. [נִסְאָל, boasting]), not having faith in God, not believing (7:9; 22:11; 31:1), and not being obedient ([not listening] 28:12; 30:9, [“refused”], 15; [also 1:19]). This last charge of not being obedient is unique to Isaiah among the pre-Exilic prophets. Israel sees herself as wise in her own eyes (5:21; 28:14ff.); she a godless people (אֵין־אֱלֹהִים, 9:16; 10:6) and defiant of Yahweh (3:8f.). For Isaiah all sins are rooted in willful rejection of Yahweh and failure to believe in God.<sup>728</sup> Such sinful people will regularly spurn the Lord because one’s moral life affects one’s intimate relationship with God.<sup>729</sup> Thus these rebels are referred to as a sinful nation who has despised HOI (1:4). Snaith notes the two ways that sin is commonly understood: One is to regard it as a transgression of a moral code, or the other is to view it in terms of a rebellion against God. It is this latter view of sin that Isaiah held in terms of Israel’s alienation to Yahweh. Sin is not merely a transgression against a code, for one would not need to be religious to think this way. But for Isaiah, sin is a religious matter that entails a “relationship with God.” Sin is more than a matter of ethics, because it leads one away from God (“theofugal”)<sup>730</sup>—who wants to purge unholiness from his people (e.g., “iniquity” and “sin,” Isa 6:7). Sadly, HOI’s own people rebelled against their lofty and exalted God who is worthy of Israel’s reverence and obedience. He is the only one who can teach Israel how to live as a holy nation. In other words, the epithet—HOI—means more than ascribing deity status to

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<sup>728</sup> Theodore C. Vriezen, “Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson; London: SCM Press, 1962), 134-35.

<sup>729</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 87. In regards to an Israelite complaining that God is inexplicably hidden, Balentine notes that in the psalms, the cause of God’s hiding (e.g., Ps 44:25, etc.) is usually not specified, but among the prophets, God’s hiding is asserted as a “direct response to Israel’s sin” (e.g., Isa 8:17; 54:8, etc.). In other words, the causal link of God’s hiddenness is referenced to Israel’s iniquity, transgression, and disobedience (“Isaiah 45: God’s ‘I Am,’ Israel’s ‘You Are,’” 115).

<sup>730</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 60-61.

Yahweh as the God of Israel. It emphasizes the nature of God and the ethical demands upon his people's conduct based on his nature.<sup>731</sup> Isaiah's ministry therefore, deals with Israel's rebellion against HOI, which at its core entails sin and iniquity. He knows that his people need the same moral cleansing he himself received from the most Holy One (ch. 6).

A statement describing Israel as a "rebellious people" (30:9) is remarkably honest because in the ancient Near Eastern annals, a nation usually records her victory and triumphs and not her weaknesses. Israel, on the other hand, recognized the reality of a transcendent one, who resides beyond her national identity and whose opinions are more significant than her status.<sup>732</sup> When God speaks, he exposes the people's pious pretensions. The prophet may have heard about Israel's rebellious history based on Psalm 78 (and Ps 106).<sup>733</sup> He identifies the people that God once declared as "my people" who were to be his special holy people (cf. Deut 14: 21; 26:19; 28:9; Lev 19:2; 20:7, 26, etc.) had become a band of rebels,<sup>734</sup> whom he now describes only as "this people"<sup>735</sup> (cf. Isa 6:9).<sup>736</sup> J. Milgrom notes that following the experience of ch. 6, the prophet's attitude

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<sup>731</sup> Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 53-54.

<sup>732</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 551.

<sup>733</sup> Andrew C. Tunyogi, *The Rebellions of Israel* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1969), 100.

<sup>734</sup> E.g., Exod 32:21, 31; Num 11:11-14; 14:11-19; Deut 9:13, 27; 31:16; Jer 5:14; 6:19, 21; Brian C. Jones, "Isaiah 8.11 and Isaiah's Vision of Yahweh," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan; JSOTSup 173; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 151. Cf. George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968).

<sup>735</sup> For a fuller discussion of this term, see J. Boehmer, "Dieses Volk," *JBL* 45 (1926): 134-48.

<sup>736</sup> R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 16.

toward “this people” significantly changed.<sup>737</sup> Thereafter, the term always refers to a people opposed to Yahweh’s purposes (8:6, 11, 12; 9:15; 28:11, 14; 29:13, 14) and bound for destruction. Isaiah uses the term analogous to Moses when he designates a faithless people who fail to trust in God’s provision.<sup>738</sup> In Isa 1:3, Israel is referred to as “my people” but Isaiah mocks Israel by contrasting the unintelligent animals (ox and donkey) that know their caretaker, yet Israel does not recognize her master.<sup>739</sup> Israel has relinquished her covenantal relationship with HOI. Her worship of Yahweh is supposed to entail a person’s entire being. Deuteronomy 6:6 states, “You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.” However, Israel becomes no better than domesticated animals by failing to love God fully. In 1:3 (“but Israel does not know, my people does not understand”) Isaiah intentionally leaves out the object of the verbs, to emphasize Israel’s astounding loss of insight and understanding of her relationship with Yahweh.<sup>740</sup> Here she has blatantly failed to comprehend her natural expected obedience to God her father. The paired words ידע/בין in 1:3 also appear in 6:9b to describe the people who listen, but do not understand, and who see, but do not

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<sup>737</sup> “Did Isaiah Prophesy During the Reign of Uzziah?” *VT* 14 (1964): 172-73; Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 108-110.

<sup>738</sup> Jones, “Isaiah 8.11 and Isaiah’s Vision of Yahweh,” 151, 155-56.

<sup>739</sup> Ilse von Loewenclau suggests that in Isa 1:2, when HOI addresses the heavens and earth directly and the sons in the third person, Yahweh is procuring a new set of dialogue partners since his own sons have deserted him (“Zur Auslegung von Jesaja 1,2-3,” *EvT* 6 [1966]: 294-308, esp. 304). How much experience is needed in order for Israel to submit herself to her master and savior? W. F. Albright described Israel’s capacity to apply the logic of her experience to her religious faith as an “empirico-logical” perspective. This is unlike the pagan neighbors who applied similar logic only to mundane affairs. Isaiah knew that Israel could reflect on life much more deeply than the mere animals (*History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism* [New York: McGraw, 1964], 71, cf. 92-100).

<sup>740</sup> J. William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 42.

know. Israel's hardened heart is emphatically addressed again by HOI in 41:20 as he intends to transform a desert land into a fruitful place (41:17-19). This is the counter-image of Isaiah's statement in 6:10b: "so that it does not see...and know." The people who worship their self-made gods cannot know and understand because their eyes are closed and their hearts are unperceptive (44:18).<sup>741</sup> This lack of knowledge and understanding (49:19) limits Israel's ability to relate to their Holy God.

Fatherhood for the Hebrews, Oswalt comments, was different from the pagan religions, which viewed fatherhood as mainly related to begetting, whereas the Israelites recognized God as one who nurtures and rears his children (cf. Hos 11:1; Ezek 16:1ff.). Therefore to disrespect the god who engendered you would be taboo; to reject the God who cared for you would be inconceivable.<sup>742</sup> Yet in Isa 1:4 Israel is called: "children given to corruption! They have forsaken Yahweh, they have spurned [despised, נָאָץ] the Holy One of Israel and turned [זָוְרוּ] their backs on him."<sup>743</sup> This is the first appearance of the epithet and here Isaiah acknowledges the "truly Other" as the only God worthy of Israel's worship.<sup>744</sup> HOI, who manifests his holy presence to Israel says in Isa 1:2, "Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled (פָּשַׁע) against me."<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 174-75.

<sup>742</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 86. As Abraham's descendants, they do not perpetuate life, but destroy it (88).

<sup>743</sup> Cf. The children of Israel rebelling against their parent (Isa 1:4; 43: 1-7; 45:10-11; 47:8-9; 49:15, 20, 25; 54:1, 13; 60:9; cf. 44:2, 24; 46:3; 50:1; 51:18, 20; 65:23; 66:8).

<sup>744</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 88.

<sup>745</sup> Israel's history had been a series of rebellions—Deuteronomy 9:7 says, "from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the Yahweh." And Deut 31:27 reiterates the same behavior: "For I know your rebellion (מַרְדָּ) and your stiff-neck; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against Yahweh; how much more, then, after my

This loving father “rears” (גָּרַל, *pi'el*) them from infancy to make them great, and “brings” them up (רִוַמַּת, *po'el*) to a “dignified sense” and eminent position. But in return, Israel transgresses (פָּשַׁע) against the HOI. Delitzsch comments regarding this פָּשַׁע:

The radical meaning of the verb [פָּשַׁע] is to break away, or break loose; and the object against which the act is directed is construed with *Beth*. The idea is that of dissolving connection with a person with violence and self-will; here it relates to that inward severance from God, and renunciation of Him, which preceded all outward acts of sin, and which not only had idolatry for its full and outward manifestation, but was truly idolatry in all its forms.<sup>746</sup>

Georg Fohrer reiterates the personal structure that exists between God and man. This relationality can be seen in God’s action, humanity’s decision or behavior, and God’s reactions to their deeds. God desires harmony to exist in this “active personal correlation” with him.<sup>747</sup> This correlation is expressed in Isa 1:19-20: “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword.” This statement highlights humanity’s decision (“willingness” to accept or refuse) and God’s desire to forgive (or judge), which form a unity.<sup>748</sup> Here the decision is related to acting in a holy manner consistent with the Holy One, but HOI (48:17) declares to such a defiant Israel, she “was called a transgressor [rebel] from the womb” (Isa 48:8b). Similarly, Hosea rebukes Israel’s abandonment of “the Holy One” in Hos 11:1-2: “When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they [God’s prophets] called them, the more they went from them; they kept sacrificing to the Baals

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death?”

<sup>746</sup> Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (1872) 1:77.

<sup>747</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures of Biblical Faith,” 123.

<sup>748</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures of Biblical Faith,” 127.

and burning incense to idols” (cf. Isa 65:7), therefore neglecting the “Holy One” in their midst (Hos 11:9).<sup>749</sup> When she grew up, Hosea describes Israel’s relationship with Yahweh as husband and wife, yet she again committed adultery against her beloved one (Hos 2:2-6; cf. Isa 54:5, 6; 62:5). As a servant, Israel had a rich heritage. The words in 41:8 “my servant,” “whom I have chosen,” and “my friend” are relational words emphasizing HOI’s special relationship to Israel (41:14). However, when Israel becomes the “deaf and blind” servant of the Lord (42:18-20, 7; 43:8), she has rebelled again against HOI (43:3, 14).

In addition to such a disobedient heart attitude, this Israel, who only performs rituals, does not “know” HOI when the people’s behavior is not right or just.<sup>750</sup> Only one who acts like God is a person who can testify to a genuine relationship with the Holy God who requires ethical treatment from his people to their neighbors. Moreover, when Yahweh’s people worshiped him through cultic regulations, the true significance of the practices was to establish a “link with the divine Lord.” In other words, every external ritual performed by his holy people is to represent a personalized witness of his rule and authority.<sup>751</sup> As for the prophet, he exhibits his worship of Yahweh through his complete reliance on the one true Yahweh; his faith implies a real relationship with HOI. His

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<sup>749</sup> See also Ezek 16:14-34, where Israel plays the harlot, against the one who had given her everything she had, her high standing, her wealth, food, and children (16:14-20). Yet she turned to sacrifice to the gods—first to the Canaanites, then to the gods of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans (16:20-28). But she is a different kind of harlot because she does not receive payments for her services (16:34), but instead she willingly gives gifts to the gods whom never gave her anything.

<sup>750</sup> Oswalt notes that regarding sacrifices to Yahweh, it was not necessary to manipulate Yahweh into forgiving his people. He had already done so for his own sake (43:25). Sacrifices were meant to be symbols of response to what God has done. But many Israelites practiced the rituals without having a changed heart. The sacrifices were made regularly, but unconfessed sins remained. Therefore, God wanted genuine religion from his people more than religious performances (*NIVAC: Isaiah*, 492).

<sup>751</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:274.

understanding of God's holiness represents a sure sign of the reality of Yahweh's presence with his people as the Holy One who *belongs* to Israel.

#### 4.2.2 Israel Repudiates the Holy One of Israel's Law and Counsel<sup>752</sup>

As a rebellious people and deceitful children, Israel is unwilling to listen to the instructions (*torah*) of HOI (30:9-12; 5:24).<sup>753</sup> In the vineyard<sup>754</sup> imagery of Isa 5, Israel is loved by her lover and owner—Yahweh. However, Israel does not perceive HOI's intention of establishing justice, righteousness, and love (through divine *hesed*), in addition to rebuking human arrogance (5:15-16).<sup>755</sup> In his vineyard, the lofty and exalted HOI found the arrogant overindulged in revelry and ignored the ways of showing justice and righteousness (5:16, 19, 24; cf. and truth, 48:1), instead he found only bloodshed and distress. The *sinnners* (5:18) mock at the idleness of the Holy God, reject his law, and spurn his word in doing what is *right* (5:24).

Hence in Isa 5:19, the people's cynicism toward their Holy God is particularly exposed (see also Isa 30:11, 12). They doubt HOI's active role in the world and seek to establish what is right in their own eyes. As a result of their misguided priorities, values are reversed: debauchery is honored more than courage, intoxication is preferred to

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<sup>752</sup> Isa 5:24; 30:9-12; 45:11; 48:8, 17-18; cf. 66:4.

<sup>753</sup> In the Decalogue, the first four Commandments are related to God, but the remaining six are related to one's treatment of a person's life, possessions, reputation, and marriage. The fact is that this is how God treats persons, therefore, if one is in a relationship with God, then one must also act as Yahweh does (Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 117). Thus *torah* ethics becomes the basis for Israel's practice of social justice.

<sup>754</sup> The vineyard is a favorite symbol for Israel (cf. Hos 10:11; Ps 80; Isa 27:1-6) and it is often used to designate the loved one (cf. Song 1:6; 2:15; 8:1-2).

<sup>755</sup> Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 161.

sobriety, the wicked are justified over the rights of the innocent.<sup>756</sup> These unholy people brazenly dare HOI to do his work (if it refers to judgment, then they are daring God to punish them). Their use of the epithet HOI indirectly taunts Isaiah for his “pietistic excess.”<sup>757</sup>

Israel’s passion for pursuing property (5:8-10) and pleasure (5:12) through their arduous quest of alcohol reflects their disinterest in HOI and desensitizes them to his righteous deeds. As his people, HOI expected them to follow him and practice his holy teachings, but notice in 5:12—The people do not “regard” or “pay attention” (נבט) to God’s deeds nor “respect” or “see” (ראה) the work of his hands. This is the reason HOI, who desires to establish holiness among his people, has to come to call them to “listen to me” (שמע, 48:12); “assemble, all of you, and listen!” (48:14, 16). Nonetheless, Israel refuses to listen to the HOI (who is present with them; 48:17) because his children are obstinate (30:1). Already in Deut 6:4, the declaration—“Hear, Israel!” reveals Moses’ same concern regarding the obedience to God’s righteous law.

Yahweh’s “counsel” (יעץ/עצה) is a highly important concept in Isaiah’s preaching.<sup>758</sup> Isaiah announced Yahweh’s holy plan to his people but they refused to take his message seriously (5:12, 19). In the Old Testament, counsel is given only by an

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<sup>756</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 164.

<sup>757</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 164.

<sup>758</sup> J. Fichtner, “Jahwes Plan in der Botschaft des Jesaja,” ZAW 63 (1951): 16-33; repr. in *Gottes Weisheit: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (ed. K. D. Fricke; AzTh 2; Band 3; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1965), 27-43. Fichtner argues that Yahweh’s plan involves primarily divine judgment against Israel and the nations, although salvation for God’s people underlies his judgments. Yahweh’s plan concerns the assertion of his holiness and sovereignty over his people (cf. Isa 6:3) (30-43); cf. Walter Brueggemann, “Planned People/Planned Book?” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; 2 vols.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:19-37.



authoritative person (e.g., prophets,<sup>759</sup> priests,<sup>760</sup> princes,<sup>761</sup> or elders<sup>762</sup>) and most often offered to secure an important decision during a difficult situation.<sup>763</sup> It is the wise man in the community or royal official (“counselor,” יוֹעֵץ) who dispensed authoritative counsel. For Isaiah, he viewed Yahweh’s עֵצָה as superior to any human’s wisdom or counsel<sup>764</sup> and as determinative of the future.

In 5:18-19 Isaiah states: “Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, who say: ‘Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!’” Here the reference to Yahweh’s counsel appears together with HOI. This combined usage appears to be distinctly Isaianic. The speakers mock Isaiah’s message and use his terms (e.g., HOI) to scoff him. They call upon HOI to quicken his work and counsel. Isaiah, however, knows that this Holy One of Jacob, the God of Israel (29:23), who seems transcendent, actually knows the hidden counsel of men (29:15) and “whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, ‘Who sees us? Who knows us?’” Therefore, Isaiah interjects with a woe against his people’s foolish thinking—that one’s activity can be hidden from one’s personal Creator. Their unholy, irreverent offense against HOI

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<sup>759</sup> 1 Kgs 1:12; cf. 2 Chr 26:16.

<sup>760</sup> Exod 13:19.

<sup>761</sup> Ezek 11:2.

<sup>762</sup> 1 Kgs 12:6; Ezek 7:26.

<sup>763</sup> P. A. H. De Boer, “The Counsellor,” in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (ed. M. Noth and D. W. Thomas; VTSup 3; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 42-71, esp. 56.

<sup>764</sup> Consider Prov 16:9: “A man’s mind plans his way, but Yahweh directs his steps”; 19:21: “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but the counsel [עֵצָה] of Yahweh will stand”; and Prov 21:30-31: “No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against Yahweh.”

turns serious when they make a political treaty with Egypt. In Isa 30:1-5 Isaiah speaks of Israel's rebellion and rejection of Yahweh's holy counsel:

“Woe to the rebellious children,” says Yahweh, “who carry out a plan, but not mine; and who make a league, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my counsel, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes, everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.”

The next chapter speaks further about this act of going to Egypt for help. God's people do “not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult Yahweh...the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh and not spirit” (31:1, 3). Although this passage does not use the term **עצה**, its emphasis is similar to Isa 30:1. Isaiah is amazed that his people would not consult the Holy One who is manifesting his presence to his people, but would doubt HOI's wisdom and power, and instead seek political assistance from a human Pharaoh. He knows that disaster will befall them (“the helper will stumble and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together,” 31:3), because they have rejected the counsel of HOI (the God who belongs to Israel), who is “wise and will bring disaster” (31:2).<sup>765</sup> Why reject holy divine counsel and prefer human plans?

Truly, Isaiah understands that this Holy One cares about his people and the choices they make in life. Thus HOI wants to guide them in holy living (e.g., “Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am Yahweh your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go,’” Isa 48:17; cf. 28:23; 32:3). Therefore, if Israel had only “paid attention” to God's commandments (Isa 48:18),

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<sup>765</sup> Consider Yahweh's counsel to destroy Assyria as part of his comprehensive plan for the whole earth (Isa 14:24-27).

she could have enjoyed peace and righteousness (and would have been exempt from her exile-related tragedies) by being loyal to HOI (48:17). However, these obstinate (סרר) children reject HOI's counsel (עצה, 30:1) and do not even pause for a moment to "ask" (שאל) for HOI's advice (30:2). HOI (30:11, 12, 15) contrasts his righteous ways with the shameful and humiliating outcome that will result when his people seek refuge and safety in Egypt (30:3-5).

Later in ch. 48, the prophet reminds the people that their present circumstances are the result of not listening in the past, thus the words for hearing occur ten times in the chapter.<sup>766</sup> He admonishes them to listen to God's promises now that they are in exile. HOI (48:17) appeals to his people when he commands them to listen (48:12, 14, 16).<sup>767</sup> The Hebrew word "listen" (שמע) implies both perception and action. So if a person truly "hears" an admonition, he/she will obey it. If the person does not obey it, then he/she has not "heard" it.<sup>768</sup>

Yet, to whom is it that Israel is refusing to listen? Is this another human being's message? No. They forget whose instruction they have received; they are rejecting the word of the omniscient and omnipotent God. They should listen to God because he is the sole Creator (48:12-13) and the Lord of history (vv. 14-15). Just as the stars of the heavens obey (v. 13), so he can summon a Persian emperor to accomplish his purpose (v. 14). No idol can make such predictions in advance nor do they have an overarching

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<sup>766</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 535.

<sup>767</sup> Chapters 43, 44, and 45 contain messages of "what Yahweh says" and describe the work of HOI (Isa 43:1, 14, 16; 44:2, 6, 24; 45:1, 11, 14, 18).

<sup>768</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 536.

purpose for humanity. Therefore in Isa 48:16, the Holy God, who speaks justly and belongs to Israel, challenges his people to draw near to him and listen to him speak. He speaks to his people intelligibly and does not need to use diviners and mediums (8:19-20; 29:4) to decipher his will. He inspires persons with his “Spirit” so that his words are transmitted through his prophets. When God speaks, humanity should listen.<sup>769</sup>

Unfortunately, the people do not realize that when they “despise the word of HOI” (5:24), they are rejecting the Holy God himself who is trying to reveal himself to them. As Knight states, the words of God are a living extension of the living God. His words, when uttered, contained the potency of his will and person.<sup>770</sup>

Furthermore in Isa 44:1, notice Yahweh imploring his people to “listen” (cf. 40:28; 42:18, 23; 43:1, 14) as the means of entering into a relationship with HOI, rather than relying on mechanical rituals. Yahweh informs his people that they can “belong to Yahweh” (44:5). Despite their persistent sinning, God has found a way to forgive their sin and transform their self-centered pride. Yahweh will enable his people to do what they cannot do (e.g., live justly and righteously, 32:15) through the work of his Spirit (44:3). Through his Spirit, the people will learn “to surrender their proud self-ownership and enter into a completely committed relationship with God.”<sup>771</sup> But in their prideful ignorance (of enjoying an authentic and deeper fellowship with HOI, 43:3), God’s people would not listen and pay close attention to him, and would not follow his ways nor obey his law (42:23-24).

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<sup>769</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 536-37.

<sup>770</sup> Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 14-16.

<sup>771</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 493.

Despite the warnings from their prophets, the Israelites were continuing to imitate their fathers' rebellion, which eventually resulted in the fall of the northern kingdom. The reason for it is captured in 2 Kings 17:14-15:

[T]hey did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in Yahweh their God. They rejected his statutes and his covenant which he made with their fathers and his warnings with which he warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which Yahweh had commanded them not to do like them.

Jeremiah rebukes the people for their same stubbornness in Jer 7:25-26: "Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all my servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers."

In Jer 11:7-8, Israel's fathers were also warned to obey God's voice, "yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart." Likewise for Isaiah, he saw this same attitude prevailing among his own people. They were rejecting right visions and seeking prophetic illusions, relishing oppression and deceit (and "lies," 30:9), pursuing all their ungodly practices. They were defiantly asking the prophet to stop bringing HOI (30:11) to them because they "rejected this word" (30:12) that guides them in righteous ways.

Unfortunately, despite heaven and earth acquiescing in glad praise to God's superiority, his own children (Israel) would "quarrel" against their Maker and question the divine initiatives of the HOI (45:9-11). HOI's people were cutting off their access to the Holy God. Isaiah gives a couple of analogies of this audacious disrespect to HOI, who created the earth and humanity (45:12): One is of the clay questioning the potter, "What are you doing?" or the child lecturing his parents, "What are you begetting?...To what are

you giving birth?” (45:10).

Due to their sacrilegious rejection of HOI, Isaiah is motivated to document his own people’s rebellious behavior against the Holy One who desired to draw near to his people. In 8:1, 16, Isaiah’s desire to “bind up the testimony, to seal the teaching” among his disciples was to preserve this vision for the future, especially when God seems hidden (8:17), but even more to provide a permanent witness to the unresponsiveness of his present generation.<sup>772</sup>

Isaiah records the people’s rejection of HOI’s instruction in Isa 30:8-11:

Go now, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, so that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of Yahweh; who say to the seers, Do not see [visions]; and to the prophets, Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.

Their rejection truly reveals they lack knowledge of HOI’s חסד, of his gracious intention (54:8) of disseminating his righteous instructions.

Although Israel “swears” (שבע) by the name of Yahweh and invokes (זכר) the God of Israel, her faith life does not exhibit any relation to God’s “truth” (אמת) and “righteousness” (צדקה) (48:1). Israel acts as if she “relies” (סמך) on Yahweh (48:2) by scrupulous observance of ceremonial laws or sacrificial offerings, but true religion can easily become sacramentalized, which occurs when religious forms are substituted for a vital, personal relationship with God.<sup>773</sup> Israel, however, has become detached from HOI.

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<sup>772</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Apocalyptic Rendering of the Isaiah Tradition,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (ed. Jacob Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 25.

<sup>773</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 498: He notes that this relationship is the hallmark of biblical experience with God. From the reference to Adam and Eve’s walking with God in the garden (Gen 3:8), to Enoch’s

In the midst of performing ritual offerings, she has rejected [גִּאֲסָה] the *torah* of HOI (5:24; cf. “abandoned” עָזַב, 1:4) and despised [נִאָץ] HOI’s Word (5:24; 1:4).<sup>774</sup> Truly, on the outside her appearance looks like Israel, but inside the content is devoid of a true worshiper, filled instead with abominable sins that HOI needs to purge away.

#### 4.2.3 Israel Relies on Idolatry, Superstition, and Divination<sup>775</sup>

In times of national emergency, such as plague, drought, invasion or illnesses, the ancient people would seek help through supernatural remedies (i.e., idolatry). For example, the Babylonians practiced magic spells<sup>776</sup> and sorceries, and sought astrologers and stargazers to make predictions (47:12-13). These evil practices were, however, detestable to HOI (47:4).

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walk with God (5:22-23), to Abraham (17:1), and to the Psalms (cf. Ps 27:8), the Bible testifies to a personal relationship with God (498).

<sup>774</sup> This rejection has been documented in 2 Kgs 17:9-17: “[T]hey built for themselves high places...sacred pillars and Asherim...they burned incense...they served idols...Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah... ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments, my statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through my servants the prophets.’ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in Yahweh their God. They rejected (גִּאֲסָה) his statutes and his covenant...they forsook (עָזַב) all the commandments of Yahweh their God.” This contrasts significantly with King Hezekiah who did right in the sight of Yahweh, and “trusted” and “clung” to Yahweh, and followed him, and kept his commandments (2 Kgs 18:3, 6). For a further study on Hezekiah’s single-minded devotion to Yahweh (e.g., בָּטַח and דָּבַק), see David Bostock, *The Theme of Faith in the Hezekiah Narratives* (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 2003).

<sup>775</sup> Isa 17:8, 10; 31:7; 42:17; 45:20; 57:3-13; also sorceries, magic, astrology (47:12-13).

<sup>776</sup> Magic consisted of spells (“key set words”) to effect powers to accomplish something. “There was an awesome power that was amoral and undirected but that could be accessed through the use of the proper words.” This magic or a personal god’s intervention were used to rid malicious afflictions (e.g., there were “bad” spirits, such as ghosts, or spirits of the dead who could bother a person) (Snell, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, 29). A god attempting to overcome an opponent would also resort to using such power (e.g., god of Babylon using a spell against the goddess of chaos) (Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses* [Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005], 459-60). These successful spells were thus preserved and passed down in writing as tradition. However, Snell comments, “magic was impersonal and arbitrary for the Mesopotamian. It could be used by anyone, but it would be senseless to worship it because, unlike the great gods, it could not respond personally” (*Religions of the Ancient Near East*, 29).

The prophet's attitude toward such magic is that none could ever save Babylon (47:13, 15). He proclaimed that first, Babylon will become a widow or suffer the loss of children despite her many sorceries and spells (48:9). Second, evil will come and Babylon will not know how to conjure it away (47:11a). Third, calamity will come that she cannot ward off (47:11b) and a catastrophe will come upon her suddenly. Fourth, the magic spells and sorceries cannot succeed or cause trembling (47:12).<sup>777</sup> Lastly, despite being weary from many counsels, Babylon still pursues astrologers and stargazers to make monthly predictions and to save her (47:13). The prophet, however, knew that all of the above magic and divination used to avert disaster are: (1) like stubble that the fire consumes; (2) worthless as to provide any "warmth"; (3) *not able to save* and each will wander in his own way (47:14-15).

Unfortunately, these same detestable ungodly practices were also adapted by the Israelites. Instead of seeking help from the only true living God, Israel turns to the gods<sup>778</sup> of this world, and human powers, to find "salvation." Moreover, in Isa 57:3 the rebellious people of God are called "sons of a sorceress" (*בני עננה*, cf. 2:6) who continued practicing the idolatry of its ancestors (e.g., magic). They engage in pagan and superstitious customs, and are regarded as "offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute"

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<sup>777</sup> R. Campbell Thompson describes the work of the Babylonian priestly magician: "He was then capable of defying hostile demons or summoning friendly spirits, of driving out disease or casting spells, of making amulets to guard the credulous who came to him. Furthermore, he had a certain stock-in-trade of tricks which were a steady source of revenue. Lovesick youths and maidens always hoped for some result from his philtres or love-charms; at the demand of jealousy, he was ever ready to put hatred between husband and wife; and for such as had not the pluck or skill even to use a dagger on a dark night, his little effigies, pierced with pins, would bring death to a rival. He was at once a *physician* and *wonder-worker* for such as would pay him fee" [emphasis mine] (*Semitic Magic: Its Origins and Development* [London: Luzac & Co. 1908; repr., New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1972], lxi).

<sup>778</sup> It is ironic that Israel would follow after gods that are known to be capricious and amoral (cf. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy*, 11).



(זרע מנאף ותזנה, 57:3). These “children of rebellion, offspring of deceit” (ילדי־פשע זרע שקר) ridicule (ענג) and stick out their tongue (57:4) against the One whose name is *holy* (57:15). They not only follow pagan idols, but they also worship nature,<sup>779</sup> the creation of God. In 57:5-6, the terebinth<sup>780</sup> is their chief place of tree-worship, and the smooth stones their objects of stone-worship, pouring upon them their drink and grain offerings; and under the clefts of the rocks is their place of human sacrifice (slaughtering the children), but none of these abominable practices are acceptable to the Holy God.

In contrast to the foolishly defiant Israelites, Isaiah understood the futility of magic and divination, and he derides Israel when they “consult the mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter” when they should instead “consult their God” (Isa 8:19) and his law and testimony (Isa 8:20). Isaiah recognizes that only Yahweh is the true living Holy God. All other deities are lifeless idols made by human hands (40:18-20). The craftsmen are merely men (44:11), yet they bow down to worship the idols they create, and pray, “save me (נצל), you are my god” (44:17), but all idols are “false” (41:29) because they cannot tell the future. Therefore those who make idols are nothing and the things they treasure are worthless (44:9). In contrast, humanity did not make Yahweh; instead he is the original creator of the living world worthy of Israel’s consultation and worship. For it is as HOI that Yahweh comes to manifest his presence, and reveals his holiness to Israel.

Then why is it that Isaiah understands this truth, but the Israelites do not? Do they

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<sup>779</sup> E.g., Isa 17:10 shows the people sought other manipulative religious activity, such as planting plants (i.e., “fertility religion”) for worship (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 149).

<sup>780</sup> אֵלֶּנִּים “oak-trees” (along with אֵלִים, as the name of a Phoenician god) is possibly the sacred tree to Astarte (Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, [1884] 2:371).

not have access to the same *torah*? Were not the written laws also transmitted orally? Yes, they were. From the older Levitical laws (20:6, 23, 27), Isaiah knew that Yahweh abhors his people's following the customs of the nations by turning to mediums and spiritists (cf. ban on the sorceress, Exod 22:18). Such clear instructions had been taught in

Deuteronomy:

When you enter the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens. Or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to Yahweh. (18:9-12a)<sup>781</sup>

Despite such warnings, God's people began exhibiting such idolatrous rebellion early in their relationship with Yahweh. Joshua said to the people:

You are not able to serve Yahweh. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake Yahweh and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you. But the people said to Joshua, No! We will serve Yahweh. Then Joshua said, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve Yahweh. Yes, we are witnesses, they replied. Now then, said Joshua, throw away *the foreign gods* that are among you and yield your hearts to Yahweh, the God of Israel. (Josh 24:19-23)

In the seventh century, Manasseh practiced each of these forbidden acts which

Deuteronomy 18 prohibited (2 Chr 33:6).

It is important to remember that Yahweh truly desires to relate to his people, and wants to make his will known. As G. E. Wright explains, God wants to make himself known and he does not want to hide behind the practices of the occult, but wants to reveal

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<sup>781</sup> Such rebellion had been specifically predicted by Moses in Deut 31:27 and 29: "For I know your rebellion [מַרִּי] and your stubbornness [עֲרֹפֶךָ הַקִּשְׁוֹת]; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against Yahweh; how much more, then, after my death?...For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger with the work of your hands" [מַרִּי also occurs once in Isa 30:9].

himself by the means he chooses (i.e., he cannot be coerced into revelation through spiritism, necromancy, or astrology). God has, however, made his word known clearly and directly through his prophet whom he sends to reveal his counsel.<sup>782</sup> The prophet Isaiah is more than qualified to speak about HOI's holy expectations for his people (cf. ch. 6).

However, for the Israelites to engage in such pagan practices was equivalent to idolatry. As Oswalt writes, idolatry involves seeking security through "manipulation of personalized forces." For Israel, on the other hand, her faith commitment to Yahweh is supposed to entail a surrendering of "manipulative control" and a receiving of God's grace, which promotes "ethical purity" in one's life.<sup>783</sup> Sadly, Israel often rejects God's ways and divides her allegiance between Yahweh and the idols.<sup>784</sup> Therefore Oswalt correctly states, though Israel did not "consciously abandon God, but their attempt to keep both amounted to abandonment and...rebellion."<sup>785</sup> Barton adds that since idols are "the work of [people's] hands, that which their own fingers have made" (2:8), the worship of idols would mean "a kind of self-worship." Rather than being merely a sign of unfaithfulness to Yahweh, it reveals human's desire to control the divine realm.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>782</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 87.

<sup>783</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 89.

<sup>784</sup> Isaiah is probably referring to idolatry (cf. Deut 28:20; 29:25, 26; 31:16) when he speaks of Israel's motivation for rejecting Yahweh in 1:4b (G. R. Driver, "Linguistics and Textual Problems, Isaiah I-XXXIX," *JTS* 38 [1937]: 36-37; A. Guillaume, "Hebrew Notes," *PEQ* 79 [1947]: 40; cf. note 224).

<sup>785</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 89.

<sup>786</sup> Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*, 37-38.

#### 4.2.4 Israel Rejects Her True King

Not only does Israel reject God's law and commit idolatry, she also denies her true king. When Israel requests to form alliances with foreign nations (e.g., Egypt, 30:1-7; 31:1), she is indirectly rejecting HOI, her majestic royalty. As it is written, "Yahweh your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, . . . I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your king [מֶלֶךְכֶּם]" (43:14-15); and "that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it. 'Present your case,' says Yahweh. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of Jacob" (41:20-21; cf. 6:5; 33:17, 22; 19:4; 32:1; 44:6). For this reason, Isaiah blames Israel for trusting in foreign armies when it is Yahweh her true King who secures victory. In Isa 6:1, Isaiah recognized Yahweh's kingship when he saw the most holy one seated on his heavenly throne, lofty and exalted.

This most Holy One was the king of the land, people, and nation. When King Uzziah died about 740 B.C., after reigning for 52 years (2 Kgs 15:2; 2 Chr 26:3), the nation would have felt a great loss. At that time the people pondered who would be their next leader (while Assyria was growing in power as a foreign threat), Isaiah receives a vision affirming Israel's true and stronger king.<sup>787</sup> Unfortunately, an Israelite king can knowingly renounce the reign of Yahweh's kingship over his nation. Consider earlier in ch. 7 where Yahweh knew Ahaz did not have strong faith in his God. He could be easily swayed by the circumstances. God was, therefore, gracious to offer Ahaz such an opportunity to strengthen his faith in God. But Ahaz refused to name a sign. At first, his

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<sup>787</sup> The kingship metaphor summarizes God's various relationships to Israel. See Brettler, *God is King*; G. V. Smith, "The Concept of God/the gods as King in the Ancient Near East and the Bible," *TJ* 3 (1982): 13-38.

answer seems very pious: “I would not put Yahweh to the test.” Actually, he was more afraid of a visibly strong human coalition (Syrian-Israelite) than the invisible God. Thus he placed his trust in an alliance with Assyria for help to go against the Syrian-Israelite coalition. Second Kings 16:7 records Ahaz’s message sent to the Assyrian king: “I am *your servant* and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram, and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.”

This is the reason for Ahaz’s unwelcoming response toward Isaiah’s good news of King Yahweh’s salvation. He placed himself in a type of relationship with the king of Assyria which Ahaz should *only* have had with God. Ahaz named himself “servant and son” of Tiglath-Pileser. These terms were typically reserved to indicate the king’s relationship with God.<sup>788</sup> Furthermore, by seeking Tiglath-Pileser’s help to prevent himself from being deposed by Pekah and Rezin, Ahaz was turning to Tiglath-Pileser to protect his own royal position as fulfilling Yahweh’s promise that a Davidic descendant would reign on Israel’s throne. Ahaz also sent treasures from God’s temple to Tiglath-Pileser as a bribe. In all these ways, Ahaz valued his relationship with Tiglath-Pileser more than trusting in God, his true divine King.<sup>789</sup>

Isaiah truly desired king Ahaz to turn away from his plan of covenant with Assyria and to experience the favor of HOI as he himself had (ch. 6), and as King David

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<sup>788</sup> E.g., Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:26; superscription to Ps 18.

<sup>789</sup> Rolf Jacobson, “Unwelcome Words from the Lord: Isaiah’s Messages,” *WW* 19 (1999): 125-132, esp. 129. Martin Buber adds that Ahaz in the midst of a national crisis, did what most West Semitic kings would do (2 Kgs 16:3; 3:27), “made his son pass through the fire”—an act that may have been real or a symbolic act using a substitute; in any case, Ahaz has transformed Yahweh the *melekh* into “Moloch,” “an extreme profanation of the name of the true god-king by [his] abominable worship.” Furthermore, when Isaiah brought his first born son *Shear-Yashub*, the boy represented a “divine protest against the sacrifice of the first born” and solicited a decision to be made by the king regarding who is of the true remnant of Yahweh (*Prophetic Faith*, 134).

also had experienced. Based on Psalm 89,<sup>790</sup> Isaiah would have been familiar with the psalmist's praise of "the Holy One of Israel" by his people, especially by David his servant, who enjoyed a special relationship of intimacy with HOI, who treated David as his firstborn son (cf. 2 Sam 7:14: "I will be his father, and he will be my son."). In this psalm Yahweh swore to keep his covenant with his chosen one (this earthly king) and to establish the line of David's throne forever. Yahweh, who is mighty and strong, is the incomparable God of Hosts over all creation. This psalm claims that HOI (89:19 [18]) rules on his throne with *righteousness* and *justice*, lovingkindness (רַחֲמִים),<sup>791</sup> and truth (89:9-15 [8-14]); therefore HOI disciplines sin and disobedience. Particularly, when David's sons *forsake* his law and do not follow his statutes, or violate his decrees and neglect his commands, HOI will punish their *sin* and *iniquity* (89:31-33 [30-32]). However, in the midst of such divine discipline, Yahweh reiterates his faithfulness to David, which does not cancel his promises to him: "My hand will sustain him...My faithful love will be with him...I will maintain my love to him forever...but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant...I have sworn by my holiness, and I will not lie to David—that his line will continue forever" (89:21-36a [22-37a]). This faithful love of HOI (89:19 [18]) to King David was also extended to Isaiah, which Isaiah now wishes could be experienced by his

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<sup>790</sup> Various datings for the occasion of the lament in Ps 89:39-52 have been suggested: N. M. Sarna suggests the period of the Aramean-Israelite alliance against Ahaz (ca. 735, cf. 2 Kgs 15:37, Isa 7:6) ("Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," in *Biblical and Other Studies* [ed. A. Altmann; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1963], 1:43-45); J. M. Ward suggests the monarchic division (ca. 922 B.C.) as an appropriate setting for this lament ("The Literary Form and Liturgical Background of Psalm LXXXIX," *VT* 11 [1961]: 338-39); Jon Levenson suggests the brief disruption during Athaliah's time (ca. 842-836 B.C.) could have produced this lament ("The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," *CBQ* 41 [1979]: 205-19, esp. 217). As for the unity of this Psalm and the common terms used in throughout the psalm, see Ward, "Background of Psalm LXXXIX," 324, 339; Sarna, "Psalm 89," 1:31-32).

<sup>791</sup> Verses 1, 2, 15 [14], 25 [24], 29 [28], 34 [33], and 50 [49].

own people, especially by Israel's kings.

This idea of relying on Yahweh's kingship was clearly stated in Deuteronomy. Here Israel is taught not to fear horses, chariots, and multitude of warriors, for Yahweh alone brings victory (Deut 7:17-24; 20:1-4). Similarly to Ahaz, Isaiah speaks: Don't be afraid of these little kings.<sup>792</sup> These two invading kings have their spheres<sup>793</sup> where God has permitted them to rule, but those spheres do not include Judah and Jerusalem, where God has ordained that only a son of David shall rule. Their plans, therefore, to impose their will on Judah will fail. Based on this fact, Isaiah reminds his people to "trust" in their God and concludes: "If you will not believe, surely you will not be established" (7:9b). Unfortunately, the force of his message is in the really untranslatable wordplay: **אם לא תאמינו כי לא תאמנו**, "If you will not stand firm [i.e., in faith], you will not be stood firm [i.e., confirmed in your position]."<sup>794</sup>

Isaiah labors tirelessly to convince the king and the people, but without success. Shortly after this incident, Isaiah gives the king the famous sign of Immanuel (7:10-17; one of the most warmly disputed exegetical problems in the book of Isaiah), which however interpreted, is intended to assure him that, if Ahaz would only hold fast, the danger would soon be over. It is also a warning to the king that the policy he is about to embark upon would bring terrible disaster to the nation, a disaster even worse than the

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<sup>792</sup> John Bright, *Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-Exilic Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 96.

<sup>793</sup> Bright (*Covenant and Promise*, 96) notes:  
 Isa 7:8a: For the head [i.e., the capital] of Aram is Damascus,  
 and the head [i.e., the ruler] of Damascus is Rezin.  
 Isa 7:9a: And the head [i.e., the capital] of Ephraim is Samaria,  
 and the head [i.e., the ruler] of Samaria is ben Remaliah.

<sup>794</sup> Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 96.

day the Davidic empire was broken up after Solomon (7:17).<sup>795</sup> To reassure the people in general, Isaiah gives them a sign, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:1-4), to state that the danger would soon pass when Damascus and Samaria is plundered by Assyria, but any lack of faith would lead them to catastrophe. A subsequent promise is also given to Israel concerning Immanuel, “God is with us” (Isa 8:10) that echoes the refrain of Ps 46:8 [7], 12 [11], “Yahweh Almighty is with us.” God has given his promise that he is his people’s sufficient defense. It was Isaiah’s conviction for his people to place their faith in their true King and trust in him alone, as HOI. This same conviction later moves Isaiah to oppose rebellion against Assyria, like during Hezekiah’s early reign (714-712 B.C.) at the Philistine city of Ashdod. This rebellion had Egyptian backing; other Philistine cities were included and Judah, as well as Edom, and Moab was invited to join. Ambassadors from Philistines and the Egyptians sought to enlist Hezekiah’s aid (Isa 14:28-32; 18), but Isaiah strongly opposed these requests, and begged his country’s leader to give a negative answer. Indeed, as all this rebellion was brewing (ch. 20), Isaiah walked about Jerusalem “naked and barefoot”—which probably means he was clad only in a loincloth, the garb of a prisoner of war—symbolizing the fate that would befall the Egyptians and all who put their trust in them. Isaiah not only realized it was futile to rebel, he certainly did not want to see his country remain a vassal state of Assyria forever. Rather, he believed that Yahweh their King, though he may seem absent, is nevertheless in control of events and would, in his own good time, give the signal for the overthrow of Assyria (18:1-6); and for this *his people must wait*. Until then, his word to them was—Trust<sup>796</sup> in HOI, who is

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<sup>795</sup> Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 96.

<sup>796</sup> Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 98.



their personal divine king and do not resist him.

Just what course Judah took at this time is not clear, but presumably she did not commit herself, for when Sargon crushed the revolt (712 B.C.), Judah was not destroyed. Later, however, when Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.) took to the Assyrian throne, a rebellion broke out where Judah played a leading role. States in Palestine and Phoenicia had been formed and a treaty with Egypt had been made. Isaiah again vehemently opposed this venture. He rebuked his nation for placing its trust in the Egyptian Pharaoh, chariots, and Egyptian gods (e.g., Isa 28:15), when she ought to have trusted in Yahweh (Isa 30:1-2), her king.<sup>797</sup> The words translated here in Isa 30:2 as “refuge” [עוֹז] and “shelter” [חֹסֶה], which Israel sought from Egypt, are the same roots as those used to describe God in Ps 46:1 (אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ מְחַסֶּה וְעֹז עֲזָרָה בַּצָּרוֹת נִמְצָא מֵאֵד). The earthly king’s action exhibited his underlying belief that “Pharaoh is our refuge and strength.”<sup>798</sup> But Yahweh declares in Isa 27:5, “let them come to me for refuge [מֵעוֹז],” thus offering his personal protection. However, this rebellion led only to disaster: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek Yahweh” (Isa 31:1). For Isaiah, the real issue here relates to the source of their help. He knows that real strength is not derived from the horses that are “flesh, and not spirit” (31:3). All flesh is perishable and can decay but God’s Spirit is eternal, and

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<sup>797</sup> Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 98-99. Because they depended on tangible and visible things that are able to be measured, weighed, and counted, the Israelites missed the opportunity to witness another possible powerful miracle of God’s heavenly forces.

<sup>798</sup> Here it does not mean that Isaiah was opposed to resisting Assyria, but he was opposed to a resistance that relied on armaments and alliances without reference to Yahweh. He desired his people to trust their God completely, “In turning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength” (Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 100).

Yahweh's Spirit represents his powerful presence.<sup>799</sup> Isaiah sees Yahweh's holiness as "power" manifested in God's redemptive concern for Israel.<sup>800</sup> Yet Israel does not turn to HOI whose powerful help belongs to them. When Israel refuses *to wait* for Yahweh's help and instead seeks for assistance elsewhere, they are described in 30:9 as the false sons who are "lying" (שׁוֹרְרִים), but as Oswalt explains, the translation does not mean the sons are telling lies as much as it is identifying them as lies. In other words, they are not acting as real sons who show respect and obedience.<sup>801</sup> Isaiah therefore denounces Israel's trust in the very power that once enslaved them. Why go to Egypt for help when Yahweh is the only resource of salvation? In return, Yahweh will *wait* for them *graciously* (30:18), allowing their circumstances to force them to return to him.<sup>802</sup>

Hence in 30:15, Isaiah explains to his people that HOI invites Judah to return to him and rest in calm surrender to his will, and to practice quiet trust in HOI. The message here is similar to Isaiah's earlier message to Ahaz emphasizing Judah's security and future rest is not in military or political alliances but confident faith in Yahweh, their Holy king. In Isa 7:4, Isaiah said to Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool, "take heed and keep *still*." Now two decades later, Isaiah is dealing with a covenant alliance not with Assyria, but with Egypt. Yet the prophet speaks the same instruction, "thus said sovereign Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, 'in returning and rest you will be saved, in *keeping still* [שָׁקֵט] and in confidence will be your strength,' but you would not." This

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<sup>799</sup> Davidson, *Old Testament*, 190.

<sup>800</sup> Anderson, "The Holy One," 17.

<sup>801</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 551-52.

<sup>802</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 550.

“*keeping still*” before HOI establishes “the right ordering of community life.”<sup>803</sup> When Jerusalem is later threatened by Assyria, Yahweh announces how he looks down upon his people from heaven: “I *keep still* and look on from my dwelling place (Isa 18:4). Therefore, as HOI keeps still, Israel must also keep still. Then the messianic prophecy of the spirit coming upon the people with righteousness shall result in “*keeping still* [שקט] and confidence forever” (32:17). These four verses explicating the verb “to keep still” help us to understand the means by which Isaiah hopes to see “holiness” (i.e., “*distinction and radiation together*”) manifested from God’s people.<sup>804</sup> Keeping still before HOI is meant to express the proper relational (political) attitude of being dependent on Yahweh, as the sovereign Lord of this kingdom. Here Isaiah repeatedly warned Hezekiah and Judah not to enter into a new alliance with human strengths but to seek divine help (Isa 28:7-13; 28:14-22; 29:9-12, 13-14). Sadly Judah rejects HOI’s offer “to be their God,” as indicated by the statement: “and you would not” (repent and trust, 30:15b; cf. 28:12b, “yet they would not hear”). Furthermore, in 30:16, Judah responds with an emphatic “No!,” which closes the door to God’s offer of salvation and invites national judgment on them (they would rather “ride on swift horses”). This oracle reveals Isaiah’s typical threefold sequence: Yahweh’s offer of salvation, rejection by Israel, and rejection of Israel by Yahweh (cf. Isa 5:1-7; 8:5-8; 17:10-11; 28:7-13). Here, as elsewhere, Isaiah forewarns Judah’s national existence is in danger because of her rejection of Yahweh’s offer.<sup>805</sup> This rejection reveals Isaiah’s most significant rebuke against the king and his

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<sup>803</sup> Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 135-36.

<sup>804</sup> Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 136.

<sup>805</sup> Hasel, *The Remnant*, 312.

counselors (31:3): “The Egyptians are men, not God; their horses are flesh, not spirit!” Again Israel trusts the creatures of her Creator and rejects the true Creator. This is where Israel fails to maintain her relationship with her HOI, the one true King she belongs to and who wants to reclaim his kingship over his holy nation and his holy people. The nation of Israel rebels against HOI as her true king by worshiping idols and practicing divinations, while ignoring God’s instructions. This defiant attitude of God’s people is addressed by a prophet who is concerned about a holy nation called to become a holy people (Isa 62:12). The rejection of Yahweh by Israel is also evidenced by how the book of Isaiah begins and ends with rebellion (1:2; 66:24), which suggests “a conscious placement on the part of the final editor(s).”<sup>806</sup> Thus Israel’s “rebellion” is the key characteristic that must be judged. Therefore, it is only HOI who can purge her of her unrighteous attitudes and actions by rebuking Israel.

### **4.3 The Holy One of Israel’s Response to Israel’s Failures**

The issue of sin, iniquity, and evil affects right relationship with HOI. His holiness stands in contradistinction to the defilement of sin (Isa 6; 1:10-20; “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool,” Isa 1:18). This sin also includes the sin of pride; neglecting the lofty and exalted Holy One. Isaiah denounces the arrogance, pride, and self-exaltation of the ruling classes (Isa 2:11, 17; 23:9; 28:1, 3; 29:20). As they sought security in their wealth (Isa 2:7a), it resulted in procuring armaments (2:7b; 31:1) and real estate (5:8-10), idol worship (2:8), and carousal (5:11-12,

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<sup>806</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 38 n. 10.

22). Through corruption and oppression, the upper classes maintained their haughty status (5:23).<sup>807</sup> Therefore HOI will address their sin and will humble haughtiness (שָׁבַל, 5:15), ruin ruthless men (עֲרִיץ, 29:20), and rebuke all who are self-exalted.<sup>808</sup> This section will examine HOI's response to Israel's failures in three aspects: (1) HOI Rebukes; (2) HOI Redeems; and (3) HOI Restores.

### 4.3.1 Rebukes

#### 4.3.1.1 *The Holy One of Israel Abhors and Rebukes Sin*

HOI's abhorrence against sin<sup>809</sup> has been expressed by his *holy* anger (קִצְוֶה, 47:6; 54:8; 57:16; 60:10). Regarding the "wrath of God," Oswalt states it is a metaphor expressing God as an intimate person with "real and deep" emotions who is passionately involved in eradicating human sin.<sup>810</sup> As the *Holy One* of Israel, Yahweh must judge or rebuke humanity's sin and punish all their iniquity and wickedness. For example, when Isaiah received his prophetic mission, Isaiah was sent to convey God's divine message to his people. Isaiah's activity was a revelation from God, but the prophet's message was given

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<sup>807</sup> Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, 85.

<sup>808</sup> נִבְהָה, 5:15; Sennacherib's pride, מִרְוֹם, 37:23; men's haughtiness, רִוּם, 2:11. When Assyria reveals her "willful pride and haughty look" (10:12) against HOI (10:17, 20), Yahweh also reacts to her disobedience and punishes this useless instrument of God (14:24-27) (Fohrer, "Basic Structures of Biblical Faith," 129).

<sup>809</sup> חַטָּא, Isa 1:4, 18; 5:18; 6:7; 29:21; 30:1; 31:7; 42:24; 43:24; cf. 44:22; עֲוֹן "iniquity," 5:18; 6:7; 30:13; 31:2; 57:17; אִי "wickedness," 1:13; 10:1; 55:7; רַע "evil," 5:20; 10:4; 31:2; cf. "haughty," 37:23; 10:12 (and "arrogant").

<sup>810</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 90. Fretheim explains that "[u]nlike divine love, divine wrath is not an attribute of God; if there were no sin, there would be no wrath" ("God, OT View of," 612).

to a people of unclean lips who “shall hear and see without understanding and knowing. For unbelief and sin are even more developed and increased in correlation with the revelation. Man gets more and more into his guilt, so that the judgment becomes inevitable.”<sup>811</sup> This judgment is similar to the rebuke of HOI against Israel in Isa 29:9-10 concerning their state of drunkenness and inability to understand because of their disobedience. As a father, God will “discipline” his children. The father has the right to demand strict obedience of his children and to punish their disobedience.<sup>812</sup> This is seen when HOI (47:4; 54:5; 60:14; 57:15) rejects, forsakes, (54:6-7; 60:15), rebukes (נָעַר, 54:9), contends, (57:16), hates (60:15), and desecrates (47:6) Israel.

In 1:4, Isaiah presents God’s judgment as a lament.<sup>813</sup> “Woe” is a “cry of grief and doom, of sorrow and death.”<sup>814</sup> This interjection is a sign of distress showing Isaiah’s personal concern (and threat) toward his own people.<sup>815</sup> The tone is of sadness and grief (This applies also to the other *continual* judgments expressed elsewhere in the book).

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<sup>811</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures of Biblical Faith,” 129. Gordon C. I. Wong argues that Isa 6:9-10 is a rhetorical irony used to persuade the people to repent (rather than to prevent them from repentance). Such a sarcastic irony can be confrontational, which includes an element of rebuke (“Make Their Ears Dull: Rhetorical Irony in Isaiah 6:9-10,” *TTJ* 16 [2008]: 24-34).

<sup>812</sup> According to aNE adoption formulas, a child that is claimed as one’s own has a new legitimate relationship with the adoptive parent. However, the consequences of rebellion often include more than disinheritance. The ramifications can also include subjection to exile and slavery. Thus to turn away from God, the father, implies dishonor and rebellion (Melnyk, “When Israel was a Child,” 256). Elizabeth Bellefontaine reiterates that Israel’s rebellion was not a one occasion act, but was a “persistent infidelity” to conducting herself according to the covenant relationship (“Deuteronomy 21:18-21: Reviewing the Case of the Rebellious Son,” *JSOT* 13 [1979]: 13-31, esp. 18); cf. Darr, *Isaiah’s Vision and the Family of God*, 46-84.

<sup>813</sup> See C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (trans. H. White; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 203.

<sup>814</sup> Oswalt, *Isa 1-39*, 87.

<sup>815</sup> This Hebrew interjection, וָאֵי, and its companion, וָהֵי, occur 22 times in Isaiah, more frequently than in any other prophetic book.

Having reprimanded his people for their lack of wisdom (1:3), Isaiah begins with a harsh cry of desolation (Woe!) to rebuke Israel's sins and corruption for forsaking Yahweh and having "spurned HOI and turned their backs on him." As a dreadful warning, the people will eventually be "devoured by the sword" (1:20), for God's holiness and his righteousness cannot condone Israel's wickedness and evil. Thus HOI judges injustice and unrighteousness.<sup>816</sup> For example, in ch. 5, the imagery of the disappointing vineyard includes six "Woes"<sup>817</sup> that reveal Israel's neglect of HOI's word and law. Ungodly behaviors are condemned in 5:8-24 and are introduced with the word "woe" which connotes sorrow, regret, and anger. An unnecessary death is imminent. But the woe reflects the sins of the people in relation to the kind of lives expected of them as covenantal people. These sins include greed (vv. 8-10), self-indulgence (vv. 11-17), cynicism (vv. 18-19), moral perversion (v. 20, 21), and social injustice (vv. 22-24). The prophet moves from the fleshly sins of greed and indulgence to the underlying attitudes that precede and follow such sins of the flesh: cynicism that dares a Holy God to take action. The precise meaning of "cords of deceit" is unclear, but its general intent is not. These are people who delight in sinning, and do it aggressively, and insist that if such actions were so bad, the great God, this "Holy One of Israel" would take some actions against it. Until then, they intend to keep on indulging. The next woes (vv. 20-21) relate to denying that there is such a thing as sin. Morality becomes subjective, based on what one considers right and wrong. The last woe (vv. 22-24) addresses the pursuit of mixing

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<sup>816</sup> Isa 5:1-25.

<sup>817</sup> Regarding the woe passages as providing the details of the failures of the vineyard allegory, see M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 128.

drinks as being nobler than defending the helpless. In sum, the people have rejected the instruction (*torah*) of the Holy One.<sup>818</sup> Yet to be known as God's vineyard means Israel belongs to HOI. As the owner who planted the vineyard, God lavished upon it meticulous care (Isa 5:2); tilled the soil, removed its stones, and planted choice vines. Moreover, he built a watchtower to guard against thieves and made a winepress in expecting abundant harvest. He made a long-term investment in hopes for a good return, but the vineyard failed to yield good wine. As a recipient of God's holy grace, Israel was expected to bring forth the fruits of justice and righteousness. However, because of her disobedience to Yahweh, she is placed under HOI's judgment.<sup>819</sup> As Wong observes, this rebuke in Isa 5:1-7 echoes the rebuke of the leaders who devoured the vineyard and plundered the poor in Isa 3:13-15. The ravaged (3:15) and ravaging (5:7) vineyard is a stark contrast to the marvelous and abundant produce of the earth paralleled in 4:2. Unfortunately, the bitterly disappointing produce of the vineyard in ch. 5 reveals how the people have relinquished "the glorious future envisaged for them in Isaiah 4."<sup>820</sup>

Since the vineyard has produced bitter grapes of sin, there is nothing left but for a Holy God to send in the animals to trample the useless vines and strip off their leaves (5:5-6), and fire and earthquakes will sweep through their land (5:24-25). This is the judgmental rebuke of desolation. Therefore, "Yahweh's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down" (5:25). The underlying factor of these

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<sup>818</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 113-15.

<sup>819</sup> See Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 102-03.

<sup>820</sup> Wong, *Road to Peace*, 65: The opening chapter emphasizes a key theme of God's expectation, correlated with his dashed hopes. In vv. 2, 4, 7 it states that, "God *looked* [קוה] for a crop of good grapes; but it yielded only bad fruit"; "I *looked* for good grapes, why did it only yield bad?"; "he *looked* for justice, but saw bloodshed."



specific failings is due to human arrogance as noted in verse 15 (“so the [common] man will be humbled and the man [of importance] abased, the eyes of the proud also will be abased”). This language employed resembles that used in Isa 2:9 (cf. 2:11, 17). Hence in ch. 5, the fundamental problem causing God’s grief and disappointment is human arrogance. This “sinful folly of human pride” is a fundamental theme found in Isaiah.<sup>821</sup> This arrogance can be seen also in Assyria, whom HOI condemns.

The purging “fire” [שֵׁן] of the Holy One (10:16, 17; cf. 5:24) is not only directed to his own, he uses it also against the nations. For example, just because Assyria is used as God’s instrument does not exempt this people from living rightly before their Creator. Assyria had initially become the “rod” (10:5) outstretched in God’s hand (9:12 [11], 17 [16], 21 [20]; 10:4) to punish a perverse (פֶּגַע, 10:6) nation. God’s people had become his enemies (1:24-25; 10:3). Even though the Assyrians should be considered worse than the Israelites, it is the latter who have been granted the covenant relationship with Yahweh, not the Assyrians. Thus when the Israelites exhibit their profane ways despite having the truth revealed to them,<sup>822</sup> Yahweh must first discipline his own people according to his covenantal requirements. But when Jerusalem’s punishment is complete, God will begin to punish wicked Assyria (10:12).

Here “the Holy One” (Isa 10:17, 20) rebukes the arrogance of the Assyrian King, who claims to be equal or superior to the “mighty one”—Yahweh.<sup>823</sup> Therefore, the fire

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<sup>821</sup> Wong, *Road to Peace*, 67.

<sup>822</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 174.

<sup>823</sup> Stuart A. Irvine reads the text in Isa 10:13b as “and I [the Assyrian King] brought down inhabitants (rulers) like a mighty one” as the presumptuous boast of the Assyrian king (“Problems of Text and Translation in Isaiah 10.13bb,” in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes* [JSOTSup 173; ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan; Sheffield: JSOT Press,

and flame [להבה] of Israel's Holy One (10:17) will burn the thorns and briars, and destroy the glorious garden of this king (10:18). It must be noted though, that the Holy One limits Assyria's destruction (10:12-19) and sends a "wasting sickness among his stout warriors" (10:16), leaving so few "that a child can write them down" (10:19). This chapter closes with a promise of Assyrian defeat as their assault against Zion is blocked.

#### 4.3.1.2 *Rebukes To Refine*<sup>824</sup>

The various forms of Yahweh's judgments (i.e., "holy rebukes" from the most Holy One) toward Israel especially, are also a means of redemption that seeks to bring about holiness in God's people. For example, when HOI addresses Israel's different types of sins (אָחַז, 1:4; 31:7; 43:27; etc.), iniquity (עוֹן, 30:13-14; 57:17), and evil (רָע, 29:20), he does so as the means for this people "to be holy as [Yahweh] is holy." This Holy One knows that in order for his people to share in his holiness, God must remove all sin, which is incompatible with Yahweh's nature. He did this for Isaiah in ch. 6, therefore, he wants to do the same for his people ("Whom shall I send? And who will go for us...and tell this people...*turn and be healed*," 6:8-10, emphasis mine).

The concept of God's judgment of Israel is multi-faceted. Judgment, as Miller notes, can be a consequence of evil deeds (Isa 3:9b-11), where sinful human activity corresponds with the Yahweh's punishment. The execution of such divine retribution (i.e., its causal effect) is a decision ultimately made by Yahweh. God affirms "appropriate justice" from all human beings and requires מִשְׁפָּט. The judgment of God, however, can

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1993], 133-44).

<sup>824</sup> Isa 1:25; 48:10.

also be seen as “purifying, reclaiming, renewing.” This divine discipline expresses God’s chastisement of sin, removing the impurities from his people.<sup>825</sup> This is also the reason Isaiah uses this epithet HOI, to emphasize God’s holy intentions to purge the people’s sin. This is the true righteous redemption that the Holy One performs for those who acknowledge his holy presence (e.g., 17:7; 43:3-21; 48:17; 54:4-5; 55:5-7).

In contrast to the general view of judgment as only punishment, God’s timely judgments [relational rebuke] can be viewed as a means of redemption. For example, God’s punishment of his people through Assyria was not meant to annihilate them. John J. Schmitt admits the chastisement was harsh, but “[t]he disaster would serve to purge the people and to redirect them, even to reeducate them in a purer service to Yahweh.”<sup>826</sup>

When Israel is accused of prostituting herself (Isa 1:21-23), the Holy God issues his divine word of judgment. His coming judgment is not a total destruction, but a terrible chastisement. It will be a fearful judgment that will purify and refine Jerusalem to become the city God intended it to be: “I will turn my hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and remove all your alloy. I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city” (Isa 1:25-26). As Patrick D. Miller, Jr. describes, this judgment is a “refining fire, not the devouring fire,” it seeks to transform Israel into a righteous and faithful people. The experience of judgment is communal since the purification involves not only removing the alloy or impurities, but requiring the whole

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<sup>825</sup> Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (SBLMS 27; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 121-39.

<sup>826</sup> *Isaiah and His Interpreters* (Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1986), 87. Cf. Isa 4:2-6, where divine judgment is viewed as purgative; 3:25-26 where the *nip'al* of נִקַּח means “to be clean, free” (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 632).

silver to go through the smelting furnace. Thus “Jerusalem in its entirety must experience the *nāqam* of Yahweh to restore her to her pure state. But out of the fires of judgment which all will undergo will come a purified people.”<sup>827</sup> Therefore when HOI (54:5) rebukes and briefly forsakes his people, this momentary interruption in their relationship will teach Israel and her children righteousness. Soon after, the magnanimous HOI will bring redemption for his people (54:7-10).

But these disciplinary correctives or divine curses that befall Yahweh’s people are not without basis, they result from a broken covenant.<sup>828</sup> Such divided allegiance demonstrated by Israel had been predicted by Yahweh himself in the Song of Moses (Deut 31:19, 21). The song was documented as a future “witness for [Yahweh]” to the people’s rebellious idolatry:

This people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake (עזב) me and break my covenant which I made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them [cf. Isa 54:8, “with a little wrath, I hid my face from you for a moment”], and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them...I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods. (Deut 31:16-18)

Isaiah reminds Israel of her covenantal relationship with Yahweh. He uses the term *Israel* in 1:3 as a likely reference to the covenant; his use of the verb “know”<sup>829</sup> serves a similar

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<sup>827</sup> *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets*, 39.

<sup>828</sup> Much of the legal language and lawsuits prominent in the prophetic literature reflect the legal agreement of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh. Israel’s history reflects her special relationship with God. This relationship involved following the prescribed covenant stipulations, otherwise, curses would follow (see Deut 28) (Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* [2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005], 305).

<sup>829</sup> See W. Eichrodt, “Prophet and Covenant: Observations on the Exegesis of Isaiah,” in *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honor of Gwynne Henton Davies* (ed. J. I. Durham and J. R. Porter; London: SCM, 1970), 170-71. Although Isaiah does not use the word “covenant” here, it appears that he knows of it (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 85).

function (In Exod 6:7 the covenant established a relationship where Israel could know Yahweh). The references to calling upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses to covenantal blessings and curses echoes Deuteronomic language (cf. Deut 32:1 and 30:19).<sup>830</sup> Here God's people are living against God's order of life and his creation. Their sin, pride, and oppression are an affront to nature.<sup>831</sup>

Not surprisingly, Isaiah<sup>832</sup> knows that it is impossible to enjoy life unless one submits to the Lord of creation. On the other hand, if in their denial of God, as seen by Israel seeking ultimate joy in the temporal rather than in an eternal relation with their Creator, it results in destruction or frustration, then suffering these consequences may actually be good since these curses can drive Israel back to Yahweh, the ultimate source of joy and goodness.<sup>833</sup> This perspective, as Saggs notes, is significantly different from the Mesopotamian view of suffering. When evil was experienced by the people, most viewed that such hardships were the result of having offended the gods, who in return abandoned the worshiper and left the person vulnerable to hostile attacks of demonic or magical powers. But for Israel, Yahweh was intimately involved in any disaster that

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<sup>830</sup> A link to Israel's covenantal traditions is apparent from the similarities between Isa 1:7 and the curse formulas of Lev 26 and Deut 28, 29.

<sup>831</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 85.

<sup>832</sup> During Israel's times of sinful rebellion, there existed at least one Yahweh-fearing prophet, like Isaiah—a true remnant. Just as Yahweh “reserved the seven thousand whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (1 Kgs 19:18), so too has the Holy One preserved another faithful believer through Isaiah. As Oswalt describes, he is indeed a true prophet who speaks the truth, even when it hurts. A difference between a false prophet and a true prophet is that the former will permit his hearers to think that all is well and that they do not need to address personal sins. Only a true prophet cares enough to tell the people what they dislike hearing [concerning sin and rebellion]. This act reflects the love of the heavenly Father who desires to see his children grow in purity, selflessness, and love (Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 85, 87). Likewise, for Isaiah he spoke the truth knowing that such rebuke may bring about salvation for his people.

<sup>833</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 91.

befell them. “The personal divine intervention in the affairs of the individual was a measure of the divine concern for the individual; this is well expressed in the words: ‘As a man disciplines his son, Yahweh your God disciplines you’ (Deut 8:5 RSV)...Suffering could be not only punishment, but also a mark of God’s moulding and testing the individual and bringing the sufferer to him.”<sup>834</sup> Thus it is HOI’s “rebuke” that punishes all sin in the form of judgments, but such judgments can also lead to repentance and redemption.

For Yahweh, the Holy One’s judgment and salvation can be pronounced together because both are derived from his holiness.<sup>835</sup> As the “Holy One” he judges, but as the Holy One “of Israel” he also does not abandon *his people* nor his city.<sup>836</sup> Following his rebuke he offers a marvelous plan of salvation.<sup>837</sup>

In Isa 28:29 and 29:14, the word “wonderful” (פלא) implies that the amazing work of God “exceeds all human comprehension.”<sup>838</sup> Interestingly, God’s action can be viewed as wonderful despite its involving destruction and salvation. This combination can be seen in the prophecy of 29:15-24 where both disaster and deliverance are proclaimed. A comparison of the prophecies in 29:17-24 and 32:1-5 also speak of the marvel of God’s work.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel*, 122-23.

<sup>835</sup> See J. Muilenburg, “Holiness,” *IDB* 2:621-22.

<sup>836</sup> “This people” (Isa 6:10; 8:6, 11, 12; 9:16; 28:11, 14; 29:13, 14) is also “my people” (Isa 1:3; 3:12, 15; 5:13; 10:2).

<sup>837</sup> Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 25: Yahweh’s holiness extends itself in a friendly way to his people.

<sup>838</sup> Vriezen, “Essentials of the Theology,” 143.

<sup>839</sup> Vriezen, “Essentials of the Theology,” 143.

On the other hand, Isaiah expresses this wonderful work in another way (28:23-29); as strange and alien (28:21) because Yahweh now threatens Jerusalem, the very city that he once gave to David (28:14-22). Yet this “strange” and “alien” (נכרי and זר) work reveals the paradoxical working of Yahweh.<sup>840</sup> Isaiah includes this in his hope in God, as part of Yahweh’s wonderful plan. The wonderfulness of God is manifested in both his judgment and deliverance, and is expressed ambiguously through the name and life of Immanuel. Isaiah preaches impending doom to his people as being certain, yet also anticipates the ultimate salvation of Israel.<sup>841</sup> Furthermore, Isaiah knows that the people deserve Yahweh’s judgment because of his holiness. However, based on that same glory and holiness, God will transform Israel’s life following his refining rebukes. Moreover, a final vindication of Zion (60:14) was also a part of God’s plan. He planned to destroy Assyria on the mountains of Israel (14:24-27) and deliver Judah at Jerusalem (37:21-35; 29:6-8; 31:5).<sup>842</sup>

In summary, God’s well-deserved judgment is meant to accomplish a positive purpose. Psalm 30:5 states, “His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime.” When God finally permitted judgment on his people (consider how long he had deferred it), he did it not to destroy them, but to purge and purify his future light-bearers.<sup>843</sup> Even

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<sup>840</sup> Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, “Prophecy and Eschatology” in *Congress Volume: Copenhagen, 1953* (ed. G. W. Anderson; VTSup 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953): 199-229, esp. 208-09.

<sup>841</sup> Vriezen, “Essentials of the Theology,” 144.

<sup>842</sup> Isaiah often speaks of Yahweh’s plan (5:19; 14:24, 26, 27; 19:12, 17; 23:8-9; 28:29; 30:1) or his work (5:19; 10:12; 28:21). See also Fichtner, “Jahwes Plan in der Botschaft des Jesaja,” 16-33; G. Von Rad, “Das Werk Jahwes,” in *Studia Biblica et Semitica: Theodoro Christiano Vriezen Dedicata* (ed. W. C. van Unnik and A. S. van der Woude; Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1966), 290-98; Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, 68-97.

<sup>843</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 85.

though HOI had forsaken and hated Israel, he also promised that he would soon make her into an “everlasting pride and the joy of all generations” (60:15).<sup>844</sup> Therefore, to live in God’s holy presence is to be exposed to both his judgment and salvific purpose. There is not judgment first and then mercy, but “God’s saving purpose is operative through the judgment” in order to recreate a new Jerusalem, a new humanity and creation.<sup>845</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Redeems

##### *4.3.2.1 Ready to Forgive*

The Holy One of Israel does not stop at rebuking; his relational and personal traits go further to forgive and redeem Israel. When Israel is confronted with his holiness through his personal “rebukes,” their sins and iniquity are exposed. However, if these sins are properly recognized by Israel, then HOI wants to give his children a chance to repent (“turn,” שׁוּב and be healed, 6:10) and to receive God’s forgiveness (cf. Isaiah’s personal experience in ch. 6). Rendtorff sees the announcement of judgment in ch. 6 as corresponding to the announcement of salvation in 40:2 where sin is explicitly confirmed as being canceled. Without the prior judgment in ch. 6, there would be no purpose for announcing salvation as part of the annulment of the hardened hearts.<sup>846</sup> Fohrer comments on Yahweh’s salvific nature in bringing about reconciliation. He states that “the salvation, which is granted to man after the right decision, is not a merit and a suable

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<sup>844</sup> See the rest of ch. 60 regarding the work of HOI’s hand that will transform his people in order to display his splendor.

<sup>845</sup> Anderson, “The Holy One,” 19.

<sup>846</sup> Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6,” 179.



[sic] reward, and that the punishment, which follows the wrong decision, is not a juridical act, but it means that both things are granted and inflicted on the strength of a personal interrelation.”<sup>847</sup> Both judgment and salvation can bring one closer to knowing Yahweh as HOI (who is the sacred Savior seeking to dwell with his holy people).

As Wong observes, evoking repentance and obedience is the main concern in chapter 1. Verses 27-28 explain how a forgiving God will execute restoration to the people in Jerusalem: “Zion will be redeemed with justice and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels [פושעים] and sinners [חטאים] shall be destroyed together, along with those who forsake [עזב] Yahweh will come to an end.” A contrast is made here between those who repent and those who are rebels. The destruction mentioned in vv. 29-31 await the “rebels and sinners” and those who forsake Yahweh (described in v. 28), but those who “repent” will be delivered from this destruction. They will enjoy “a newly redeemed Zion that will be characterized by righteousness and justice.” On the other hand, those who rebel will experience the destruction like a withering tree, a waterless garden, or a forest set blaze. Thus in ch. 1 Isaiah exhorts his people to repent.<sup>848</sup> HOI is also calling them to seek righteousness. As Sweeney observes,

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<sup>847</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures of Biblical Faith,” 131.

<sup>848</sup> Wong, *The Road to Peace*, 11. D. Carr comments: “In sum, . . . the structural focus of the chapter on repentance becomes clear. Everything in 1.2-31 revolves around the call to repentance in 1.10-17, whether preparing for it with accusation (1.2-9) or motivating a response to it through prediction (1.18-31)” (“Reading Isaiah from Beginning [Isaiah 1] to End [Isaiah 65-66]: Multiple Modern Possibilities,” in *New Visions of Isaiah* [ed. R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 188-218, esp. 200).

By claiming that Jerusalem and her repenters would be redeemed, the text encourages the people to make sure that they are among the righteous and not among the wicked who will perish. The oracles of Isaiah facilitated this by providing instruction in the proper way of returning to YHWH, i.e., how to be righteous as well as examples of what will happen to the wicked. The result is an exhortation to the people to choose righteousness which now stands at the beginning of the book of Isaiah.<sup>849</sup>

This is why Isaiah strongly admonishes Israel to repent (31:4-9; “Return to him you have so greatly revolted against, O Israelites”; cf. 1:18-19; 17:7; 29:1-8), and be saved (30:15-17),<sup>850</sup> since HOI’s holiness encompasses forgiveness. For instance, when the Israelites “rejected the message” (30:12) commanding the prophet to stop confronting them with HOI, the Holy One, acknowledging their rejection, still extends an opportunity for them to return to him. HOI says, “In returning and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength” (30:15). Repentance and rest equals salvation, but Israel “would have none of it” (30:15b). What was the result of this rejection? Their numbers would be reduced and all that remained would be like a flagstaff on mountaintop, a banner on a hill. However, HOI longs to be gracious to them and show his compassion to them (30:18). He is a merciful, compassionate, and loving God (Exod 34:6). As a faithful father, he eagerly waits for the opportunity to forgive his children. For this Yahweh is a God of justice and blessed are those who “wait” (חכה)<sup>851</sup> for him (30:18b). Those who repent, he forgives.

Israel’s rebellions thus provide a rich contrast that emphasizes God’s gracious

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<sup>849</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 133.

<sup>850</sup> Schmitt, *Isaiah and His Interpreters*, 75-76.

<sup>851</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:31 states, “those who wait [קיה] for Yahweh will gain new strength.”

response of unconditional lovingkindness. Despite Israel's repeated rebellions, the Holy God continues to forgive. Tunyogi comments, "The history, the life of Israel, never rested on Israel's obedience, national strength, or political wisdom. It rested on the pure grace of God. The history of salvation is not a series of human achievements but a series of forgiving divine acts."<sup>852</sup> This compassionate HOI (54:5) reiterates this point in

Isa 54:7-9:

For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather [קִבֵּץ] you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love [חֶסֶד] I will have compassion [רַחֵם] on you, says Yahweh, your Redeemer. For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you.

In Isa 54:4-8, Yahweh makes a momentary break in his relationship with his people.

Nevertheless, the election traditions provide a continuity in terms of the ongoing dispensation of God's salvation to Israel. Therefore once the preaching of God's judgment ends, his "salvation preaching must pick up...Rejection's negations are counterbalanced and historically superseded by the affirmations of God's love and his will to reinitiate a relationship."<sup>853</sup> HOI (54:5) does not want to rebuke (נָעַר, 54:9)<sup>854</sup> his people forever, but would rather pour out his lovingkindness [חֶסֶד, 54:8),<sup>855</sup> compassion, and forgiveness to his children (e.g., Isa 27:9; 6:7; 40:2).

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<sup>852</sup> Tunyogi, *The Rebellions of Israel*, 111-112.

<sup>853</sup> Thomas M. Raitt, *Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 76.

<sup>854</sup> This verb is often used for fathers rebuking their sons (cf. Mal. 2:3).

<sup>855</sup> Fohrer comments, "as soon as a fairly close relationship exists between two people חֶסֶד arises. Although rights and duties may be included in it, it is not a relationship based on rights and duties, but one of personal union" ("Basic Structures of Biblical Faith," 103).

Isaiah experienced this forgiveness personally in Isa 6:5, when he cries, “Woe is me! For I am lost.” Here the judgment aspect of divine holiness is revealed. However, Isaiah is not consumed, but is purified with holy fire through Yahweh’s holiness. This removal of guilt and gift of new life signifies Yahweh’s salvific holiness.<sup>856</sup> W. Eichrodt states, “*Das tödliche Feuer wird zum reinigenden Element, der gnädige Gotteswille schenkt durch seine Glut neues Leben.*”<sup>857</sup> Thus the prophet becomes a proleptic representative of the future remnant once he has experienced Yahweh’s “holiness” and emerged as a cleansed individual.<sup>858</sup> As Walter Harrelson notes, Isaiah’s own purifying experience “symbolizes Yahweh’s cleansing and forgiveness of Israel.”<sup>859</sup>

#### ***4.3.2.2 Remission of Sins for the Holy One of Israel’s Name’s Sake***

Indeed, HOI (43:15) is eager to forgive Israel (43:25; 44:22) when he blots out transgressions and remembers sins no more. Notably though, the underlying reason God graciously forgives is for the sake of his Holy Name: “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (43:25).

Consider Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, where Yahweh acted for the sake of his name. For

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<sup>856</sup> Hasel, *The Remnant*, 243.

<sup>857</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Der Heilige in Israel: Jesaja 1-12* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1960), 15: “The deadly fire is to be a purifying element, the merciful God will give new life by his ardor/glow” (trans. mine).

<sup>858</sup> Hasel, *The Remnant*, 243. Geoffrey W. Grogan comments: “[T]he name of the prophet (“Yahweh is Salvation”) would lead us to expect a positive note in the inaugural vision and in his message generally, and it is there, for example, in 6:7 that the assurance of forgiveness for the penitent is constantly reiterated (1:18-19; 12:1; 30:18-19; 33:24; 38:17; 40:12; 43:25; 44:22; 59:20); and, just as the ultimate sacrificial basis of it is suggested in 6:6-7, so it is shown to be grounded in the sacrificial sufferings of God’s great Servant (52:13-53:12)” (“Isaiah” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [ed. Frank E. Gaebelain; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 6:13).

<sup>859</sup> *Interpreting the Old Testament* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), 232.

Yahweh to lose his “name” (i.e., reputation) would be equivalent to losing his hold on or possession of the nations.<sup>860</sup> Yahweh must save his people or city (Jerusalem) to restore his honor.<sup>861</sup> Therefore, whenever God delays and restrains his wrath against Israel [so as not to cut Israel off with total destruction], it is done for the sake of his holy name and his praise (48:9). HOI disciplines his children in order to preserve his own sacred reputation: “I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I will act; for how can [*my name*] be profaned? And my glory I will not give to another” (48:10-11). HOI (48:17) will refine Israel and redeem her to esteem his glory. Through his redemption (forgiving of their sins), he reveals he has the power to save his own (cf. Exod 9:16).

Yahweh, HOI, loves his people. He made known his will to Israel and called them to follow it. If Israel had “paid attention” (48:18; cf. 28:23; 32:3) to God’s words in the past, they would have avoided the exile and experienced the fulfillment of God’s promises (48:18-19). However, despite their sinful rebellion, God has not abandoned them either. If they turn to God now, he can redeem them from Babylon. Only the Creator of the earth (48:13) has this capability to deliver Israel. Oswalt explains, “In the world of the gods, the world of continuity, where all things are as they have always been, ruled by inexorable fate, there is no possibility of redemption. The gods cannot change anything. But God’s creation is not a world of continuity. Just because no one had ever

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<sup>860</sup> The uttering of one’s name over something revealed one’s ownership, thus God took possession of the nation of Israel as his own to reveal his glory and power (cf. K. Galling, “Die Ausrufung des Namens als Rechtsakt in Israel,” *Theo. Literaturzeitung* [1956], 66 cited in Tunyogi, *The Rebellions of Israel*, 156 n. 5).

<sup>861</sup> Lyn M. Bechtel, “The Perception of Shame within the Divine-Human Relationship in Biblical Israel,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones* (ed. Lewis M. Hopfe; Winona Lake Eisenbrauns, 1994), 79-92, esp. 88.

gone home from exile before does not mean it cannot happen. The Creator can break in and make ‘water flow’ from rocks if he chooses.”<sup>862</sup> And since HOI (43:3) created Israel for his glory (43:7; 44:23), therefore he will not abandon her but seeks to restore her even from the distant land, for his name’s sake.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Yahweh’s Redemption*

The word “Redeemer” appears in 41:14 for the first time in Isaiah (it will appear thirteen more times until the end of the book; ten of them before 54:9).<sup>863</sup> Here it is especially associated with HOI. In chapters 1-39, according to Oswalt, this epithet frequently expressed God’s transcendent sovereign power and glory (as ruler of the nations), and in this latter part of the book, it is associated with his power to redeem, to bring his own back to him.<sup>864</sup> This makes sense when we consider Muilenburg’s comment that Yahweh as Holy One is not focused on his absoluteness (40:25; 41:14-16; 43:3; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 55:5), but more so on his “redemptive activity (41:14; 43:3, 14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5)”; but this redemptive quality is nothing new, since Yahweh’s redemptive holiness is evident in Israel’s earlier traditions of redemption from slavery.<sup>865</sup>

Hence, when Isaiah refers to HOI as redeemer, it is always in relation to Israel, who was chosen to be God’s people, as no other nation was. Even though Yahweh’s

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<sup>862</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 537; cf. idem, *The Bible Among the Myths*.

<sup>863</sup> This term is absent from Isa 1-39 (except once, where it is referring to the people as the “redeemed,” 35:9). As noted earlier, in chs. 40-66, HOI appears in 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14. Among these verses, the apposition of two phrases “your Redeemer” and “HOI” appears six times (41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5).

<sup>864</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 460, 548: The term **גֹּאֲלֵךְ** is used when Boaz marries Ruth to carry on the family line of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech. Thus, a redeemer protects from possible harassment and slavery, preserves posterity, and provides a form of belonging (460 n. 3).

<sup>865</sup> Cf. J. Muilenburg, “Holiness,” *IDB* 2:621.

salvation ultimately embraces all nations, Isaiah does not present Yahweh as loving them, choosing them or redeeming them. These terms are used specifically to refer to Israel.<sup>866</sup> This God shows compassion for his afflicted people. Thus when the people of God are afraid that their enemies will overpower them (41:11-16), Isaiah uses the specific reference that Yahweh, their redeemer is also HOI who “belongs” to them and is setting them apart for himself. Thus he promises his protection that will cause their enemies to disappear. Isaiah reminds his people concerning this truth about their HOI: “For I am the Lord [cf. Exodus 6] your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you. Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel’” (43:13-14).

In 43:3, 14, 15, Yahweh declares that he is the HOI (who manifests his presence to his people) who will be Israel’s Savior—redeeming her, honoring her, and loving her (43:1-4) because he formed Israel, called her by name (43:1, 7), and sees her as precious in his sight. Therefore, there is no savior besides Yahweh (43:11) who saves (43:12).

According to the biblical context, the term “redeemer” (גֹּאֵל) is from the sphere of family law. “The גֹּאֵל is the next of kin who has the duty of redeeming or buying back.”<sup>867</sup> Its meaning is “to lay claim to a person, or thing belonging to a relative, to claim back from another’s authority. It is a personal concept.”<sup>868</sup> It describes a near relative rescuing a poor member from enslavement or redeeming the loss of family inheritance (Lev 25:25; Ruth 4:1-8). “Male relatives of a deceased person were obliged to

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<sup>866</sup> Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 170.

<sup>867</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 76.

<sup>868</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures,” 104; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 158.

free his widow from her childless state, if she was left childless<sup>869</sup>; or in a violent murder, it is also used as a means of vengeance to redeem the guilt of the manslayer. “Thus the term has both positive (for the oppressed) and negative (against the oppressor) connotations.”<sup>870</sup> When the prophet uses the term together with the epithet HOI, it is clear that it highlights the magnitude and distinctiveness of Yahweh’s ability and willingness to redeem Israel as evidence of his holiness. It is through the “Holy One of Israel” that Yahweh accomplishes his deliverance.<sup>871</sup> HOI, who is the sacred and powerful One, is with his people, and will do what is right.

The divine deliverance that Israel experienced is mentioned throughout her history. Her intimate communion with HOI can be elucidated by briefly examining the three psalms that specifically reference HOI’s deliverance of Israel. In these messages, Isaiah may have been informed of Yahweh, HOI’s redemptive nature, which he later understood more deeply and personally during his visionary encounter of ch. 6.

A key component in Isaiah’s understanding of HOI can be traced to the common cultic tradition of the Psalter. In examining Pss 71, 78, and 89, one finds HOI is being depicted as the powerful redeemer of Israel, who is with his people.<sup>872</sup> Beginning with Ps 89,<sup>873</sup> the psalter affirms Yahweh’s incomparable might because he created and rules

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<sup>869</sup> Fohrer, “Basic Structures,” 104.

<sup>870</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 93.

<sup>871</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 93.

<sup>872</sup> In these psalms where the epithet only appears once, it is difficult to say that the whole psalm is an explication of HOI. But when it is used, the emphasis is on the personal immanence of Yahweh with his people; the Holy One of Israel is their personal God.

<sup>873</sup> This psalm is not necessarily exilic or post-exilic (e.g., downfall of Judah in 587 B.C.) since it does not clearly mention that event, nor for instance, “the capture of the king and the deportation of the people,” it is presumably related to an earlier defeat (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 591).



over the heavens, the earth and the seas (89:9-13 [8-12]). He is also all powerful:

You have a mighty [גבורה] arm, strong [עז] is your hand, your right hand exalted [89:14 (13)]...for you are their glory and strength [עז]...our shield belongs to Yahweh, and our king to the Holy One of Israel. Once you spoke in vision to your faithful ones, and said, I have conferred power upon a warrior; I have exalted one chosen from the people [89:18-20 (17-19)]...with whom my hand will be established; also my arm shall strengthen [אמץ] him [89:22 (21)]...he shall cry to me, “you are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation [ישועה]” [89:27 (26)].

This psalm testifies to God’s power and divine personal salvation. The psalmist

acknowledges it is by his favor [רצון] that the horn of his people is exalted (89:18 [17]).

Likewise, Isaiah acknowledges HOI’s salvation in Isa 49:7-8: “Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One...who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you,” [who says,] “In a time of favor [רצון] I have answered you, in a day of salvation [ישועה] I have helped you; I will preserve you and give you as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth.” Yahweh promises salvation to his own people because he desires that “all mankind will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isa 49:26). HOI’s salvation seeks to restore justness to the people.

In Ps 71,<sup>874</sup> the psalmist praises the Holy One of Israel (Ps 71:22) who redeemed [פרה] him. Once he sought refuge in Yahweh, he beseeched God to deliver, rescue and save him. He knows that it is HOI’s intimate “righteousness,” “salvation,” and “strength” [גבורה] that he will declare (Ps 71:15-16). For there is no God like him whose righteousness reaches the heavens and who has done great things (Ps 71:19). This Holy One of Israel is the only one who can bring comfort (נחם, Ps 71:21) to his people through

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<sup>874</sup> The psalm is derived from a liturgical cultus (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 497).

his saving deeds (see also Isa 12:1, 6). In Ps 78,<sup>875</sup> one has already heard about the mighty deeds of a holy God in the preceding psalm (Ps 77). Yahweh is the one whose way is *holy*, and who works wonders, and makes his “strength” [עֹז] known among the peoples. For there is no god great like Yahweh who by his mighty arm [זְרוֹעַ] had “redeemed” [גָּאֵל] his people (Ps 77:14-16 [13-15]). Both psalms declare that God’s “strength” and “wondrous works” (77:15 [14]; 78:4) are to be made known to the next generation. The psalmist attests that when Israel “rebelled” [בָּרָדָה] against Yahweh, they grieved him and pained HOI (Ps 78:40-41)<sup>876</sup> because their testing of God meant “they did not remember his hand [power], the day he *redeemed* them from the enemy” (Ps 78:42). It was Yahweh who brought them out of Egypt and sustained them in the wilderness (78:12-15), yet they continued to “sin” and “rebel” against the Most High (78:17, 35, 56). They did not “believe in God and did not trust in his salvation” (78:22). His power [עֹז] controlled the winds and brought meat to feed them (78:26-29). In spite of all this, “they still sinned, and had no faith in his wonderful works” (78:32). When “he slew them, then they sought for him, and returned and searched for God earnestly, and they remembered that God was their rock, the Most high God their redeemer [גָּאֵל]” (78:34-35). However, “they deceived him with their mouths; and lied to him with their tongue. Their heart was not steadfast [כֹּיֵן] toward him, they were not faithful to his covenant. But he, being compassionate [רַחוּם], forgave their iniquity [יִכַפֵּר עֲוֹן] and did

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<sup>875</sup> This psalm can be regarded as pre-exilic since it relates to a common cultic tradition and does not reference the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 540).

<sup>876</sup> It grieved HOI who, as the most high God, was trying to draw near to his people as their personal redeemer (78:35, 41-42).

not destroy them. But many times he turned his anger away and did not stir up his full wrath (78:38). For he remembered that they were but flesh” (78:36-39). It is this HOI, who belonged to Israel, that the Israelites caused to grieve (78:41) and against whom they “acted treacherously by provoking him with their high places and aroused his jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, he was filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel” (78:57-59), until he chose David to “shepherd Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance” (78:71). Despite being rebelled against by his people, “the Holy One of Israel” was still willing to act as her Redeemer by comforting Israel with his love. This act of HOI’s personal encouragement emphasizes his immanent presence (i.e., HOI who does what is right, is with Israel).

In Isa 40:1, “comfort” in its *pi<sup>c</sup>el* past-tense form of נָחַם<sup>877</sup> emphasizes God as the encourager who is Israel’s “helper.” He is the one who intervenes to turn away suffering and restore his people.<sup>878</sup> This response acknowledges, as Brueggemann writes, the pain, guilt and grief of suffering Israel. It sounds like a refrain of Lamentations (“there is none to comfort,” 1:2, 7, 17, 21) that seems to say Yahweh has forgotten his people (Isa 49:14).<sup>879</sup> Thus the words of the prophet answer the question in 51:19, “who can comfort you?” and it is only Yahweh who “has comforted his people” (49:13) by helping them (cf.

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<sup>877</sup> To comfort does not mean to sympathize, but to encourage (*HALOT* 2:689).

<sup>878</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 34: He explains, the duplication of the term “comfort” is as an expression of urgency; cf. 51:9; 52:1: “Awake, Awake,” and 51:17: “Rouse yourself, Rouse yourself,” and 48:15: “I even I, have spoken, and 43:11; 48:11: “For my own sake, for my own sake.” Much of the cry of 51:17 is uttered at a time when men were gradually turning away from God, gradually closing their minds to him, gradually letting their faith grow cold. These are circumstances that call for urgent cry. Israel must be aroused. A moment, and it may be too late. And here the opening words are from God himself, who urgently insists in bringing comfort to his people. It is also significant to note that in 40:2, the mention of Israel’s time of service has ended is only because “her *iniquity* is pardoned.” This change of fortune for Israel is based again on God’s forgiveness (34, 35, 37).

<sup>879</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Unity and Dynamic in the Isaiah Tradition,” *JSOT* 29 (1984): 95-96.

51:3, 12; 52:9; Lam 1:2, 9; 2:13; Ps 86:17). This encouraging message that the prophet brings in this opening chapter is spoken with authority and announces God's forgiveness and God's determination to rescue his people. When the Lord of history intervenes, we notice the cry of "Comfort" is followed by a cry to "Prepare" (40:3), signaling God's ability to turn lamentation into joy.<sup>880</sup>

HOI comforts Israel with the word "Fear Not!" (or "do not be afraid," אַל תִּירָא).<sup>881</sup> It is used fourteen times in the book of Isaiah.<sup>882</sup> In 41:14, 20, particularly, the assurance of salvation is made again and the cry "Fear not!" is repeated as the central theme in this passage. By it, Isaiah has executed God's commission to encourage his chosen people. The reason HOI would ask Isaiah to bring this encouraging message is because of Yahweh's close relationship with Israel. HOI wants to let his people know that he who does what is right, is with them. This encouraging remark "fear not" is not just a one-time reassurance, but reiterates God's constant relational support as the word "uphold" (41:10) indicates. However, the use of the epithet HOI emphasizes the Holy One coming in person to do what is right (to shame those who angered Israel and to destroy those who contended with her, 41:11) and to create a genuine transformation (bringing water and cedar into the wilderness, 41:19). HOI who is high and exalted wants his people to know he dwells with them.

Westermann views "Fear not!" as a statement that can be found in two different situations: a) a theophany that generates fear in man due to the manifestation of the deity,

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<sup>880</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 34.

<sup>881</sup> Isa 43:1; 41:10.

<sup>882</sup> Isa 7:4; 8:12; 10:24; 35:4; 37:6; 40:9; 41:10,13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4.

and the statement that takes this fear away, and b) personal lament of a fear evoked by a threat or danger and the statement is directed at such a lament (e.g., Dan 10:8-12; Exod 20:18-21; Judg 6:23). For the passages here, he regards the statement as relating to Israel being threatened by enemies. These threats have been exhibited in the past when Yahweh appeared as the holy warrior fighting against Israel's other enemies (Josh 8:1; 10:8; Num 21:34; Deut 1:21; Exod 14:13f.).<sup>883</sup>

The cry in 41:10 by HOI (41:14) is given in two noun clauses, "I am with you," and "I am your God." The former statement appeared prehistorically, both inside and outside of Israel.<sup>884</sup> It has also been used with the command, "Fear Not!" (Deut 20:1; 31:8; Jer 42:11; cf. Jer 1:8; 30:10-11 ["For I am with you...to save you"]; 46:27-28). The phrase "I am your God" is used here characteristically to counter the same self-predication and self-glorification made by the Babylonian gods (e.g., "I am Ishtar"). Thus Yahweh's self-exaltation reduces the self-glorification found among the Babylonian gods and exalts himself before Israel as their true God.<sup>885</sup> In fact, Yahweh gives additional assurances to his people by stating, "I have redeemed you," "I have called you by name," "I am Yahweh, your God, HOI," "I am with you and I will help you," and "I will not forsake" nor "forget" you. These various promises are given to alleviate Israel's fretting and fear. And thus when the epithet HOI is used in the book of Isaiah, it reminds

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<sup>883</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 71. See also Josh 11:6, where God provides comfort and reassurance before a battle; and the patriarchal "fear not" oracles in Genesis (15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 46:3) (E. W. Conrad, "'The Fear Not' Oracles in Second Isaiah," *VT* 34 [1984]: 129-52). A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden note that the Assyrian king Assurbanipal had also received similar oracles of salvation (e.g., "Fear not") from his god Nabu. His father Esarhaddon also received replies of fear not (*ANET*, 449f.) ("Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete" in *Zur Neueren Psalmenforschung* [ed. Peter H. A. Neumann; Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976], 280-314, esp. 292-94 cited in Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 71 n. a.). However, these oracles are usually directed to the king and rarely to the people.

<sup>884</sup> S. N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1958), 177.

<sup>885</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 72-73.

its readers the near presence of the Holy One. The high and exalted One is in their midst.

#### 4.3.2.3.1 “I have redeemed you”<sup>886</sup>

As Israel’s **גאל**, Yahweh is the kinsman, father, and spouse who loves his own.<sup>887</sup> The use of **גאל** instead of **פרה** (as in chs. 1-39) in chs. 40-55 enhances the intimate bond between Yahweh and Israel. In this section, Yahweh is mentioned as Israel’s **גאל** seventeen times and almost all with a pronominal suffix emphasizing his “strong personal attachment” as Israel’s only “blood-relative” kinsman who can redeem her from enslavement.<sup>888</sup> In Isa 43:1-7 the Holy One *of Israel* declares himself as her personal redeemer.

In Isa 43:1-7 there is a significant phrase in v. 7 that refers to Israel’s offspring as the sons and daughters who are “called by my name” (**הנקרא בשמי**), which parallels a similar phrase in v. 1, “I call you by name; you are mine!” Notice the repetition of **ברא** (created), **יצר** (made), and **קרא** (called), plus **מבשמי** (in my name) in vv. 1 and 7, which bind this poem’s introduction and conclusion. In this passage, Israel who is driven into exile, living far from her home (v. 6b), and is separated by an “impenetrable barrier” from her land, will be released from captivity only by the saving presence of Yahweh (vv. 2-3a).<sup>889</sup> In fact, Israel does not need to fear because Yahweh is her redeemer (**גאל**)<sup>890</sup>

<sup>886</sup> Isa 43:1; 44:22-23; 48:20; 52:9; 63:9.

<sup>887</sup> Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 106-31.

<sup>888</sup> Isa 41:14; 43:1; 43:14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 54:5, 8 (Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 110).

<sup>889</sup> Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 113-14

who is “the Holy One of Israel,” her “Savior” (43:3). God’s people are the objects of the verbs, “created,” “made,” and “formed” (v. 7), therefore it is the intention of HOI to reclaim his chosen people, which will also elevate his glory. HOI procures his people’s freedom by “ransoming” them because they are precious in his sight, and honored and loved by him (43:3b-4).

Because HOI is Israel’s God (“I am your God,” 41:10; “your God,” 43:3) who chose Israel, God endures all her rebellions, but will also rebuke her to bring her back to himself. As Israel’s only true redeemer, he redeems her from her sufferings. He will take action for his people not because of something they did but out of his unconditional grace.<sup>891</sup> This is the reason that the prophet overturns the whole argument of Israel’s doubt regarding HOI’s presence with Israel as expressed earlier in 42:18-25,<sup>892</sup> which is a disputation similar to 40:12ff. and the charge stated in 40:27, where God has hidden himself and forsaken his chosen people. This same charge may lie behind 42:18-25, which would be a response to an earlier accusation that God is blind and deaf to Israel’s present suffering. However here in 43:8 the passage actually implicates Israel for she is the one blind and deaf, and fails to see and understand why these afflictions have come about.<sup>893</sup> Israel denied the presence of Yahweh, HOI, “against whom we have

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<sup>890</sup> In chs. 40-55, the prophet most often uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person suffix with the participle **נִאֵל** (44:24; 48:17; 41:14; 43:14; 49:26; 54:5; 54:8; 60:16) whereas elsewhere in the MT the suffix is usually 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person (Lev 25:25; Pss 19:15; 78:35; Prov 23:11; Isa 60:16; 63:16; Jer 50:34). Therefore the prophet is intentionally emphasizing the special love of Israel’s redeeming God (Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 107, 278).

<sup>891</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 136.

<sup>892</sup> The “But now” in 43:1 begins to contrast with 42:18-25, connecting this part with the words of HOI in 43:3, 14, 15.

<sup>893</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 109.

sinned” (42:24).

Following an emphatic disjunction “But now” (43:1) begins a new word of God, which cancels (40:2) the old guilt (42:18-25) and proclaims a new day of salvation.<sup>894</sup>

Hanson comments on the meaning of verse 43:1b in a relational perspective:

These words renewed an ancient promise. The attention of the people of Israel was thus directed beyond the immediate calamity that had befallen them, back to the beginning of the love relationship, to the point when they, in a situation much like the one in which they again found themselves, had been enslaved, without hope, without a future except the future of serving their oppressors...God...had drawn them into the personal relationship of the covenant that forever after would be called to mind by the divine promise, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”<sup>895</sup>

Here HOI encourages Israel not to be afraid for he is her redeemer. He is going to manifest his presence to his people again. This word of encouragement is also found in Jeremiah 1:8: “do not be afraid of them [the nations], for I am with you to deliver you.” This sheds light on the fact that HOI himself will dispel the fear of enemies that Israel is experiencing, and will rescue and protect his people even from the dangers of a flood and a fire.<sup>896</sup> The prophet writes: “When you pass through the *waters*, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the *fire*, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you” (Isa 43:2, emphasis mine), which echoes Ps 66:12, “we went through *fire* and through *water*, but you brought us out into a spacious place.” The Israelites attest a couple of verses earlier, “For you have tried us, O God; you have refined us as silver is refined” (66:10). This psalm of thanksgiving acknowledges God’s deliverance, but also his use of discipline to purify Israel. Yet even through these

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<sup>894</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 115.

<sup>895</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 63.

<sup>896</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 156.



significant trials, God did not abandon his own people. Therefore Isaiah testifies to God's constant presence with Israel as HOI.

The title, Israel's Savior (43:3), appears here for the first time in the book, which is used again later (43:11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8). "God's salvation included Judah's physical deliverance from Babylon but also a personal faith relationship with him."<sup>897</sup> God's judgment on his people was over, and now he would judge others in her place (43:3-4). Interestingly, God disciplines his own first. The priority of his children highlights the significance of their relationship to him. The father cares for the welfare of his own first and then proceeds to help other children next. This emphasizes again the core relationality of HOI with Israel. Moreover, as HOI, he wants to magnify his *torah* for his righteousness' sake (42:21). God proves his faithfulness and the truth of his words by coming forth as his people's redeemer. The faithful and constant love of God knows no boundary, in that he is even willing to pay a ransom for his chosen people. In 43:3b, Yahweh, HOI gives Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba in Israel's stead, exchanging them for Israel as her ransom. God is, once again, working out Israel's liberation.<sup>898</sup> Therefore he will be Israel's Savior—redeeming her, honoring her, and loving her (43:1-4), for there is no savior besides Yahweh (43:11). He who is "your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (43:14) will bring down Babylon because "your Holy One" is the Creator of Israel and their king (43:15). What he decrees, he will accomplish because no one can reverse his decision as the redeeming HOI (43:13-15). In these verses, Yahweh proves he is the creator of everything and verse 15 strongly supports this, "I am Yahweh, your Holy One,

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<sup>897</sup> Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 179.

<sup>898</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 118.

Israel's creator, your king." But in v. 14, HOI is paired with "your Redeemer," which justifies his redemptive efforts in buying back Israel. HOI did not save or rescue Egypt or Seba but only Israel because he is the Holy one *of Israel*. Thus, when God desires Israel to remember him as her "Redeemer," he uses it many times with the epithet HOI, to remind his people of his presence, in addition to the name, Yahweh. It signifies that this transcendent One is now immanent with his people and will set out to restore justness. For example, in 43:14, the HOI intervenes on behalf of Israel as "redeemer" and he proclaims the fall of Babylon that is later fulfilled by Cyrus's invasion ("for your sake I have sent to Babylon"). As a result of this attack, the prison bars will be broken and the Chaldeans will lament.<sup>899</sup>

In 43:16-17, the Holy One (43:15) expands on his past deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea where the Egyptian troops were destroyed. Here Isaiah refers to the basic faith tradition of Israel. Remembering the past is an important virtue, and the Exodus is frequently celebrated in the Psalms<sup>900</sup> as it is also here, but Isaiah calls his people to stop clinging to the past deliverance. This "former thing" is to be demoted in comparison to a miraculous new thing that Yahweh will be doing by making a "roadway in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (43:19). The prophet brings his people to hope and expect and believe in some new saving act. Thus look at the new way being prepared in the

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<sup>899</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 125. Hanson notes that earlier in 42:13, Yahweh is described as "a warrior" which parallels the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:3), which ends with the acclamation of Yahweh as king (Exod 15:18; cf. Isa 52:7) who is "majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders" (Exod 15:11). This image of Yahweh as divine warrior who challenges and stirs up Israel's oppressors, brings great comfort to the oppressed Israel (*Isaiah 40-66*, 50). Yahweh himself combats, and even sounds the battle cry, rescues, and protects Israel ultimately rather than the Persian, Cyrus. HOI alone is the redeemer of Israel who reigns forever (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 124-25).

<sup>900</sup> Claus Westermann, "Vergegenwärtigung der Geschichte in den Psalmen," in *Forschung am Alten Testament: Gesammelte Studien* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1964), 306-35.

wilderness. It will be transformed when God gives it water to replenish his people and the wild creatures. This is a new Exodus that corresponds to the original one. Through it, God wants to awaken a faith that has ceased to expect anything new from HOI, who seems distant and indifferent. This new act of God, the new Exodus will cause the redeemed (who were formed for him, 43:21; cf. 43:1, 7) to declare God's praise (even though it may not be a complete salvation)<sup>901</sup> that is transforming them into a holy remnant (Isa 4:3) and a holy people (Isa 62:12).

Moreover, as a reminder to Israel (44:21-22), Isaiah affirms Israel's special relationship to Yahweh. He formed Israel, and chose her as his servant. Particularly, Isa 44:22 signifies that Israel has been accepted and forgiven by God. God declares their sins are wiped away. This is the basis for Israel to repent and have a new beginning.<sup>902</sup> God's forgiveness came before Israel's repentance. Thus this phrase, "for I have redeemed you," has a powerful notion of God's remission of Israel's iniquity. By letting Israel know that he cleansed their sins he then calls them to turn back to him: "return to me."<sup>903</sup> God's command to come back to him verifies that he [HOI] is concerned with his people's sin more than their captivity itself.<sup>904</sup> To this divine initiative Israel's response is important because the key is not whether her God would be willing to redeem her or able to do so. God already showed his willingness and ability in this. Rather it hinges on whether or not she would respond to his initiative. Therefore, the faithful HOI constantly reminds Israel "not to fear, not to believe they are forgotten, and not to forget who, and whose, they

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<sup>901</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 127-29.

<sup>902</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 205.

<sup>903</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 181.

<sup>904</sup> J. Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66," *IB* 5:509.

are.”<sup>905</sup>

One of Yahweh’s divine rescue plans involves Cyrus executing his deliverance even though this king does not know Yahweh. This sovereign HOI is over all and directs Cyrus’s paths and uses him to subdue the nations. Through his sovereign salvation, HOI (45:11) will pour down a divine righteousness from heaven (45:8), reminding the people that he who is near, will do what is right. His צדקה is an expression of his salvation. It is Yahweh, HOI who creates this righteousness, and he is the maker of the heavens and the earth. So it is asinine for the clay to question its potter, “What are you doing?” As one of God’s creation like pottery to the potter, the creation has no position or basis to judge God’s methods in carrying out God’s will.<sup>906</sup> Moreover, humans do not know the right thing to do. Only HOI, who is humanity’s maker, knows what is just and sees what lies ahead (45:8-9, 11). HOI uses Cyrus to do right by permitting the exiles to go free (45:13). Therefore Yahweh is affirmed as the God who speaks and does what is right (45:19).

#### 4.3.2.3.2 “I have called you by name”<sup>907</sup>

In 43:1 Isaiah recalls an ancient summons. The use of the perfect tense is to emphasize God’s ancient promise, his eternal covenant with Israel; “I am your God and you are mine,” is still in effect, thus, Israel should fear not. Most of all, the redemption and the covenantal relationship are highlighted—“I have redeemed you and I have called you by name.” When we specify something among many, we call it either “this” or “that”; but

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<sup>905</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 188.

<sup>906</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 208.

<sup>907</sup> Isa 43:1.

when we want to specify more clearly or distinguish one from many, we name it.

Likewise, calling by name (קרא בשמי) indicates choosing, singling out an individual just as “in Akkadian the semantic cognate *sumam nabu/zakaru* also denotes choice.”<sup>908</sup> Here, God’s naming reflects his direct personal relationship with Israel as a crowning intimacy,<sup>909</sup> and a sign of an unbreakable bond of affection in his dealings with Israel.<sup>910</sup>

#### 4.3.2.3.3 “For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel”<sup>911</sup>

This phrase evidently indicates that the Holy God, Yahweh, is Israel’s relational redeemer. In this phrase, it is clear that the choice of being Israel’s God was God’s alone: not ‘the God you have chosen’ but the ‘God who has chosen you’ (43:10).<sup>912</sup> He is the one who “created,” (ברא), “formed” (יצר), “redeemed” (גאל), and “called” (קרא) Israel (43:1). These elements mark Yahweh’s commitment and investment in his people. The creating and forming refers back to Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt and leading Israel through the wilderness and bringing them into the promised land. This oracle of salvation is “very personal.” When HOI refers to himself as Israel’s God, he specifically designates her as his, “you are mine” (43:1). The three noun clauses, “you are mine” (43:1b), and “I, Yahweh, your God” (43:3a), and “I am with you” (43:5a) express an ongoing and intrinsic relationship between Yahweh and Israel, as expressed by the

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<sup>908</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 205.

<sup>909</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 331.

<sup>910</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 212.

<sup>911</sup> Isa 43:3; 41:13-14.

<sup>912</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 331.

epithet HOI. “You are mine” reflects an earlier legal formula declared by the owner of something. “I Yahweh, am your God” echoes the introduction to the first commandment (Exod 20:2) and “I am with you” is reminiscent of the Joseph stories that are known to every Israelite. Each of these statements relate to a historical act of God’s personal involvement with his people.<sup>913</sup>

In addition, HOI (41:14) addresses Israel as “my servant” to express God’s special treatment to her: “But you, Israel, my servant [עַבְדִּי], Jacob, whom I have chosen [בַּחֲרִי], the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant [עַבְדִּי], I have chosen [בַּחֲרִי] you and not cast you off” (41:8, 9).

Addressing Israel as “my servant”<sup>914</sup> affirms the personal bond between Yahweh and Israel because Israel is specifically God’s “chosen” servant. The prophet is unique in using the first person singular suffix with the term and is the “only writer to call Israel, ‘my servant.’”<sup>915</sup> Delitzsch notes this word “chosen” reveals Yahweh’s deep affection for Israel and the repetition of the suffix ךְּ, emphasizes the intimate relation Yahweh placed

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<sup>913</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 117. From the beginning of creation and formation, Yahweh is Israel’s God and she belongs to him as his treasured possession (סְגֻלָּה, Exod 19:5). Thus, HOI (43:3) calls Israel “precious” (יָקָר, 43:4) in his sight and affirms that he “honors” and “loves” them. These profound words (spoken by the powerful Lord of history and creation), placed between descriptions of God’s intervention, illustrate the beautiful and endearing [“sacred”] bond HOI shares with Israel.

<sup>914</sup> See Isaiah’s use of עַבְדִּי (41:8, 9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 54:17; 65:9, 15). As noted earlier, HOI (41:14) addresses his servant Israel (41:8); HOI (43:14) speaks to Israel as “my servant” (43:10) who is to be his witness; HOI (45:11) summons Jacob his servant (45:4) by name; and HOI (48:17), as redeemer, will redeem his servant Jacob (48:20).

<sup>915</sup> C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant*, 97.

himself toward Israel, and vice versa.<sup>916</sup>

Here in 41:9-10, Israel becomes the servant of Yahweh, HOI (41:14) by his divine initiative and pure grace, and it was not based on any excellent merit on the part of Israel as indicated by the expression: “I have chosen you and not rejected you.” Yahweh’s divine act of choosing Israel to be “my servant” (עבדִי) dates back to Abraham (41:8). In the next verse, Yahweh states that he took his people from the farthest corners of the earth to call her עבדֵי־אֵתָהּ. And from a Palestinian point of view, both Ur of Chaldea and Haran located in northern Mesopotamia certainly seem like the ends of the earth. Yet from this far distant land of the Tigris and Euphrates, Yahweh went to fetch Abraham and adopted him as “my servant” (Gen 26:24), who in essence became the father of this servant nation.<sup>917</sup>

Addressing Israel as “my servant” involves a different dynamic in the Hebrew culture. In Mosaic legislation, the protection of the slave was more greatly extended than in other countries’ law codes, and their provision was assured. Even though being a servant meant he was socially at a lower status,<sup>918</sup> but “he was as powerful as his master, for should he ever have been molested, it was the master the molester had to reckon with.”<sup>919</sup> A master chooses his/her servants. It was God’s divine choice that Israel become his privileged servant who can and should give honor and trust to her master, and receive love and protection in return. HOI wants to be the recipient of Israel’s loyalty.

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<sup>916</sup> Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (1884) 2:162.

<sup>917</sup> Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (1884) 2:163.

<sup>918</sup> See earlier discussion on HOI as the King of Israel.

<sup>919</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 312.

Now Israel only has to accept the HOI's assurance of salvation (43:3) as her means of redemption. The prophet speaks of a later time when Israel will credit HOI for his work (43:6-10) in bringing her home through political maneuvers, when she will safely pass through rivers and walk through fire (43:2).<sup>920</sup> Her safe return, effected by God is not to *exalt* Israel, but is meant to bring glory to HOI. Those who are dispersed in far places are each called by their name for his name's sake. This address reminds the reader that Yahweh is Israel's creator (v. 1) who created (אֵלֶּיךָ) her for his divine glory (43:7).

At this point, Israel has to remember who her God is. Her God, HOI (43:14), is not just one of many gods. He is Yahweh, the highly exalted and all-powerful one. In 43:11, "I, I am Yahweh"<sup>921</sup> corresponds to the words of v. 10b, "that I am he." This formula of revelation, "I am Yahweh"<sup>922</sup> had been revealed during the nation's initial encounter with him. The name signifies Israel's important relationship with God because it reflects God's words and deeds. It is the name that Israel clung to in the past and present, and is used in supplication for sufferings or in exultation for praise.<sup>923</sup> God's being with Israel is not theoretical, but based on actual experience.<sup>924</sup> Since he proved

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<sup>920</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 118.

<sup>921</sup> "I am Yahweh" (41:13; 43:3; 44:24; 45:3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 21; 48:17; 49:23, 26; 60:16; cf. Exod 6:2, 6: "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."; Exod 20:2; 29:46).

<sup>922</sup> See W. Zimmerli, "Ich bin Jahwe," in *Gottes Offenbarung: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament* (München: C. Kaiser, 1969), 11-40.

<sup>923</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 123-24.

<sup>924</sup> See J. J. Schmitt, "The God of Israel and the Holy One," 28: He notes that the epithet HOI is not an abstract term as though referring to the God of the Greek philosophers, but it relates to the personal God whom Israel experienced in her history.



himself as the only personal and powerful savior in the past, then only he can help her in the future. Thus, in 43:10-15, HOI confirms that he has existed as God throughout all time and he has created a bond between Israel and himself that cannot be destroyed. She remains in his hand. She is his. This Yahweh is her only God. In 43:10b, the prophet declares it by conveying God's statement, "before me there was no God formed." This contrasts with the surrounding paganism where the polytheistic theology consists of myths and theogonies.<sup>925</sup> The reason that God emphasizes his uniqueness is that there are many pagan gods, who were fickle and not dependable. So, when someone asks God's people why HOI is unique and different from the other gods, Israel should be his witness in testifying to the distinctiveness of his holiness. The passage in 43:8-15 is another trial speech seeking to establish Yahweh's claim to divinity—it is either God or the gods of all nations. The question posed to the other gods is, "Who among them can declare this [the future things mentioned earlier] or tell us about the former things [when a word of the past is fulfilled]?" If the gods are able to prove their continuity in history (e.g., provide "a bridge over a chasm torn open by the downfall of a nation"<sup>926</sup>), they are called to produce witnesses to attest to this. Yahweh, HOI then brings forth witnesses who despite being blind and deaf (43:8; 42:18-19) are qualified to testify. He can arouse the deaf and blind from their deafness and blindness so that they will know and believe and understand (43:10) that it is Yahweh who is able to create a future out of the ruins of the past. To know that Yahweh alone can do this, Israel has to personally encounter Yahweh as HOI

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<sup>925</sup> Friedrich Stummer notes: "Here we should remember in particular *Enuma Elish* I.9ff., which describes 'how the gods had been created,' how *Lahmu* and *Lahamu* 'came into being,' and how *Anshar* and *Kishar* 'were created'" ("Einige Keilschriftliche Parallelen zu Jes. 40-66," *JBL* 45 [1926]: 171-89, esp. 180, cited in Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 123).

<sup>926</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 122.

and fully acknowledge him as truly God. Then she can become his witnesses (43:12).<sup>927</sup> Therefore, it is Israel who can rightly present Yahweh as the true God to the world by testifying to what he has done distinctively for her, as their Holy One, who dwells in their midst.

However, does God really need Israel's help (as a witness) for him to be deemed the true God?...for he is Yahweh. Why does he desire Israel's participation? It is because he is a relational, intimate, and gracious Holy God who desires to lift up his people among the nations by taking away her shame and to help her to become a holy people (62:12). Therefore, the prophet calls his people to turn to their personal God and to trust in him alone.

HOI, who belongs to Israel, is Yahweh and the only true God; whatever he chooses to do will be righteous. In response to an apparent challenge to Yahweh's appropriateness in using a pagan deliverer, God asserts he has the perfect right to do so (45:9-13). The passage 44:23-45:13 reveals the prominence of first-person pronouns and verbs referring to Yahweh as God, who is the "one purposeful center" of all events.<sup>928</sup> Therefore, using a pagan nation to accomplish his purpose is not wrong for he is Yahweh who is the cause of all things in the way they should be. In this passage, "I am Yahweh" is repeated four times (44:24; 45:3, 5, 6). This phrase suggests his rulership and absolute sovereignty, but what does "you will know that I am Yahweh" mean? If his name represents a verbal sentence meaning "he causes [everything] to be," then Yahweh is "the

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<sup>927</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 122-23.

<sup>928</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 96.

origin, the foundation, the basis, and the end of all things.”<sup>929</sup>

Westermann comments that 44:24-28 is designed as an introduction to 45:1-7.<sup>930</sup> The phrase “I, Yahweh, make [עֲשֶׂה] all things” (44:24) is seen again at the end of 45:7. In vv. 24-28, the ever-present nature of Yahweh as Creator is mentioned. “All the verbs are participles or their equivalents, making the utterances a statement of the changeless nature of the Lord.”<sup>931</sup> He lives in the past, present, and the future. No one but Yahweh creates change. It is Yahweh, Israel’s creator (“who formed [יָצַר] you” [in the womb, 44:1, 24, speaks of God’s personal touch]; cf. HOI as Israel’s maker [יָצַר] in 45:11) and her redeemer, who glories in the fact that he is the creator of all things and “lies behind all creational reality.”<sup>932</sup> The emphasis in 44:24 is on the word “alone”<sup>933</sup> together with the implied rhetorical question “who was with me?” meaning “entirely by myself.”<sup>934</sup> This theme of being the only creator is shown in the next verse (v. 25) as God proves his lordship over history. God’s self-prediction to rebuild Jerusalem and his promise to redeem are not meaningless but secured by three claims, as Oswalt states succinctly: “He brought Israel into existence as by birth (v. 24a), he created the whole world (v. 24b), and he has foretold the future in ways that make fools of all who rely on techniques in order

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<sup>929</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 514.

<sup>930</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 154.

<sup>931</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 353.

<sup>932</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 354.

<sup>933</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 156.

<sup>934</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 354.

to tell the future (vv. 25-27).”<sup>935</sup> But HOI in 45:11 affirms his ability to do so: “Ask me about the things to come” (since he is the maker of the earth and creator of humanity, 45:12).

Though predictions existed in the gentile world, most did not materialize. For example, among the plethora of oracles addressed to Babylonian and Assyrian kings, none proclaimed the fall of an empire. Most were oracles of salvation that later proved to be futile in the final destruction of Assyria and Babylon.<sup>936</sup> These oracles are in contrast to the prophet’s words which Yahweh himself has fulfilled in history (see 44:26a). Specifically, Yahweh confirms and bequeaths weighty authority to the word spoken by his messengers to his people (44:26a) and the world through the formulas of “I am Yahweh (44:24; 45:3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 21),” “Thus says Yahweh (44:24; 45:1, 11, 14, 18),” and “Says Yahweh Sabaoth (45:13).”<sup>937</sup>

This God who controls the “abyss” also can control history as he commands something new, which relates directly to the appointment of Cyrus. He is the Lord of history, which is shown by his ability to command the deep to dry up, and which can designate Cyrus to fulfill his purpose (44:28) as God’s anointed agent to perform his work of freeing Israel.<sup>938</sup> The use of the terms “shepherd” (44:28) and “anointed” (45:1) for Cyrus flabbergasts Israel because her king is the anointed one mentioned in Psalm 2. However, in the Old Testament, the word is used for a reigning monarch. The act of anointing refers to a person given the authority to perform his official duties, and the later

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<sup>935</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 192.

<sup>936</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 156-57.

<sup>937</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 210.

<sup>938</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 155.

meaning of the term Messiah—“bringer of salvation”—is not to be associated here.<sup>939</sup>

Nonetheless, Cyrus typifies God’s chosen instrument like the Messiah through whom God’s gracious purpose will be fulfilled.<sup>940</sup> In ch. 45, it is explained that Yahweh himself will accompany Cyrus and make his conquest successful (nations will be subdued, kings’ loins will be loosened, gates opened, bars of iron cut asunder [45:1-2]).<sup>941</sup>

Cyrus’ commission, however, is given ultimately for the sake of Yahweh’s servant Israel. Notice that though Cyrus is called Yahweh’s anointed, he is never called his servant—implying a permanent mutual relationship. For Cyrus is anointed to do only a particular non-recurring task. The words “though you do not know me” confirm this paradoxical relationship, which is made on behalf of Israel.<sup>942</sup>

Furthermore, 45:6 adds a note about the purpose of this royal oracle (vv. 1-4), so “that men may know.” This historical event of Cyrus’s capture of Babylon is also referred to in the Cyrus cylinder.<sup>943</sup> Here, however, this event is not meant to convert Cyrus, but to show the world that Yahweh alone, the Holy One, is God. This is also a strong derision against idol worshipers and false prophets concerning these man-made and manipulated idols that could never possibly plan such an improbable event. But Isaiah notes how Yahweh is the one who anointed Cyrus (v. 1) and holds him by the right

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<sup>939</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 159.

<sup>940</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 201

<sup>941</sup> This language of removing obstacles is based on conventional words of the ancient royal oracle tradition; therefore the things listed do not need to be linked with actual events in Cyrus’s conquest (Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 160).

<sup>942</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 160.

<sup>943</sup> The Cyrus cylinder dating from about 538 B.C. shows close parallels with Isaiah 45:1-7. It describes how Cyrus captured Babylon and credits Marduk, the Babylonian god for the success (see T. Fish, *Documents from Old Testament Times* [ed. D. Winton Thomas; London, 1958], 92).

hand (v. 1) and calls him by name (vv. 3b and 4b) and gives him an honorable name (v. 4b) and strengthens him (v. 5b). This sovereign miracle in the context of Israel's history shows that in spite of the nation's complete ruin, her relationship with her God persisted.<sup>944</sup> He keeps relation with his people and by orchestrating this miraculous event, he attests again his commitment as Israel's Holy One (he who does what is right, is with Israel). Thus for the Israelites to realize that Yahweh is all these things, and is their personal Holy God, should cause them to place their faith in him alone. Through such fulfilled promises as this, other nations will also begin to turn to the God who truly keeps his word (cf. 44:5).

As a crowning description of Yahweh's uniqueness (45:7), the text emphasizes that God literally created everything from light to dark and is accountable "for everything in history, from good fortune to misfortune. No other beings or forces are responsible for anything."<sup>945</sup> Consequently, nothing will happen that is outside of Yahweh's sovereignty.<sup>946</sup> The declaration of his mighty power in 45:7, "who forms light and create darkness," **יצר** usually signifies an action that extends to the present and the future<sup>947</sup> and **ברא** in 40:26 relates to the appearance of the celestial bodies called forth by God, with the emphasis on its surprising novelty (41:20; 45:8; 48:7 and 54:16); **ברא** is also reserved for a divine activity.<sup>948</sup> Thus Isaiah highlights here, Yahweh's power and sovereignty in

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<sup>944</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 161.

<sup>945</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 204.

<sup>946</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:200.

<sup>947</sup> Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 215.

<sup>948</sup> Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III: Volume 1: Isaiah 40-48* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997), 441.

creation, but the purpose of asserting Yahweh's transcendence is not primarily to prove that he is the Creator, but to give support that only Yahweh can redeem Israel.<sup>949</sup>

Therefore, why should Israel be afraid of other nations since she is related to such a mighty Creator as Yahweh, who as HOI has given himself to Israel and will execute his righteous redemptive plans in her midst (45:11-13)?

4.3.2.3.4 "I am with you and I will help you",<sup>950</sup>

In Isa 43:2 and 5, the Holy One of Israel (43:3) promises to abide with Israel. He does not promise to get rid of the water and fire mentioned in v. 2, but he guarantees personal protection over them. This is because water and fire are the means of purifying Israel's sin. Knight asserts that many OT prophets did not distinguish between "God's living, guiding presence with Israel in the burning zeal of his love, and his judgment upon Israel's sin made evident in the trials and troubles of life which, as here, were constantly pictured in terms of burning fire."<sup>951</sup> His presence assuages their fear just as children feel great comfort when they have accompanying parents with them when they are going through a difficult situation. HOI also assures Israel's safety through Israel's travels. No danger of nature can harm her, or any circumstances can overtake her. His presence throughout Israel's history was evident since Abraham<sup>952</sup> to the Exodus until the exile. It is also based on the timeless fact that his indestructible relationship of love with his

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<sup>949</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 205.

<sup>950</sup> Isa 41:10, 14; 43:2, 5.

<sup>951</sup> Knight, *Deutero-Isaiah 40-55*, 91.

<sup>952</sup> See Gen 15:1: "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you"; Gen 26:24 (spoken to Isaac): "Do not fear, for I am with you."

people never changes, and “that necessarily determines God’s dealings with the true people of Israel and shapes their destiny.”<sup>953</sup> How powerful is this statement, “I am with you”? Being together with the personal redeemer who happens to be the almighty God and the king of heaven is unfathomable. For Isaiah, calling out the epithet HOI is to remind his people how near this Holy One is to them. He wants them to recognize that the Holy One of Israel is the God who is not only in the heavens, but also manifests his presence everywhere they go (here on earth). In fact, his holy presence makes all surrounding nations “fear” him. So his people should not fear, but worship and rejoice in his holy presence. What else do they need when HOI pledges his commitment to abide with them? What can provide a better comfort than this assurance?

However, because God understands the human weakness of needing to hear more concrete promises, he gives his people another extra reason why they should not fear, “I will help you.” When HOI says to his people, “Do not fear; I will help you” (41:13, 14), Israel is given serious relational support. As Israel’s redeemer, HOI will take vengeance for his people (קָנָה, 47:3-4; 34:8; 35:4; 59:17; 61:2; 63:4). Divine “vengeance” relates mostly to the context of lawfulness or war, justice, and salvation. God as king, judge, and warrior expresses his vengeance as a “punitive retribution” because he is faithful to his covenant, will vindicate his glorious name, and maintain his justice, and save his people. God’s holy vengeance is usually disciplinary in nature in hopes to restore lawfulness and covenantal order so that Zion can become that “city of righteousness,” a “faithful city” (Isa 1:24-26),<sup>954</sup> where the people are called “oaks of righteousness” (61:3) and

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<sup>953</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 211.

<sup>954</sup> Cf. H. G. L. Peels, “קָנָה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:154-55.



recognized as a holy remnant/people (4:3; 62:12). Here in 46:13, HOI promises to rescue Israel by vanquishing Babylon in 47:1-15. In 47:3, HOI (47:4) says to Babylon, “your shame will be seen; I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.” HOI curses prideful Babylon. Her arrogance is revealed in 47:7, “I will continue forever—the eternal queen!”<sup>955</sup> She sits in her self-assurance and says, “I am, and there is no one else besides” (47:8b, 10c), something only Yahweh can say (45:14, 18, 22; 46:9). Thus HOI will subject Babylon to the shameful and harsh situation they imposed on others. The work of grinding flour on a millstone was usually reserved for the lowest slaves who did not need to keep their dignity by veiling themselves.<sup>956</sup> As a figurative word, “nakedness” (47:3) connotes the defenselessness in which Babylon will be greatly humiliated. Who is this that can command such abasement as this to Babylon? This is the divine announcement of her end.<sup>957</sup> Then, the prophet solemnly identifies the one who would avenge and bring such judgment against Babylon; That is the Redeemer, the Yahweh Almighty is his name, the Holy One of Israel (47:4).<sup>958</sup> The name Yahweh Almighty testifies to his inconceivable power. Oswalt superbly describes this power: “Here is power, power almost beyond comprehension: power to defend, power to deliver, power to revive, power to renew. Yes, he is the Holy One of Israel in regard to Assyria, and he is also the Holy One of Israel in regard to Babylon. Circumstances may change; he changes

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<sup>955</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 188.

<sup>956</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 188.

<sup>957</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 269.

<sup>958</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 188. It is HOI who comes to administer righteousness upon Babylon.

ever.”<sup>959</sup> His holiness will come to establish righteousness. It is HOI who draws near to Israel to defend her with his holy power. Yahweh’s divine power and plan was shown through the process of Babylon’s conquest over Judah and, then, Babylon’s fall to Cyrus.

HOI promises his personal redemption. In 48:17a, HOI begins his word of salvation. This chapter emphasizes the fulfillment of God’s promises (to rescue his people). Yahweh is a God who keeps his word and commitment to his people. God predicted the first things and then brought them to be (48:3-6a). Now he predicts new things that will be realized in the future (48:6b-11). There is the juxtaposition of “former things” and “new things” (48:3, 6).<sup>960</sup> These two parts complement the other and guarantee that just as God has acted before, he will act again (48:3b, 11a), but in his own new way. God was faithful to his people in the past and now his creativity is preparing for “unheard-of possibilities”<sup>961</sup> (e.g., work of Cyrus, vv. 14-15 and the Servant of the Lord, 49:1-7). Yahweh will speak new things, hidden things, and prophecies to show that he alone knows the future and therefore, Israel should trust in him.<sup>962</sup> Yahweh is and remains the “Redeemer” of his people as HOI, who is near to them. The nearness of HOI

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<sup>959</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 243

<sup>960</sup> Isaiah’s use of these recurring terms may reflect: “former things” can be the general past (41:22), events related to the coming conqueror (42:9) or the exodus (43:9, 18). “New things” are the coming ministry of the servant (42:9) and the return from Babylon (43:19). The context must decide each case. Here the “former things” may represent the predicted events of the exodus or the rise of Cyrus, and the “new things” the servant events (coming of the Spirit-endowed one). But Isaiah is using the argument of prediction and fulfillment to affirm the sole deity of Yahweh against the false gods (Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 377). Oswalt notes that the “former things” reflect any of the various prophecies God had made in the past (e.g., Announcement to Abraham about the Egyptian sojourn [Gen 15], the exodus and the promised land, etc.) and the “new things” focuses on God’s ability to creatively do something new, and not on the events themselves (259-67).

<sup>961</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 124.

<sup>962</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 268.

is seen in 48:16b, where the speaker<sup>963</sup> calls on the divine name (אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה), affirming his highly personal relationship with his “Lord” and is instilled with “his Spirit.” The Spirit acknowledges that HOI as redeemer is a personal guide (i.e., helper) “who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go” (48:17).

Here in 48:17, “your Redeemer” and HOI both are in parallel as in 41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 54:5 and introduce Yahweh’s word of personal salvation to Israel. The dominant theme is Israel’s salvation by the powerful and faithful HOI who also imparts his Spirit upon his people. As his title Holy One *of Israel* declares he upholds his special covenantal relationship with Israel and reminds her that this transcendent and ethically perfect God belongs to Israel and is now immanent with his people.

#### 4.3.2.3.5 “I will not forsake<sup>964</sup> them” nor “forget<sup>965</sup> you”

Another reason that Israel does not need to be afraid is because HOI (41:16, 20; 49:7) remembers his people. Recognizing himself as their redeemer, Israel is constantly on his mind. When his people are in need, HOI willingly gives them divine aid and support. God is “with” them, to “strengthen,” “help,” and “uphold” them (41:10, 13-14). Here in 41:14-15 HOI’s relationship with Israel is emphasized through a series of redeeming graces. Not only is HOI with the Israelites, but he is also the source of their strength (he

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<sup>963</sup> The identity of the speaker in the final bicolon 48:16b has been viewed as the prophet, or Messiah, but here it seems that God is speaking through the prophet who is inspired with God’s Spirit. The Spirit should not be considered the subject in the sentence (i.e., the Lord and the Spirit have sent the prophet), which is grammatically incorrect. It refers to the Spirit as the one being sent (cf. 11:2; 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; 61:1) (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 274 n. 61, 278).

<sup>964</sup> עִזָּב, Isa 41:17; 49:14.

<sup>965</sup> שָׁכַח, Isa 49:14, 15b.

upholds Israel with his righteous right hand to administer destruction, 41:10, 13-16). Thus his divine assistance is constantly available.

God is personally present with his people so they do not need to “fear.” This phrase “do not be afraid” occurs many times in this section of the book because the people in captivity fear that God has abandoned them, but Isaiah reminds them that this will not happen.<sup>966</sup> In 41:17, God comes to help those who *apparently* feel forsaken. “The needy and the poor” are those who are in a double predicament such as having a low social status and restricted rights. They are dependent because they cannot help themselves.<sup>967</sup> They can easily feel neglected, but God promises that he will answer their cries and not forsake them. In 41:19-20, Yahweh, HOI expresses his amazing rescue by filling the wilderness with a manifold fullness of stately and shady trees. There are seven trees mentioned that are not accidental or self-produced but will be recognized as the powerful production of Yahweh.<sup>968</sup> This is Yahweh’s transforming power in nature and in our souls as HOI (41:20).

As an answer to Israel’s doubt and worry about being abandoned by Yahweh, HOI (49:7) uses the strongest image of personal attachment between a mother and a child, and he reassures Israel of his unfailing love in 49:15-16. His love is stronger than that of a mother to her child.<sup>969</sup> Being compassionate, HOI never forgets his people. He has engraved them on his palms (49:16) to remember them at all times. It is not mere writing, which can fade later, rather, he marked Zion’s name on his palms like a self-inflicted

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<sup>966</sup> Oswalt, *NIVAC: Isaiah*, 460.

<sup>967</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 108.

<sup>968</sup> Delitzsch, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (1884) 2:167.

<sup>969</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 305.

wound.<sup>970</sup> Even though God does not have a human's bodily form, this expression accommodates the strength of God's love to his people.<sup>971</sup> The word "engrave" denotes the intensity and assurance of HOI's love for Israel implying that he will never forsake nor forget Israel, and her name will never be removed from his palms. God reassures Israel of his relationship with her. He connects himself and his thoughts with his people because he belongs to Israel.

#### 4.3.3 Restores

Through Yahweh's redeeming grace, HOI restores and renews his people's worth and significance. Yahweh's holiness is manifested in his redemptive concern that brings forth true righteousness so that Israel may share in Yahweh's holy character (cf. Isa 6; 4:3-4; 11:9; 32:15-18; 35:8-10; 60:21). God's redemption seeks to restore justice, righteousness, and purity in his people. This is not done by human works (chs. 55-59) but by divine provisions (chs. 60-66). Mere legalistic righteousness is not what God had in mind (56:1-8; 58:1-14), but God's character infused in every part of life, manifesting itself in devotion and justice is what he intended.<sup>972</sup> This is only possible through the power of God's holy, transcendent Spirit. Thus, Isaiah writes with remarkable honesty and speaks "of the necessity of suffering as a prelude to healing, brokenness as the condition for restoration to wholeness, and power as breaking forth out of powerlessness."<sup>973</sup> This

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<sup>970</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 394.

<sup>971</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 4:31-32.

<sup>972</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 60.

<sup>973</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 59.

section will examine HOI's salvific plan to restore his relationship with Israel, and to transform them into his righteousness so that all the nations will come and worship the glorious redemption of the Holy One of Israel.

#### **4.3.3.1 Restores Relationships<sup>974</sup>**

The restoration process of HOI involves reclaiming a remnant by gathering and healing them, while also restoring the city, her king, and the land.

##### **4.3.3.1.1 Reclaiming a Remnant<sup>975</sup>**

From Israel's Assyrian encounter, it is undeniable that Yahweh (the Holy One) is in sovereign control of all nations. It is his hand that holds the axe, the saw, the club, and the rod (10:15-17, 24), executing a *righteous* destruction (10:6-7; 22-23). However, after Yahweh's sovereign punishment and destruction against the nations and Israel, a remnant<sup>976</sup> of Israel will prevail.<sup>977</sup> This sacred portion that is preserved and restored after a dreadful desolation reveals that Yahweh's "holiness also means faithfulness,"<sup>978</sup> and their devastation is not the end.

Though this restoration is promised, the question is when will it occur? The

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<sup>974</sup> Isa 43:19; 60:22

<sup>975</sup> Isa 6:13; 10:20, 21, 22; 11:11; 18:5; 37:31; cf. 17:6; נִצַּר, 49:6, 8.

<sup>976</sup> See Hasel, *The Remnant*.

<sup>977</sup> In HOI's rebuke, there is hope. For even though Zion becomes a mere desolate shack (1:8), she is not completely destroyed. Yahweh's hand is in this because he could have exterminated her like Sodom and Gomorrah but he did not. The idea of a remnant (1:27; 2:2-4; 7:3; 10:18, 21, 22, etc.) is evident in Isaiah's preaching. He believes there is hope for his people, even if he does not live to see it. He believes that even out of a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, God can bring restoration.

<sup>978</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 61.

remnant will come as a result of HOI's purging and forgiveness, and Isaiah sees a future for a purified remnant. The anticipation of its arrival can be seen in Isaiah's question for "how long, O Lord?" (Isa 6:11), which reflects Isaiah's love for his people.<sup>979</sup> He grieves for Israel and deeply pleads God's mercy on her to swiftly end God's discipline. He knows that despite Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh's covenant, this covenantal relationship will not be abrogated. God has further expectations for his people. When Yahweh answers him in 6:11b-13, Yahweh assures Isaiah that he will vex, but not destroy.<sup>980</sup>

In fact, when Isaiah was sent to bring the most Holy One's healing message to his people (ch. 6), Yahweh did not call Isaiah to awaken the people to their sin in hope that they might repent and receive Yahweh's forgiveness (although he does so elsewhere). Instead Yahweh affirms the admission of the people's sin, but knows that this people will continue to rebel and remain blind to their own sin. Therefore they will suffer the consequences of their sinfulness and will perish, and their land will be desolated.<sup>981</sup> However, Yahweh punishes to save and he destroys to rebuild. His ultimate purpose is not destruction but salvation. Hence, Israel's time of discipline answers Isaiah's cry of despair, "How long, O Lord?"<sup>982</sup> During this period of devastation, Yahweh will also preserve a remnant (a tenth as well as the stock).<sup>983</sup> Although this idea of the tenth can be

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<sup>979</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:261-62.

<sup>980</sup> Georg Fohrer and E. Sellin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (trans. David E. Green; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 373 n. 34.

<sup>981</sup> Gray, *Book of Isaiah*, xci.

<sup>982</sup> See Hasel, *The Remnant*, 245.

<sup>983</sup> Different translations have been given for this difficult Hebrew text in Isa 6:13. For example, it can be read as the TNK with an expression of hope, or according to the ESV where verse 13 (except the last

characterized as a threat to show the magnitude of the impending disaster,<sup>984</sup> there remains the holy seed that expresses hope. This “holy seed” can be two possible referents: one to the Messiah, and the other to the remnant, the people of God, who seem to represent Abraham’s descendants due to the reference about them being his seed.<sup>985</sup> Some scholars like Chisholm propose a negative reading where the holy seed was the sacred pillars of the high places<sup>986</sup> because it usually means “pillar” and this is the only passage where it is used to mean “stump.” However, alongside with the context of previous verses of 6:11 “how long” and v. 12 “moved men far away,” its meaning should indicate “remnant.”<sup>987</sup>

Moreover, the sentence “a holy seed is its stock (6:13c) can be understood based on Job 14:7-9 where it was commonly known that a root stock of a chopped tree was able to sprout again.<sup>988</sup> The felling of the tree certainly meant its destruction, but not the extermination of the root stock’s life.<sup>989</sup> This idea of the root stock becomes a symbol for the destruction of the nation but also a symbol of its resurgent life which will grow out of

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line) continues the destruction mentioned in the preceding verses; cf. J. A. Emerton, “The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13,” in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal* (ed. J. A. Emerton and S. C. Reif; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 85-118.

<sup>984</sup> Hasel, *The Remnant*, 239-40.

<sup>985</sup> Oswalt notes that the “stump” in “stump of Jesse” in 11:1 is שרש instead of מנצבת as in 6:13 makes it difficult to associate it to the Messiah with certainty (*NIVAC: Isaiah*, 128).

<sup>986</sup> Chisholm Jr., *Prophets*, 27-28.

<sup>987</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah 1-39*, 140; cf. BDB’s validation.

<sup>988</sup> Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1942), 7:43-45.

<sup>989</sup> H. S. Gehman notes, “the stump, however, is not dead, but it will send forth new shoots from among which in due course a new tree will develop” (“The Ruler of the Universe: The Theology of First Isaiah,” *Int* 11 [1957]: 269-81, esp.270).



the remnant.<sup>990</sup> The root stock that remains is the “holy seed.” This remnant will seek Yahweh again in faith. It will not lean on its oppressors (cf. 10:1), but on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel “in truth” (אֱמוּנָה) (10:20). When the prophet uses the name of his son Shear-Yashub<sup>991</sup> (שָׂאֵר יָשׁוּב), “a remnant will return,” cf. 7:3) in 10:21, he is acknowledging that the powerful nations of Assyria (and later Babylon) cannot destroy God’s people. Through this terrible judgment, God’s people will return to their Holy God. They will no longer “rely on” their evil enemy, but will “trust” in HOI (10:20). Israel’s trust is legitimate because Yahweh as their Holy One is the true protector of his people (10:24-34). Therefore, the prophet instructs them not to “fear” Assyria since the Assyrians will quickly disappear under God’s direct destruction. This *remnant* testifies to HOI’s gracious compassion to restore his people, and his holy rebuke is a means of his holy redemption, which reflects his clear relationality with Israel.

In 12:6, on that day, the remnant will recognize Yahweh, HOI’s salvation and give thanks to him who is trustworthy (12:1-2) and able to save. The people will sing praise to his excellent deeds and proclaim how great is HOI who dwells in their midst. All the various descriptions of God climax with HOI. This one who has been majestically praised (in these previous verses) is in their midst! “The *only* Holy One in the universe is Israel’s God,”<sup>992</sup> who redeemed and restored his people according to his *hesed*<sup>993</sup> love is

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<sup>990</sup> This reflects the notion of Isa 6:13, where Yahweh’s “holiness” affirms his purification and forgiveness. Cf. Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1959), 323; Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 188.

<sup>991</sup> The riddance of sin and possibility of forgiveness which Isaiah personally experienced, is not limited to Isaiah himself. We see that in the name he gave his eldest son (*Shear-Yashub*, 7:3), Isaiah anticipated a remnant of individuals would return to Yahweh and receive forgiveness (Gray, *Book of Isaiah*, xci-xcii).

<sup>992</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 295.

among them. Thus, the remnant is rejoicing because of God's holy presence, which is equally an invitation to the nations beyond the remnant of Judah to receive this divine King. Yahweh's final act is not anger but reassurance of his salvation and presence about who he is, HOI (12:6), who does what is right. He will bring his abundant life to his remnant and all others who are invited into his presence.<sup>994</sup> In 37:32, the assurance of the remnant's redemption and restoration is guaranteed by "the zeal of Yahweh Almighty will do this." It is his zeal (not human endeavor or efforts) that will accomplish all these promises, and this zeal is manifested through HOI (37:23), who has committed himself as Israel's personal God.

#### 4.3.3.1.1.1 Gathers<sup>995</sup>

HOI is also involved in gathering his people to himself (43:3-6). Unlike the self-congratulatory sovereign shepherd depicted in the Babylonian Code of Hammurapi or the Sumerian law code of Lipit-Ishtar in ancient Near East, Yahweh's genuinely *caring* quality is described as a shepherd in 40:11.<sup>996</sup> His shepherd's love for Israel, cares for his sheep's safety and nurture first. This image that Isaiah portrays shows that all scattered sheep are gathered by their shepherd who knows their feeding time and takes them back

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<sup>993</sup> Cf. Robin Routledge describes God's *hesed* covenantal love: "It is that divine commitment to the relationship and the self-imposed obligation that accompanies it, which assures loyal action in accordance with it and which, in graciously bearing with his people's failure, actively seeks the continuance of the union in the face of all that threatens it" ("*Hesed* as Obligation: A Re-Examination," *TynBul* 46 [1995]: 179-96). Thus such a loving commitment from HOI to Israel can only flourish within the context of a relationship.

<sup>994</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 111.

<sup>995</sup> קבץ, Isa 40:11; 43:5; 54:7; 56:8.

<sup>996</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 55.

to the sheepfold for restoration. Such care is expressed in Exodus 15:13: “in your unfailing love you have led the people whom you have redeemed; in your strength you have guided them to your holy habitation.” Isaiah 40:9-11 describes a theophany of how the Holy One (40:25) gathers his people and leads them home.<sup>997</sup> In his compassion, he will restore his people. The metaphor of the “arm of Yahweh” in 40:10-11 depicts both God’s military strength<sup>998</sup> and tenderness in holding his lambs closely. In fact, the majority of the *pi’el* form of  $\text{יָבֵן}$  depicts God as the subject who restores Israel to the Promised Land.<sup>999</sup> The basis for the prophetic proclamation that God will scatter his people, but will again gather them into the land he has given them is Deut 30:1-10 (cf. 4:25-31).<sup>1000</sup> Moses speaks of the covenant promises and curses and a time when Israel’s disobedience (Deut 30:1-4) will lead to her banishment from the land, but the covenant promises made to Abraham will bring them back (Deut 30:6). Thus the prophet uses the word to show HOI’s (43:3; 54:5) personal concern in bringing Israel back into the land (43:5; 54:7; also 56:8; Jer 31:8, 10; Mic 2:12; 4:6; cf. Deut 30:3-4; Isa 49:18; 60:4) from around the world, from the east, west, north, and south (43:5; 11:12). Even idols are worthless in comparison to the genuine grace and pure passion of HOI (43:14) who truly redeems and restores the “blind” and the “deaf” (43:8). Smart views Isa 43:5 as having an eschatological concept of gathering his people continually until the last day.<sup>1001</sup> As HOI

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<sup>997</sup> H. E. von Waldow, “The Message of Deutero-Isaiah,” *Int* 22 (1968): 276.

<sup>998</sup> Cf. Isa 48:14; 51:9; 59:16; 63:5, 12.

<sup>999</sup> E. Jenni, *Das Hebräische Pi’el*, 188.

<sup>1000</sup> Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 346-61, 366-70.

<sup>1001</sup> James D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66* (London: Epworth Press, 1967), 97.

(43:3) gathers his scattered people in his loving and powerful arms of care, their ongoing relationship is restored. In this sense their journey through the wilderness is to be interpreted as a revelation of Yahweh presence's to overcome all adversities. Yet the main focus may not be so much upon the return of the exiles from Babylon to Zion but on Yahweh's "renewed care for his people" as their shepherd, more so than as a king.<sup>1002</sup>

The passage in 43:14-21 emphasizes the motif of returning home from exile. Here the prophet sees it as a counterpart to the exodus from Egypt. As Yahweh once liberated Israel from Egypt (cf. Deut 26:5-9), he will introduce a new salvation of returning from Babylon that no one knew about or could have anticipated.<sup>1003</sup> These events are the completion of Babylon's fall, and the restoration and renewal of God's people.<sup>1004</sup> Here HOI who is with Israel, does what is right by restoring his people from Babylon.

Moreover, the restored relationship between HOI and Israel is like a husband taking his wife back. In Isa 54:5-7 Israel is presented in a marital relationship with Yahweh, but she had been found unfaithful. Yet HOI acknowledges this abandonment is not permanent<sup>1005</sup> for he will "gather" her back with great compassion. God is calling back to himself his wayward wife, whom he had disciplined during the exile, and who had experienced the feeling of widowhood during the time of exile;<sup>1006</sup> her true restoration has now come through the redemption of her husband, Yahweh Almighty, her

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<sup>1002</sup> Berges, "Zion and the Kingship of Yahweh in Isaiah 40-55," 95-119, esp. 103.

<sup>1003</sup> See also 42:13; 48:21; 52:12; Exod 12:11; cf. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:246-47; C. R. North, "The 'Former Things' and the 'New Things' in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 116-18.

<sup>1004</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 249.

<sup>1005</sup> Cf. Isa 50:1: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce?"

<sup>1006</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 217.

Redeemer, HOI, who draws near to Israel. By his unfailing love and everlasting lovingkindness, Israel his wife, is restored and found her place. How powerful and mighty is her God. The one who is transcendently holy comes in person to initiate restoration. Therefore, Israel shall not be shamed and disgraced, which is a stark contrast to her position found in Jeremiah 3:25 “Let us lie down in our shame (בבשתנו). Let our disgrace (כלמתנו) cover us.”<sup>1007</sup> How much her situation has changed after God’s personal restoration, as HOI, of his people. This God also promises her that his *hesed* (חסד) will never be removed from her (54:10). *Hesed* here (54:8, 10) means “lovingkindness,” which occurs over two-hundred fifty times in the Old Testament and connotes especially a strong notion of God’s covenantal love to his people. This relationship can have such an eternal basis because it is based upon a confidence in HOI, who has committed himself as the Holy One “of Israel.” God also promises an everlasting covenant to those who listen and obey his offer (55:3). This is not just a newly made covenant, but a blessing of the covenant God already made with David and his progenies in 2 Sam 7:8-16. Thus, the faithful ones can experience God’s everlasting lovingkindness, his *hesed*.<sup>1008</sup>

#### 4.3.3.1.1.2 Heals the Wound<sup>1009</sup>

As a process of restoration, Yahweh binds up the fractures of his people and heals their wounds (Isa 30:26). His people cannot heal themselves just as they cannot save

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<sup>1007</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 420.

<sup>1008</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 219.

<sup>1009</sup> Isa 30:26.

themselves. Thus the gracious redeemer, HOI (30:15) takes initiative to go through the healing process—binding and healing the wounds to full recovery. This recovery is not just a means to go back to their previous situation but a total change introducing a new stage of transformation. For example, the people will weep no longer because God will hear their cry (30:19). He will reveal himself as their teacher (30:20), and the people will abandon their worthless idols (30:22). He will provide fruitful agriculture, fat cattle, and abundant supplies of water from the mountains (30:23-25a). He will also bring judgment on the day of great slaughter as the towers fall (30:25).<sup>1010</sup> This restoration is the reason why Isaiah writes about a much brighter moon and sun than before (30:26). Goldingay considers there is something of a correlation. “It perhaps also indicates the point of the metaphor in verses 25-26, that transformation of nature is a figure for transformation of human life, or at least accompanies it.”<sup>1011</sup> Likewise, when Israel returns, trusts, and depends upon HOI, “she may expect a new era of unbelievable fruitfulness.”<sup>1012</sup> Therefore when the redeemer, HOI, heals his people, it is not a mere putting-things-back process, but a transformation made by a marvelous salvation of astounding restoration.

#### 4.3.3.1.1.3 Teaches and Guides

As part of the restoration process, a life spent together with HOI, also provides divine guidance. HOI, the redeemer desires to personally teach his people. HOI (48:17; 49:7) identifies himself as his people’s teacher (לַמִּדָּה) and leader (דָּרַךְ) (48:17), who leads (נָהַג),

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<sup>1010</sup> Grogan, “*Isaiah*,” (2008) 6:668.

<sup>1011</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 172.

<sup>1012</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 562.

49:10) and guides (נָהַל, 49:10; cf. 57:18) Israel.<sup>1013</sup> In 48:17, HOI says, “I am Yahweh, your God, who teaches (לָמַד) you what is beneficial (יֵעִל,<sup>1014</sup> “to profit”; “which helps”), who leads you in the way<sup>1015</sup> you should go.” H. D. Preuss notes that this verb for “help” is used in a positive sense only here in the prophetic tradition. It contrasts with the gods who are “not able to help,” but only Yahweh “helps” his people. This verse is reminiscent of Yahweh’s opening statement in the Decalogue (“I am Yahweh,”<sup>1016</sup> Deut 5:6), which is introduced with the firm admonishment: “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I am speaking in your hearing today, that you may learn them (לָמַד) and keep them to do them (Deut 5:1). This statement clearly reflects Israel’s fundamental relationship to God as expressed in the First Commandment.<sup>1017</sup> Thus if they had observed his commandments they would have been blessed with: (1) well-being (שְׁלוֹם), (2) righteousness, and (3) many descendents enjoying his presence (48:17-19). However, the wicked ignore Yahweh’s instructions, therefore, “there is no *shalom* for the wicked, says Yahweh” (48:22). In previous times, Israel would not walk in God’s ways and listen

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<sup>1013</sup> Yahweh as: Instructor/Teacher: Exod 4:12, 15 (יָרָה); Deut 6:1; Pss 25:8 (יָרָה); 32:8 (יָרָה, שָׁכַל); 86:11(יָרָה); 119:171 (לָמַד); Isa 2:3 (יָרָה); 28:26 (יָרָה, יָסַר); Jer 32:33. Guide/Leader: Gen 24:48 (נָחָה); Exod 13:17 (נָחָה), 18 (סָבַב), 21 (נָחָה); 15:13 (נָהַל); Deut 8:2 (הִלֵּךְ); Pss 5:9[8]; 23:3 (נָחָה); 27:11 (יָרָה); 43:3; 77:21 [20]; 136:16 (הִלֵּךְ); Isa 40:11; 42:16 (דָּרַךְ); 57:18 (נָחָה); 63:14 (נָהַג).

<sup>1014</sup> H. D. Preuss, “יֵעִל, y<sup>l</sup>,” *TDOT* 6:144-47; see also M. Sæbo, “יֵעִל, y<sup>l</sup>,” hi. “To be of use,” *TLOT* 2:554-56.

<sup>1015</sup> “[T]he way” in 48:17b on which God wishes to guide his people may be literally the return of the exiles (cf. 43:16, 19; 49:9, 11; 51:10; and also used with the verbs “walk” and “lead” in 42:16). Cyrus’s “way” is noted in 48:15 and 45:13, and may mean his journey to Babylon. However, the figurative sense of the word can be justified by 40:14, 27; 55:7ff. This view fits the immediate context of 48:18a and by a similar formulation in 42:23f. (Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 594).

<sup>1016</sup> Note that both in Deut 5:6 and Exod 20:2 the pronoun “I” is written as אֲנִי, not אָנֹכִי.

<sup>1017</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 297.

to his instruction, but now she can learn from her downfall by listening in the future. K. Koch sees the reference here as not only to the superficial return to the promised land, but also the profound return to God and his will.<sup>1018</sup>

Yahweh's relationship with his people is not one of power manipulation or domination, or for them to control him. Rather, God has revealed himself to humanity in order to show them what their purpose is in life and how to attain that goal. He acts as Israel's teacher and provides the *torah*, or "instruction" to guide his people ultimately to himself and to their true identity.<sup>1019</sup> Apart from a relationship with Yahweh there is no true self. Only Yahweh can teach a person how to properly interact with God and with others. As a student, Israel should not be prescribing the way to God but must be willing to be directed by God. The construction לַמִּצְוָה plus ל plus inf. represents the instruction in what a person must do (Deut 20:18; Jer 12:16).<sup>1020</sup>

#### 4.3.3.1.2 Restores the City, the King and the Land<sup>1021</sup>

When God promises to restore his people, he will also restore their city. In fact, the city that belongs to HOI is privileged to receive God's divine presence. Gregory J. Polan writes that Zion receives God's salvation because her identity is linked to the Holy One of Israel (60:9, 14), who reverses Zion's situation. She who was once forsaken, desolate, with no one passing through her ("gates" implied) (60:15), will be changed into gates of

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<sup>1018</sup> K. Koch, *TWAT* 2:308f. cited in Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 594.

<sup>1019</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 281.

<sup>1020</sup> Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 594.

<sup>1021</sup> Isa 11:1, 2; 44:26, 28; 49:8.



“praise” (60:18). Yahweh’s divine effulgence (the “eternal light of the divine presence”<sup>1022</sup> that replaces the sun and the moon) will exalt the “once-prostrate” city (60:1), and this servant nation will be offered homage by other nations. The metaphor of light in Isa 60:1-3 reflects the relationship between Yahweh and Zion. God’s eternal presence will be life-giving (“endless blessing”), and the return of light will bring righteousness to the nation (60:21) that was once in darkness and gloom (59:9-10). All of this restoration that is done for Zion, thus affirms her being in full relationship with Yahweh, HOI.<sup>1023</sup>

In Isa 44:26,<sup>1024</sup> the use of “the verb אֶקְוֶמָה, a *po<sup>c</sup>lel* form from the root קוּם, denotes restoration and rebuilding what was once ruined.”<sup>1025</sup> As God’s people go free from exile, the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt (45:13) and HOI (45:11) will restore the city of Jerusalem to become a righteous and faithful city (1:26). His restorative hand will lay on the city to purify her like refiner’s fire burning away impurities. God’s act of judgment is thus combined with the act of restoration, to cleanse the dross, which will rebuild them to its full purpose.<sup>1026</sup> By reinstating the right kind of judges and counselors, the city will execute justice in truth. Yahweh promises this restoration in 24:23 and 26:1-

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<sup>1022</sup> God’s glory (vv. 1, 2, 13) conveys his nearness and life-giving force to his people (as well as his theophanic manifestation of dazzling light, fire, or cloud) (“Zion, the Glory of the Holy One of Israel: A Literary Analysis of Isaiah 60,” in *Imagery and Imagination in Biblical Literature: Essays in Honor of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F. S. C.* [ed. Lawrence Boadt and Mark S. Smith; CBQMS 32; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2001], 57).

<sup>1023</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One of Israel,” 65-71.

<sup>1024</sup> “[W]ho says of Jerusalem, she shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, they shall be built. And I will raise אֶקְוֶמָה up her ruins.”

<sup>1025</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 248.

<sup>1026</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 39.

2, where Yahweh Almighty will reign and reveal his glory before his elders. The city will receive a new kind of strength and Zion will become a transformed city of salvation and the center of all nations on earth.<sup>1027</sup>

When God promises to restore his city/people, in his mind, he also thinks of a completely restored kingdom ruled by the perfect king Messiah (11:1). He will come from one of the fallen stumps, which seems insignificant and helpless. But according to Oswalt: “From that helpless shoot (53:1, 2) would come the restoration of that nation and with it the end of the war (9:4 [Eng. 5]) and the establishment of that which the world has sought but never attained, namely, genuine security.”<sup>1028</sup> And later it is through the lowly beginnings of Christ the King<sup>1029</sup> that eternal salvation, restoration of the kingdom is accomplished; completely restoring the Davidic monarchy. This king has the full measure of all the charismata suitable to his office and administering justice.<sup>1030</sup> His leadership will demonstrate a supernatural endowment for his calling,<sup>1031</sup> which is distinctively different from earthly kings under whom many people have suffered throughout human history. On that day of restoration, under this godly new leadership, the poor will be rightly judged, the afflicted will be avenged because the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge, and the fear of Yahweh will be his delight (11:1-4). This will all come about following the light of Israel becoming a fire and the flame of the “Holy One” (10:17) administering righteousness. Following this destruction, the people

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<sup>1027</sup> Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 188.

<sup>1028</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 278.

<sup>1029</sup> Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah 1-39*, 214.

<sup>1030</sup> Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 122.

<sup>1031</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 279.

will see the stem of Jesse spring up to bring forth righteous judgments (cf. 11:4). This holy salvation that the people witness will cause them to praise Yahweh (ch. 12), acknowledging how great in their midst is HOI (12:6).

HOI reiterates the reason for his renewed commitment to the people in Zion—it is “for his own sake and for his servant David’s sake” (60:35). His transformative accomplishments through his chosen one will draw other nations to his divine light. We see the universal plan of God’s holiness here. As his glory is to fill the earth (6:3; cf. 40:5), so too will his holiness suffuse Israel’s worst enemies. Just as these nations were used as instruments for the purification of Israel (5:26-29; 7:18-19; 10:5-6), so also will these nations worship HOI.<sup>1032</sup>

Behind this restoration, there is the Servant’s (Messiah) ministry (49:1-13). Some scholars view the servant here as the nation, Israel, but Oswalt explicates it, “At the least, the language of the Servant’s call is that of an individual prophet (cf. Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15). But could this not be the nation as a prophet? Perhaps, if the language were not so explicit. However, as both Delitzsch and Westermann point out, the assigning of a name from the loins of my mother argues strongly against any collective idea.”<sup>1033</sup>

Again, however, in 49:3, the phrase “you are my Servant, Israel” brings up the issue again but it is clear that the term Israel is not used as name but is more focused on the function of Israel, which can be supported by the rest of the verse, “in whom I will be glorified.”<sup>1034</sup> Therefore, the community, Israel, is unfit for the official task that only the

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<sup>1032</sup> Haughey, *Housing Heaven’s Fire*, 55: These foreigners will come to the holy mountain to express joy in Yahweh’s house of prayer for all the peoples (57).

<sup>1033</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 289.

<sup>1034</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 291.

perfect Servant, the Servant of the Lord can do.<sup>1035</sup> The Servant is called to “bring Jacob back,” “gather Israel,” “be a light for the Gentiles,” bring eternal salvation to “the ends of the earth,” mediate God’s covenant with his people, and restore the land (49:5-8).<sup>1036</sup> Through restoring the land and freeing the captives Yahweh will make the Servant a covenant for the people and a light for the nations as God had pledged to Abraham the blessings of land, people, and relationships. The book of Isaiah uses shepherd imagery to describe the refreshed land on the day of salvation; the fertile land with ample pastures (49:9), rivers and springs flowing on the barren heights, pools of waters in the desert (41:17-18), and all kinds of trees growing in the wasteland (41:19). These trees, especially, that the text names here are the ones usually growing in fertile soil. That was the same desert where Israel’s forefathers experienced God’s miraculous provision during the Exodus. “The root (בְּקֶשֶׁת) and the substantive (יָרֵא) (v.17) link this unit with the previous one (vv. 11, 12).”<sup>1037</sup> The motif from the Exodus that influenced the prophet, which he uses here, signifies that this restoration goes beyond the previous condition; it will be even more abundant.<sup>1038</sup> All these promises of restoration will be fulfilled because

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<sup>1035</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 354.

<sup>1036</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 194-5.

<sup>1037</sup> Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 172.

<sup>1038</sup> As Samuel E. Balentine writes:

The new beginning is envisioned as a new Eden, resplendent with trees (note the seven species listed in 41:17-20; cf. 44:1-5) bearing fruits of ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ (e.g., 45:8) that transform Israel’s withered landscape into a fertile garden teeming with the possibilities of life. Unlike the Yahwist’s garden, which contained a forbidden tree of knowledge, Isaiah’s new Eden is a majestic grove that invites all people to understand what God is about (e.g., 41:20; 48:6-8). It is in effect, as William P. Brown has noted, a ‘victory garden,’ for it proves, in advance of the reality, that God will claim victory over Israel’s enemies (44:24-45:25) and will restore Israel to its land (41:17-20; 42:13-17; 43:16-21; 49:8-12).

(Balentine, “For No Reason,” *Int* 57 [2003]: 355; William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis*

it is “כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה.” “For its fulfillment, the Lord pledges His honor as the Redeemer of Israel, 42:8, and as Israel’s zealous defender against all enemies;”<sup>1039</sup> as HOI whose holy presence is manifested to a holy people (see also Isa 55:5).

#### **4.3.3.2 Restores Righteousness**<sup>1040</sup>

Isaiah understands that Israel’s Holy God seeks to reveal himself holy in righteousness (5:16). This means that the Holy One, who is morally perfect, seeks to restore justice in the world and among his people. When God brings salvation, it certainly reflects his righteousness. But God’s righteousness is more than “deliverance” for “the saving of his people is the clearest expression of God’s essential character, to do right.”<sup>1041</sup> Moreover, the prophet declares that HOI (45:11) will pour down a divine righteousness from heaven and his salvation will bring forth his righteousness from the earth (45:8). More specifically, HOI (1:4; 5:19) wants to restore righteousness to his people (e.g., 1: 21; 5:7). For instance, in the opening chapter of the book, the righteousness of the faithful city is emphasized twice, in the beginning and at the end (1:21, 26). Klaus notes that righteousness seems to be “more a divine gift and endowment than a human achievement. Nonetheless righteousness should become human behavior. That was the very purpose of God’s action.”<sup>1042</sup> Klaus explains the two connotations for the term righteousness. The

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*of Moral Imagination in the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 229-69).

<sup>1039</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 363.

<sup>1040</sup> Isa 45:8, 25; 54:11, 17; 60:17.

<sup>1041</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 206: “all of his actions are governed by the absolute right(eous)ness with which he treats every person, and by his determination to deliver every person from the consequences of his or her own sin, if only he or she will let him” (206).

<sup>1042</sup> Koch, “Damnation and Salvation,” 7.

noun *tsedeq*, found in 1:21 and 1:26, reveals the city receiving its endowment of a metaphorical righteous person. This *tsedeq* always relates to “integral wholeness” a “hypostasis or sphere originating in God’s own being.” Standing besides this noun is the feminine noun of the same root *ts<sup>e</sup>daqah* (1:27), which refers to a “single act of righteousness, sometimes even a divine act or to a human righteous behavior.”<sup>1043</sup> In this verse, the people repent, but it is not their repentance that qualifies Jerusalem to be considered a righteous city. It is, however, the divine gift of *tsedeq* that makes human repentance as *ts<sup>e</sup>daqah* possible. Thus *tsedeq* is the divine source preceding *ts<sup>e</sup>daqah* that gives humans the ability to live righteously (e.g., in 1:22, the original silver and wine are images of God-given *tsedeq*).<sup>1044</sup> In addition, the whole natural order, like the heavens, the skies, and the earth, is invited to participate in God’s restoring acts from whom all salvation and righteousness comes (45:8).<sup>1045</sup>

HOI’s righteousness will also judge the gross injustice prevailing in society (e.g., Isa 5:7-16, 18-24; 10:17, 20, 22; 41:10-14, 15-16). This discrepancy will be removed on the day when Yahweh comes to judge the earth (Isa 2:6-22; cf. Pss 96:13; 98:9). Judgment will begin on Mount Zion (Isa 28:21) and extend to all the nations (17:12-14). No human can escape from God, whose holiness will consume all impurity in order to establish a just society. However, divine judgment is for the purpose of salvation and in Zion’s case will cause her to become a city of righteousness (1:26).<sup>1046</sup> Isaiah knows that

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<sup>1043</sup> Koch, “Damnation and Salvation,” 9.

<sup>1044</sup> Koch, “Damnation and Salvation,” 9.

<sup>1045</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 106.

<sup>1046</sup> Cf. Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One of Israel,” 69: God’s eternal presence will remove the darkness and gloom (Isa 59:9-10) and restore righteousness through his eternal light (60:19b, 21).

God is the only one who can change Israel's darkness to light and their trouble to peace.<sup>1047</sup> Therefore, in order to become a city of righteousness, Israel should seek HOI because he alone is Israel's true redeemer (cf. 48:17-18) who brings righteousness (cf. Isa 5:16; 60:17).

Because of HOI's presence and influence in the city (60:14), the people will enjoy righteousness as their overseers and peace as their administrators (60:17). Also, in Isa 60:21b, the people of Zion are described as "the shoot" of God's "planting." A similar motif is found in Isa 61:3 where the people are called "oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." "Planting" is a recurring motif as well as a reference to the motif of "righteousness" (cf. Isa 60:21a; 61:3c). B. Batto notes how the "planting" motif is often found to be dealing with the planting of peace.<sup>1048</sup> The context of the planting is often associated with a divine authority overcoming sinfulness in order to restore wholeness in a broken situation.<sup>1049</sup> We can see how in Isa 60:21-22 it is the hand of Yahweh that accomplishes the planting and transforming of the people from lowliness to strength (60:22) and from being unjust to righteous (60:21). Therefore God's righteousness will be reclaimed through the restoration of Israel and his kingdom, when HOI exhibits his holiness among his people.

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<sup>1047</sup> Stuhlmuller, *Creative Redemption of Deutero-Isaiah*, 199-200: Thus the prophet emphasizes God as the only deliverer more than a Creator.

<sup>1048</sup> B. Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 187-211.

<sup>1049</sup> Batto, "The Covenant of Peace," 211.

## 4.4 Expected Response

### 4.4.1 Return of Israel

Based on HOI's righteousness and lovingkindness (e.g., he rebukes, redeems, and restores), it is now Israel's turn to return to the true living God and look to HOI (17:7) who seeks a right and personal relationship with Israel and all humankind. He already forgave them so that they can turn to him. Thus for Israel to reinstate her covenantal relationship with HOI, she only needs to do four things: turn (שוב, 31:6; 55:7; פנה, 45:22), revere (ירא, 29:13; ערץ, 29:23), trust (בטח, 12:2; בטחה, 30:15), and listen to HOI (שמע, 48:12).

Isaiah calls on the nation to come back to their Holy God who belongs to them because Israel's protection and deliverance comes only from HOI. Ultimately, they will know who the true God is and throw away those unholy idols that their hands made (as a means of sin like the golden calves [Deut. 9:21; Amos 8:14]).<sup>1050</sup> Turning to God means repenting and abandoning what they have been doing, practicing abominating idolatry. They cannot turn to God while they are holding those idols in their hands because of Yahweh's holiness. As Motyer explains, "*Return* is penitence that is more than mental, the practical redirection of life."<sup>1051</sup> There are huge contrasts between human-made idols and HOI. Although their idols were made out of precious silver and gold, and gave visible and tangible comforts, their uselessness and impotency will be manifested on that day, whereas an invisible Holy God is the "intangible deity who cannot be

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<sup>1050</sup> Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:491.

<sup>1051</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 256.



manipulated,”<sup>1052</sup> but is powerful and gracious to save his people. However, shame and appalling judgment awaits those who oppose HOI.<sup>1053</sup> Therefore, Isaiah urges the Israelites to return to HOI and redirect their life before the judgment day.

Furthermore, the fundamental expression of faith in the OT is reverence or “the fear of the Lord” (יִרָא, Isa 29:13, the fear of God is not taught by man’s precept, but is a religion of the heart; cf. 29:23, stand in “awe,” [עָרַץ] of the Holy One). This term “fear” can mean faith and expectation. The word always presupposes the holiness of God, which evokes fear in a person upon that person’s first encounter (Exod 19; Isa 6; Ezek 1).<sup>1054</sup>

In Isa 29:23, it is apparent that when God’s children openly acknowledge God’s faithfulness and display their awe of God, they sanctify his holy name. Motyer asserts that Isaiah distinguishes between “acknowledging the holiness [*hip<sup>c</sup>il* of קִדְּשׁ, “to acknowledge as holy” is used twice] of the name” and of “the Holy One of Jacob/Israel.” “The former is the nature of God as he has revealed himself, and the latter is the presence of the Lord among his people.”<sup>1055</sup>

When HOI comes in person, he brings his trustworthy and awesome salvation (12:2-6). When the people declare him to be their “strength and song,” he has become everything to them because they have abandoned all other trust. Isaiah believes in the day when the people will trust in God so completely that all fear is banished (12:2).<sup>1056</sup>

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<sup>1052</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 575.

<sup>1053</sup> Peter D. Miscall, *Isaiah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 113.

<sup>1054</sup> Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 160-61; Bill T. Arnold, “The Love-Fear Antimony in Deuteronomy 5-11,” *VT* 61 (2011): 551-69.

<sup>1055</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 243.

<sup>1056</sup> Grogan, “*Isaiah*,” (2008) 6:550-51.

Thus, the book of Isaiah confidently calls its readers to have faith in Yahweh (“to believe,” Isa 7:9) and trust in HOI (in “quietness and confidence,” 30:15) for he has come into their midst. When Isaiah boldly preaches a trust in HOI that points the way back to God, he is also calling them to obey HOI. In other words, ‘trust’ can mean to “lean.” A real remnant in that day is one who relies upon HOI (in Isa 10:20, he does not use the word “believe” [אָמַן] as it is found in 7:9 and 28:16) and does so “in truth” (בְּאֵמֶת). This appendage clarifies that there will be no superficial faith when one truly leans (שָׁעַן) upon Yahweh.<sup>1057</sup> Wholehearted leaning on God and living a righteous life will require listening to HOI. Therefore, through obedience to HOI and living a righteous life, the remnant can truly prove whether their reverence and trust is genuine or not.

Moreover, because HOI is the indwelling personal holy redeemer who leads (דָּרָךְ, 48:17; נִהַג, 49:10) and guides (נִהַל, 49:10) Israel in the right way to live, it is for her benefit to return to the Holy One “of Israel” (who belongs to her) whose manifested presence secures Israel’s safety.

#### 4.4.2 Return of All Nations<sup>1058</sup>

Through the restoration of Israel and her witnesses, all the nations will also return to HOI. In 60:1-2, Isaiah encourages God’s people to shine the light of God, which is the Lord’s glory:

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<sup>1057</sup> Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 436-37: For in Mic 3:11, the phrase “lean upon Yahweh” that is used in the cult is treated with skepticism as reflecting a disingenuous type of trust by the people (contra the בְּטָח expected in 30:12; 31:1). Thus one can understand why Isaiah has to modify this term that often describes false confidence by stating that it must be also established “in truth” (בְּאֵמֶת).

<sup>1058</sup> Isa 55:5; 60:3, 5, 11, 14, 18.

Arise, shine for your light has come,  
 and the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you.  
 For the darkness shall cover the earth,  
 And thick darkness the peoples;  
 But Yahweh will arise upon you,  
 and his glory will appear over you.

Israel will look radiant (60:5), and the Lord's glory will outshine the darkness around the world, and it will draw the nations to the light. The nations will come to honor HOI (60:9; cf. 2:2-3), recognizing the splendor he endowed upon his people. According to Hanson, God's light breaks forth in darkness as a means to renew the hope of a wavering community. God's salvation comes to release human bondage and suffering. This theme of God's light was already noted earlier in Isa 9:2, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," and in Isa 42:16, "I will turn the darkness before them into light." God's prominent power brings a brilliant majestic light that will break through the darkness of death. This promise of restoration would pierce the gathering gloom and guide them toward a "life of integrity and wholeness."<sup>1059</sup>

The word פאר (to beautify, glorify, adorn) is used six times and כבוד is used four times in ch. 60. While both may have a sense of "glory" there are differences between the two. The noun כבוד often refers to a visible and dazzling theophanic splendor of light, fire or cloud. It conveys the notion of nearness or divine presence. The כבוד of Yahweh is a life-giving force for God's people and its presence provides salvific assistance (Exod 29:43; Ezek 39:13, 21).<sup>1060</sup> The use of פאר reveals God's desire to see Zion prosper,

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<sup>1059</sup> Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 219-220.

<sup>1060</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (AB Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 169.

adorning her with wealth and beauty.<sup>1061</sup> Thus the light of the city is the holiness of HOI filling the place with his כבוד, his near presence (60:1; 6:3).

Besides, the word אור (light) is used five times in this chapter and is closely related to the “glory” of the Lord in Isa 60:1. Both are merged together with the verb זרח (to dawn, to rise). In the opening chapter, the light dawns upon Zion, dismissing the darkness over the earth. Then in the final verses 19-20, the light comes to its full splendor, replacing the radiance of the sun and moon, and the light of God will become their everlasting light.<sup>1062</sup> Indeed, אורך (your light) and כבודו (effulgence of Yahweh) describe God’s blessing that comes to those who practice justice and righteousness (Isa 58:6-7, 9b-10a), and who do not feign uprightness.<sup>1063</sup> Those who understand genuine fasting will practice justice and righteousness, then their light will dawn and they will know vindication (צדקה) and the כבוד of Yahweh will be their rear guard (58:8). Thus in Isa 58:8-10, the symbol of “light” is associated with divine deliverance (צדקה) which is grounded in justice and righteousness.<sup>1064</sup> This concept is similarly found in Isa 59:9 where a life of injustice drives the light away, “Therefore, justice is far from us and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but behold, darkness; for brightness, but walk in gloom.” In the later parts of Isaiah, light is a symbol of both just action and Yahweh’s deliverance, the one who establishes his glory upon Zion. Thus the dawning

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<sup>1061</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 58.

<sup>1062</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 58.

<sup>1063</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 61.

<sup>1064</sup> O. H. Steck, *Studien zu Tritojesaja* (BZAW 203; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 104 cited in Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 61.

light in Isa 60:1-3 describes a metaphorical relationship between Yahweh and the woman, Zion. Light and divine “glory” are symbols of salvific deliverance, which will lead to a social order of justice and righteousness.<sup>1065</sup> And this city of Zion is purged of its darkness and beautified by the nations because it belongs to HOI (60:14), who ultimately will exalt himself before the world.

Indeed, God calls not only Israel, but also the nations, to the light because although Israel was adopted as the first son, God also has other children (Isaiah 19:24-25; cf. 56:7: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples”). In Isaiah 55:5, Israel will summon nations, and they will *run* to Israel because of the HOI. In Isaiah 60:3, nations come to the light of HOI’s glory upon Israel. But the children of those who despised Israel will fall prostrate before Zion (60:14) of the HOI. For Isaiah, the rule of God was not limited to Zion or Israel, but extended globally to the nations (Isa 2:2-4; 6:3; 10:5-15; 11:6-9). Thus God’s passion is for his holy righteousness, moral purity, and his kingly reign to extend to all the earth as an extension of his holiness and glory (6:3).

In fact, the repeated use of second person feminine singular (fifty-one times in ch. 60) reminds the reader of how God will bring nations to bow before Zion and her children (60:3, 5, 6, 10). The temple is now having accouterments being brought so that sacrificial worship can be resumed. Isaiah explains in 60:10b how the Lord turned from his anger/wrath to compassion that results in the procession of the world toward Jerusalem (cf. 57:17-18, where anger and striking are parallel to healing and comfort). These acts of salvation reflect the Lord’s redemptive act toward Zion.<sup>1066</sup> The whole

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<sup>1065</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 62.

<sup>1066</sup> Polan, “Zion, the Glory of the Holy One,” 64.

stanza depicts the reversed fortune for Zion: She who was once exiled and a servant to the nations is now being honored in her own land. This stanza reveals the tremendous transformation taking place in Zion as noted in Isaiah 60. It is Zion, who for the first time is named the recipient of God's goodwill and is exalted as belonging to the "Holy One of Israel."<sup>1067</sup> It is only possible because of salvation from God through God's holy righteousness. As all these good things are derived solely from the holiness of HOI (cf. 5:16), Pieper explains that "it includes all temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual, gifts that lie in God's power to bestow, — the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ that is imputed to faith without any human merit or contribution whatsoever."<sup>1068</sup>

Moreover, one sees in ch. 60 the description of glory and its transformation in each distinct stanza. This glory produces transformation throughout each line of this poem.<sup>1069</sup> Yahweh transforms Zion to change her mourning into joy, darkness into light, loneliness into eternal presence, and worthlessness into strength. Zion is renewed and acts of reversal are evident: she who was once humbled before the nations is now praised by foreigners. The light which the nations turn to is the life-giving light of Yahweh that transformed Zion. Through Zion, the nations behold what Yahweh has recreated and made new.<sup>1070</sup>

Therefore all nations will go on an eschatological pilgrimage to Zion (2:1-4) and return to HOI. This notion is more palpable in chapters 54 and 55. At first, the theme of God's covenant with his people becomes explicit through a reference to the covenant

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<sup>1067</sup> Polan, "Zion, the Glory of the Holy One," 64.

<sup>1068</sup> Pieper, *Isaiah II*, 613.

<sup>1069</sup> Polan, "Zion, the Glory of the Holy One," 71.

<sup>1070</sup> Polan, "Zion, the Glory of the Holy One," 71.

with Noah, which is designated as an “eternal covenant” (Gen 9:16; cf. 9:12). The effects of God’s oath sworn then to all living creatures is now repeated as God swears not to be provoked to anger against Israel. Yahweh brings his bride home again and declares: “my steadfast love” (חסדי) shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace (ברית שלומי) shall not be removed” (Isa 54:10). Yahweh’s covenantal commitments are reflected by keywords used in both chapters: “compassion” (רחמים, Isa 54:7, 8, 10), “with everlasting love” (בחסד עולם, Isa 54:8; חסדי, 54:10), “everlasting covenant” (55:3), and “my faithful mercies” (חסדי, 55:3). The “covenant of peace” mentioned here can also be associated with statements from ch. 2. Yahweh now elaborates how his faithfulness to Israel is related to the nations. In 55:5 Isaiah shows that the Servant Messiah will bring a glorious light to the nations and draw them to God. This does not deny that Israel will also play a role as well. For as the Messiah calls all nations to himself, the nations will then come to Israel to learn God’s ways. Thus Israel’s role would be, like Moses, proclaiming the *torah* to the nations who make their pilgrimage to Zion (Isa 2:2-4). Foreigners who observe God’s law (and hold fast to his covenant) are given the chance to gather with the people of Yahweh (cf. Isa 56:1-8).<sup>1071</sup> The Lord gives the wicked and unrighteous a chance to repent and return to Yahweh, HOI, who draws near to Israel and is compassionate and ready to pardon (55:7). This is why his thoughts and ways are beyond ours and Yahweh’s word will be accomplished. Consequently, God’s people are to keep justice and do righteousness, for in his salvation, Yahweh’s righteousness will be revealed (56:1). Thus, as the light of Yahweh’s glory rises upon his people, nations will

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<sup>1071</sup> Cf. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 50-54.

gather to worship Yahweh, HOI at his sanctuary. They will offer gold, silver, and frankincense (60:6, 9) to his house, and those who despised Israel will give homage to Zion and praise this city of HOI. What an honor and blessing for Yahweh's people to be at the center of this universal blessing that glorifies Yahweh's name through their return to Zion. The name of Israel that once was profaned but is now exalted on high is due to the work of their Redeemer, the *Holy One of Israel*, who is the lofty, exalted, and righteous God, who has adorned his holy remnant (4:3) with his presence.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This present study has investigated the theological significance of the epithet—“the Holy One of Israel” [HOI] (קדוש ישראל) in the book of Isaiah. It was accomplished by first examining the usage of the root term קדש in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament. From Akkadian, the term describes things, persons, or places that have been “cleansed, purified” and therefore “consecrated, dedicated” to the deity. The Sumerian term for holy describes affairs related to the divine realm. The Ugaritic and Phoenician-Punic usages of *qdš* mean “holy” or “to consecrate” and are used to describe the gods, cultic servants, things, places and sanctuary. The term when used in reference to a deity, designates it as a divine being removed from the earthly sphere. However, unlike the Old Testament usages, they do not reflect an ethical or moral connotation. In the Old Testament, the term means being “consecrated” or “holy” and for God, it connotes his “wholly-otherness.” The adjective “holy” represents that which belongs to the sphere of God’s being or activity and is used to describe people, places, and God. But when speaking about Yahweh’s holiness, the ethically neutral term קדש was given a new meaning to highlight Yahweh’s moral and ethical perfection. Thus when Isaiah met Yahweh during Isaiah’s throne room vision, he saw the majestic “wholly-other” and was awe-struck by Yahweh’s radiant glory reflecting his holiness. The presence of the most Holy God immediately caused Isaiah to worship him, and also recognize Isaiah’s own sinfulness. Once Isaiah

confessed his guilt, the Holy One purified Isaiah of his iniquity and sin. As a result of this personal encounter, Isaiah understood that the Holy One wanted to bring his holiness to the people. It is this divine willingness to heal and restore righteousness in God's people that inspired Isaiah to call his people to return to Yahweh. Although the epithet—"the Holy One of Israel" is not present in Isaiah 6, it is this author's opinion that this experience influenced Isaiah's understanding and use of the epithet. When he speaks of this epithet to Israel, it means more than a divine title, for it reflects Isaiah's belief that the Holy One of Israel, who is lofty and exalted (majestic and powerful), will do what is right to redeem his people.

Israel's God, however, does not wait for a rebellious Israel to come back to him. As HOI, he takes the initiative to seek out a covenantal relationship with his sinful people. Even though HOI was rejected by his wayward and rebellious people, he did not give up on them. Instead he revealed his commitment to Israel as "the Holy One of Israel" who desires to manifest his holy presence before them. The Isaianic use of the epithet reminds Israel of the immanence of the transcendent, powerful, and pure God who belongs to Israel. The epithet emphasizes HOI's relationality with Israel and it connotes: "the Holy One of Israel, *the powerful righteous redeemer is with you.*"

Furthermore, since holiness is the essence of Yahweh's nature, one learns more about his holy character through the various roles he plays in the different contexts of the text. Therefore, the twenty-five verses where "the Holy One of Israel" occurs were briefly examined to provide a foundational understanding to HOI's character and roles. The next chapter provided an analysis of Yahweh's relationship with Israel as revealed in the epithet, noting his character, roles and functions as the Holy One of Israel,

emphasizing, he who does what is right is with Israel.

The Holy One of Israel's relational character traits are unique and distinctive from the other gods in the ancient Near East—e.g., Only HOI is both transcendent and personal. He is sovereign and powerful and has supreme knowledge and authority. He is the eternal God who knows the future and has the power to accomplish his righteous purposes.

The Holy One of Israel is an unique and incomparable God who cares about righteousness and justice, and can personally sanctify his people. He is unlike the other inferior human-made idols/gods that are amoral and powerless to establish genuine righteousness in people. But when HOI manifests his presence, his glory reflects a holiness that testifies to his mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness.

The Holy One of Israel's roles with Israel also emphasize his personal relationship with his chosen people. The use of the epithet affirms that HOI is Israel's personal God, Creator, Husband, King, Father, and Redeemer and Savior. The Holy One of Israel cares for his rebellious people as evidenced by his rebuking, redeeming, and restoring them to whom they belonged. It is sad to see his own children rebel against him and repudiate his holy counsel and laws. Israel instead prefers to rely on idolatry, divination, and political alliances for personal and national help. Thus she has rejected her true divine King.

With such rebellion, HOI must execute judgment upon Israel's sin and arrogance. His rebuke of her rebellion is meant to purge her of her sins and cause her to return to HOI. He is ready to forgive her of her sins and will do so for his name's sake. With his lovingkindness, HOI will redeem Israel and comfort her with his presence. His intimate

presence is evidenced by HOI calling Israel by name, affirming that he is her God, promising to be with her, to help her, and will not forsake her, nor forget her. His redeeming nature, which manifests his holiness, will teach and guide Israel on the path of righteousness. Therefore HOI seeks to restore his relationship with his rebellious people in order to establish a holy remnant; he will do so by gathering, healing, teaching and guiding them. He will also restore their city, king, and land. And in that day, when HOI manifests his light upon his people, Zion will be exalted with his glory, and righteousness will be restored. The display of God's glory will draw the faithful remnant of God to return to Zion and attract the nations to come and worship Yahweh, HOI.

HOI is indeed the lofty and exalted one who is the sovereign God of all creation. But to speak about HOI is to personalize Israel's God as being not just transcendent, but also immanent. He is, as HOI, constantly reaching out to his own people. God did not choose Egypt nor any other nations to be his treasured possession. He called and created Israel to be his holy nation. The book of Isaiah thus uses this epithet to remind its readers that, "HOI, *the powerful righteous redeemer is with you.*" Hence, their holy and righteous (Isa 60:21) status can only be achieved when they return and revere HOI. When Israel repents and is humble enough to exalt HOI, she can experience HOI's restoration and renewal; and the world will also recognize HOI's holiness.

In summary, the holiness of HOI transforms his people to exchange their mourning into joy, darkness into light, loneliness into eternal presence with God, and worthlessness into strength (Isa 60). God's people will also see and experience HOI's glorious fame replacing their past shame (cf. Isa 54:4). This glorious redemption will prove that indeed, it was Israel's greatest privilege to relate to the only true redeemer, the

Holy God who says, “I am Yahweh, and there is no other; besides me there is no God...the Holy One of Israel, and his maker” (Isa. 45:5, 11).

Finally, this study is not meant to provide the final answer on the nature of Yahweh’s holiness as HOI, but is rather an invitation to continue on the journey of examining the additional roles and functions of HOI in the book of Isaiah and in the other six Old Testament passages.<sup>1072</sup> This study focused mainly on the relationality of HOI, who is Israel’s true, powerful, and righteous redeemer, who though rebelled against, comes to rebuke, redeem, and restore his people. For HOI, who exercises righteousness, *is with Israel*.

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<sup>1072</sup> 2 Kgs 19:22 [duplicate of Isa 37]; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Pss 71:22; 78:41; 89:19 [18]; cf. Ezek 39:7, “Holy One *in* Israel.”

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