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**Hanna Liss,**

**“Undisclosed Speech: Patterns of Communication in the Book of Isaiah”**

# Undisclosed Speech: Patterns of Communication in the Book of Isaiah<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Preliminary remarks on modern research on Isaiah

- 1.1. Modern research on Isaiah has made tremendous progress during the last twenty years. This advance is primarily due to the fact that redactional questions concerning the *development of the book as a whole* have resulted in a number of challenging conclusions.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, many of the axioms by which the interpretation of the prophet's message is determined have never been called into question. The eighth-century Isaiah had a good eye for the abuses in his own society; reproaching his society, in particular its political and cultic representatives, for their transgressions. The picture drawn of the Judean society is extremely decadent: addiction to luxury (Isaiah 3), roaring celebrations (Isaiah 5), law-breaking (Isaiah 5), and drunken priests (Isaiah 28). Isaiah sharply exposed the system in which crushing pledges and taxes drove the small farmers into debt-induced slavery, while at the same time big landowners increased their large landholdings and indulged in *Dolce Vita*. But the prophet does not only attack the Judean society in relation to these internal problems. In view of the Assyrian western expansion that cast its long shadows in the Ancient Near East, at the latest since 745, foreign policy and the question of policy vis-à-vis the allies

was Isaiah's topic in particular. There is widespread agreement, that the eighth-century prophet announced total "judgment"<sup>3</sup> to a generation generally characterized as "stubborn sons of Judah." With this characterization, it is argued, he claimed that the destruction of large parts of the Judean *shefela* could have been averted if the kings (Ahab, Hezekiah) had abstained from military aid by Assur and Egypt and instead had trusted in God.<sup>4</sup> The prophet had acted in vain for at least 30 years against the resistance of a rebellious people.

- 1.2. This interpretation is generally linked to the so-called 'command not to comprehend' (Isa 6:9-10). We read for instance:

If it should actually be true, that the 'command not to comprehend' stands at the beginning of Isaiah's activities, and if we should take this command seriously, then we would be faced with the following consequence: no matter what the prophet proclaims, it would always be the execution of this non-comprehension, the execution of judgment."<sup>5</sup>

Another argument for the separation of non-comprehension and Isaianic proclamation is the epistemological observation that he cannot preach non-comprehension if he desires communication. The request: "listen but please do not understand" is paradox and contrary to any purpose of communication (...) In the exegesis of this passage we have to become aware that the command not to comprehend does not have an object that we could lay our hands on. In terms of communication, therefore, chapter 6,9-10 is sheer without substance.<sup>6</sup>

- 1.3. These conclusions by R. Kilian (1977) and U. Berges (1998) are quoted here *pars pro toto* for many Biblical scholars. There has hardly been a passage in the biblical corpus that has placed upon its interpreters such difficulties of interpretation as Isaiah ben Amoz's 'command not to comprehend.' Kilian's and Berges' interpretations show in remarkable clarity the exegetical 'bag of tricks' that has to be opened to master these difficulties. We find unanimity especially on two issues: first, the 'command not to comprehend' describes a situation that

negates any purpose of communication; second, prophetic speech is “intended communication,” “clear instruction. This combination presents us with a problem: clear instruction seeks to be heard and understood, but what exactly is “clear instruction?” Who are its addressees? And, did Isaiah truly speak clearly at all times? What does it mean, when it is written that the prophet spoke with *strange lips and with an alien tongue* (Isa 28:11a), or when we read that *God will work his alien work* (Isa 28:21)?

- 1.4. The concept of stubborn-resistance, as we find it in the classical passages referring to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in the Book of Exodus, is often applied to the Book of Isaiah. This concept (in German: ‘Verstockung’) does not have a direct linguistic equivalent in Hebrew. A determinative concept, however, that is common to both Exodus and Isaiah is a negative communicational relationship between God and a human being (or collectively: the people of Israel).<sup>7</sup> This negative communication is seen where the word of God to the people is either simply not heard, or where human action occurs in contradiction to the intentions of God. The hermeneutical starting point of almost every exegetical interaction with the non-comprehension statements in Isaiah is the classification of prophetic proclamation as “message of salvation” on the one hand and “proclamation of judgment” on the other. The polarity of this classification is based on the hypothesis that God, in all instances, wants to create a positive communicational relationship between himself and his people, and that only the negative response of the people leads to a ruinous act of judgment. The

“hardening” is seen as God’s judicial reaction to the wrongful behavior of the people or, specifically, of their political and cultic representatives.

**1.5.** Only a few scholars so far (such as G. von Rad<sup>8</sup>, F. D. Hubmann<sup>9</sup> and recently F. Landy<sup>10</sup>) have gone against this hypothesis. One of its consequences is very often a psychological or historical explanation of the (literary) genesis of the ‘command not to comprehend.’ The advocates of the so-called ‘Rückprojizierungsthese’ (first introduced by F. Hesse)<sup>11</sup> separate the command itself in Isaiah 6:9ff. from Isaiah’s activities (in word and deed) as recorded in *First Isaiah*. These advocates subsequently do not ask the question of how the command influenced the practical shaping of the prophet’s action in word and in prophetic sign. In other words, they do not ask about the execution of the command itself.

**1.6.** In the following, I would like to raise the question of whether or not the premise of what will be introduced shortly can be accepted without question. Can Isaiah’s message actually be reduced to the argument of a “pious prophet” on one hand, and the “obstinate people” on the other? Was Isaiah essentially offering clear instruction as support for the formation of opinion for the political and cultic elite? Does the Isaianic tradition convey that listening to and acting according to the prophetic message could have dammed the Assyrian expansion, and thereby could have prevented the destruction of large portions of the Judean empire? And, last but not least, with regard to the question of whoever handed down the Isaianic tradition, one might ask whether these agents, as part of ‘this people’ (still!), wanted to portray themselves only in terms of a “stubborn people.”

**1.7.** The hermeneutical starting point for the following observations will be the structure created by the lack of communicational equivalence between prophet and people caused by the ‘command not to comprehend.’ This structure will be used as the basis to develop a constructive assessment of Isaiah’s prophetic effectiveness (as well as its reception by later agents of tradition).<sup>12</sup> The exegesis will concentrate primarily on stylistic aspects of the text. The textual basis of the following arguments is constituted by texts, which are classified according to form and content by many scholars as Isaianic.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. The foundation of a structure of ‘non-communication’**

### **2.1. The ‘command not to comprehend’ (Isa 6:9-10)**

6:9 He said:

Go then, and say to this people:

‘Keep hearing, but do not comprehend -

Keep seeing, but do not understand!’

6:10

Make dull the mind of this people,

Stop their ears, and glue their eyes shut!

Lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears,  
and understand with their hearts, and turn and be  
healed (...)

**2.1.1.** Isaiah 6:9ff. (שמעו שמוע ואל תבינו) describes the actual ‘command not to comprehend.’ The grammatical structure (verbs of perception without direct object) serves as a first indication that the imperatival call to hear and to see does not refer to anything concrete, but merely constitutes the initial situation between speaker and listener.<sup>14</sup> The speaker asks the audience repeatedly for a communicative interaction (Isa 6:9bαβ) which, at the same time, is not upheld. Isa 6:9bαβ implies, therefore, that a basic communicative readiness on the part of the

people, triggered by the command for hearing and seeing (שמעו שמוע), is inverted by the requests for not understanding and not recognizing, that is, by אל תבינו .

2.1.2. V10ab describes a second command, which is directed to the prophet as its immediate subject. Compare the following outline of the different levels of communication (= LC).

	LC <sub>3</sub>	LC <sub>2</sub>	LC <sub>1</sub>
			ויאמר
		לך ואמרת לעם הזה	
	שמעו שמוע ואל תבינו		
		השמן לב העם הזה	
			ואמר

2.1.3. Like the ‘command not to comprehend,’ the second command imposed on Isaiah not only shows an imperatival structure (Imp. hiph. \*שמן; \*כבד; \*שמע), but also a metaphorical usage of its verbs. Since v10 uses an identical vocabulary (\*שמע; \*בין; \*ראה), a close relationship between both commands is established: by transmitting the ‘command not to comprehend,’ the prophet causes the condition illustrated in v10 (...פן יראה) to come into being. As a first result, one can say that the ‘command not to comprehend’ in Isa 6:9-10 presents as its primary

intention the formation of a negative communicative interaction. According to our text, the negation of hearing, seeing, and understanding is not rooted in the people's transgressions, but in the appearance of the prophet. Isa 6:9-10 explicates that the creation of non-communication, i.e. the rejection of the word of YHWH, is not left to the people, but rather arises from the command itself. If this call has any positive meaning at all, then this meaning can only be found on the level of communication, not within the logic of the text. This leads us to the next interpretative step. The 'command not to comprehend' reveals a higher goal, namely the intention to create a negatively qualified communication between the prophet and the people. All this points to the first assumption that the inner structure of the 'command not to comprehend' does not render the speech recorded in Isa 6:9ff. as a clearly understandable prophetic word, i.e., a word that would open a real possibility of decision for the people. The command thus does contain a prophetic mission that at first glance is a contradiction in terms:<sup>15</sup> YHWH intends to move the people, through the prophetic word, into the status of non-comprehension.

## 2.2. The vision as an experience of ‘non-communication’ (Isa 6:1-8)

- 6:1 In the year of King Uzziah’s death,  
I saw the LORD seated on a throne raised up on high,  
his lower area<sup>16</sup> filling the palace.
- 6:2 *seraphim* were in attendance above him: Each of them had six wings:  
with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and  
with two he flew.
- 6:3 (Each) called out to the other, saying:  
‘Holy, holy, holy is YHWH *Zeva’ot*: This, what the  
whole earth fills, is his glory’<sup>17</sup>
- 6:4 The pivots of the threshold shook at the sound of their call, and  
the house began to fill with smoke.
- 6:5 And I said:  
‘Woe is me, for I am silenced!’<sup>18</sup>  
For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a  
people of unclean lips.  
For my eyes have seen the king, YHWH *Zeva’ot*.’
- 6:6 Then one of the *seraphim* flew to me, (holding) a hot coal in his  
hand that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.
- 6:7 He touched (it) to my mouth, and said:  
‘Behold! (Now) this has touched your lips,  
your guilt is removed, and your sin is purged<sup>19</sup> away.’<sup>20</sup>
- 6:8 Then I heard the call of the LORD saying:  
‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’  
And I said:  
‘Here I am! Send me!’

**2.2.1.** In the following, the visionary experience in Isa 6:1-8<sup>21</sup> shall be described mainly in terms of its communicative structure: how does the text depict the relationship between the *dramatis personae*? How does the speaker, the “prophetic I” (*P*I), describe his visionary confrontation with the (sovereign) LORD, and what

implications arise from the visionary experience with regard to the ‘command not to comprehend?’

**2.2.2.** At the center of the introductory segment of these verses stands the attribute of holiness expressing the existing distance between YHWH and the prophet. The entire scene is thus dominated by the dialectic movement between the Lord’s immediacy and his simultaneous distance to the observer. There is no construction of a communicative relationship to Isaiah. During the entire introductory scene (vv1-4), Isaiah remains in the role of a passive observer. He can only respond to the immediacy and close proximity of the Lord with the awareness of his own distance from God (v5).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the text presents as corresponding elements on LC<sub>2</sub> the ‘Holy, holy’-call of the *seraphim*<sup>23</sup> and the ‘Woe’-cry of Isaiah:

	LC <sub>3</sub>	LC <sub>2</sub>	LC <sub>1</sub>
			(...)
		קדוש קדוש יהוה צבאות	
			(...)
		אוי לי כי נדמית כי איש טמא שפתים אנוכי	

**2.2.3.** The vision-report (vv1-5) defines the lack of communicative equivalence between Isaiah and YHWH as a necessary element of a meeting between “impure” human beings, in particular the ‘people of unclean lips,’ and the divine king. In that respect, Isaiah does not hold any particular status. The text portrays him as part of the people among whom he lives.

**2.2.4.** The moment Isaiah becomes aware of his “impurity,” he is approached by the divine sphere through one of the *seraphim*. ‘Guilt’ and ‘sin’ (עוֹן; חַטָּאת) are not elucidated in any more detail. Yet, by correlating the ‘purification’ and the unclean lips, the speech of the *saraph* clearly puts a connection forward between ‘guilt/sin’ on the one hand and ‘unclean lips’ on the other.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, one can say that the phrase of the ‘unclean lips’ expresses in general the deficient status of man facing the Holy One. Isaiah’s ‘silence’ (\* דַּמּוּהּ II [=\* דַּמּוּם] ni.) is the necessary consequence of the vision. It is a relationship of non-communication<sup>25</sup> as well as recognition of one’s forlornness<sup>26</sup> not caused by a specific transgression, but as a characteristic of the relationship between God and man. The immediate visionary proximity of God causes the prophet’s awareness of his own distance from God: the ‘silenced man’ is the human being who can not even dare to come within reach of God.<sup>27</sup> The purification of Isaiah by one of the *seraphim* expresses that the inability to establish a communicative interaction between the pure and the impure can only be overcome by the divine sphere, i.e. on order of YHWH, who alone can create a positive communicative correspondence between Isaiah and himself.<sup>28</sup> From this point (v7) on, Isaiah is permanently different from the people, since he is able to respond to the divine call meaningfully: The ‘Woe’-cry is replaced by the answer ‘Here I am! Send me!’ The purification not only forms the prerequisite for the prophetic task, but rather establishes a sharp demarcation line between the prophet and the people who remain in the status of “a people of unclean lips,” i.e. within a relationship of non-communication.

**2.2.5.** The vision report, therefore, encompasses two different types of communication with the Divine: whereas Isaiah is depicted as part of his people in the beginning (vv1-5), vv6ff. move him to a distinctly isolated position<sup>29</sup> that lays the foundation for his ability to communicate with God. Since the people do not experience such a ‘purification,’ they are kept in the status of a ‘people of unclean lips.’ As a corollary, a second characteristic of Isaiah’s prophecy is thus made coherent. Whether Isaiah wanted it or not, he no longer stood on the side of his people: the people will never “get it,”<sup>30</sup> but this inability for communicating (hearing and listening!) results from Isaiah’s distinctive position.

**2.2.6.** My preliminary conclusions are that Isaiah 6 describes the lack of communicative equivalence between the prophet and the people, and thus Isaiah’s rejection by the people as something initiated by YHWH himself. This non-comprehension is a necessary result of the prophetic word and describes the impossibility of comprehending what Isaiah himself could only understand after the event of his purification. Hence, prophetic message and its rejection are complementary elements. With regard to the ‘command not to comprehend,’ one can say that the relations of non-communication between Isaiah and the people are not presented as a result of the behavior of a ‘stubborn people,’ but rather as an entity of its own quality: a necessary tool in the course of the meeting between prophet and people.

**2.2.7.** This structure of a lack of communicative equivalence is now to be proven in Isaiah’s message, as laid out in particular in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-32. Methodologically, we will ask less about social-historical events *behind* the text, but rather confine ourselves to stylistic means and features presented *in* the text.

Four different types of language patterns shall be mentioned that shed light on Isaiah's prophetic discourse and bear relevance for the structure of non-communication: (a) The use and function of "quotations" in the prophetic speeches; (b) the creation of fiction; (c) the use of metaphorical language; and (d) the (depiction of the) prophetic signs.

**2.2.8.** Several questions concerning the form and function of the different kinds of quotations arise. Are there any kinds of distinguishing marks between "faked" and "authentic" quotations? What purpose do they serve? Why does Isaiah allow his enemies (e.g. the Assyrian king) to turn to the (implicit) audience/reader by means of ironic speech? How do the metaphors function in these quotations? What do the narratives on the prophetic signs say about the temporal correlation between 'seeing' and 'comprehending?'

### **3. Quotations, Metaphors, and Signs: Enigmas of Prophetic Speech**

#### **3.1. The Assyrian 'rod' as mirrored in the prophetic word: Isa**

##### **10:5-15\***

10:5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger, the stick - *it is in their hand*<sup>31</sup> - of my fury!

10:6 Against a dastardly nation I send him,  
and against a people of my fuming rage I command him,  
to take spoil, and to seize plunder,  
to trample him down<sup>32</sup> like 'gutter mud' in the streets.

10:7 Yet, he: this is not what he is inclined to, his mind does not see it that way.

Rather: destroying is in his mind, cutting off not (only) a few nations.

10:8 For he says:

'Are not my commanders all kings?'<sup>33</sup>

Is not Calno<sup>34</sup> like Carchemish, Hamath like Arpad,  
Samaria like Damascus? (...)

10:13 *for he said:*

‘By the strength of my (own) hand I have done it,  
by my wisdom, for I have understanding.  
I remove<sup>35</sup> the boundaries of peoples,  
deprived them of their ‘bellwethers’,<sup>36</sup>  
like a bull I have brought down (their) inhabitants.<sup>37</sup>

10:14

My hand has grasped the wealth of peoples like a nest:  
as one gathers eggs that have been abandoned, I have  
gathered all the earth.  
There was no one that (excitedly) fluttered with its  
wings,  
Or opened its ‘beak’ to cheep.

10:15

Does the axe boast over the one who hews it,  
or the saw magnify itself against the one who wields  
it? (...)

**3.1.1.** Isa 10:5-15\* can be characterized as a consistent literal unit, bound together by the motifs of “rod” and “stick” (שֵׁבֶט; מַטֵּה).<sup>38</sup> The remarkable feature of the opening verse (v5) is caused by the fact that the metaphorical speech does not declare Judah (or another small political entity) to be the “rod” of YHWH’s anger. Instead it is the mighty Assyrian empire and the Assyrian king respectively; and the empire, in fact, at the peak of its political power (this touches the question of the exact dating of this expression only indirectly). During the eighth century B.C.E. Assyria was the main political actor within the Syro-palestinian territories.<sup>39</sup> It was Assyria who claimed to hold the scepter and, therefore, systematically collected the rods or scepters (<sup>GIŠ</sup>*hu-ta-ra-te*<sup>MEŠ</sup> or *hattu* <sup>GIŠ</sup>PA) of the smaller and inferior states, thereby changing their status into that of a vassal- or “puppet”-state.<sup>40</sup> Isaiah turns the powerful Assyrian empire into a tool in the hand of a strange and, from Assyria’s point of view, even powerless God. This metaphor takes up the motif of the Assyrian king as the *kašūš ilāni [rabûti]*<sup>41</sup>, the

*destructive weapon of the (Great) Gods*, a title which has been attached to the Assyrian Kings since Salmanassar I and Tukulti-Ninurta I,<sup>42</sup> acting as representatives of their gods.<sup>43</sup> The Assyrian kings waged wars mainly for the execution of the divine anger (*uzzu ili; kimiltu*). Within this ideology the Assyrian kings became executors of the divine judgement<sup>44</sup> and were thus also assured of military victory.<sup>45</sup> Isaiah, who must have known these topoi, took them and consciously *defamiliarized* them, letting the Assyrian king take a stand according to his own religious and political ideology against a “dastardly nation.”<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Isaiah puts him under a foreign divine commander. To proclaim Assyria as the “rod” of the Lord is, therefore, rhetorically seen a “re-evaluation of all current values.”

**3.1.2.** Vv8-14 contain an extensive quotation put into the mouth of the Assyrian king (or better: a *typos* of the Assyrian king). The first paragraph lists six cities according to their *geographical* order (north to south) and corresponds to the “display-inscriptions” that also list events in their geographical order as seen in the palace of Sargon II in Dūr-Šarru-ukīn = Khorsabad,<sup>47</sup> unlike the so-called “annals” that list the events in chronological order. The *chronological* order of the Assyrian campaigns can be listed up as follows:

City	Assyrian king	campaign/year
Arpad	Tiglat-Pil’eser III	740 (annexed)
Kalno	Tiglat-Pil’eser III	739/38 (annexed)
Dammeseq	Tiglat-Pil’eser III	733/32 (annexed)
Shomron	Salmanassar V	722 (annexed; 733/32 vassal-state)
Chamat	Sargon II	720 (annexed; 738 vassal-state)
Karkemish	Sargon II	717 (annexed)

**3.1.3.** Without going into the campaigns mentioned here in more depth,<sup>48</sup> the description (according to the geographical order) clearly alludes to the method of the Assyrian western expansion, in which small states were sooner or later incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system, losing their political and cultural independence (vv13-14). Likewise, the image of the bird's nest reflects the situation of the small states in the Syro-Palestinian territories in light of the Assyrian military strength: the small state rulers often left their cities, their families and population and fled westward, so that many towns could be taken with lowest use of military force.<sup>49</sup>

**3.1.4.** The power and the self-confidence of Assyria are a dominant factor in vv13-14. For many modern exegetes, the "Anti-Typos" Assyria discloses itself from here. The demonstration of the power of the Assyrian king (v13a) is mostly characterized in terms of "hubris" and Assyrian "over-estimation" of its military abilities. One has to assume not only for the bird image with its different semantic determinations (i.e. the metaphor of the abandoned nest; the excited behavior of the wing-beating bird mother<sup>50</sup>), but also for the complete characteristic style of vv8-9, 13-14 that Isaiah by and large adopts the style of the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions.<sup>51</sup>

**3.1.5.** The literary and visual Assyrian "propaganda" (or better: ideology) pursued internal as well as external purposes: directed towards the inside of the Assyrian society, it emphasized not only the military performances of the single king but also the glorification of the Great Gods in whose names wars were initiated and who equipped the king with military power and helped him towards the victory.

At the same time potential opponents were supposed to be intimidated and weakened at the onset of every military action taken. One can see very clearly that Isaiah's "image of Assyria (...) was the same as that defined and promulgated in the official literature of the Neo-Assyrian kings" (P. Machinist). Recently, W. R. Gallagher has been able to prove with further detailed individual comparisons that the expression in Isa 10:8ff. takes up Assyrian propaganda.<sup>52</sup> One has, therefore, to assume that Isaiah had either direct access to official Assyrian documents like obelisks, steles<sup>53</sup> and reliefs, or had gained indirect knowledge of the Assyrian literal propaganda as a member of the political and cultic elite.<sup>54</sup>

**3.1.6.** Isaiah 10 is often understood as if Isaiah wanted to make its opponents recognize Assyrian hubris by a means of the final rhetorical question. His audience should appreciate the Judean God as the "master of the history."<sup>55</sup> But did Isaiah really intend for his listeners to take such a view? One can assume that the royal elite knew not only about the successful military campaigns, but also about the ideological self-portrayals of Assyria. Therefore, such a claim would have been doomed to failure from the start: Isaiah's characterization of Assyria as "the rod of the Lord" is a theopolitical judgment against every contemporary historical and political expertise, and could have evoked nothing other than derision by his audience.<sup>56</sup> If one denies that Isaiah wanted to persuade his contemporaries of Assyrian hubris, then one has to explain the meaning and the function of the "Assyrian quotations" even more.

**3.1.7.** In my view, two points have to be emphasized. First, by means of the Assyrian propaganda in the prophetic speech, Assyria indeed becomes a tool in the hand of

God and his prophet. Assyria is transformed only *within* and *by means of* the prophetic speech into a completely heteronomous instrument of God's power in history. Second, and even more important, Isa 10:5ff. contains a *fictitious element*<sup>57</sup> whose essential function lies in the expansion of the semantic realm of the text. The historical and theological context given in the text is exceeded in this manner. The prophet selects single elements from available reference rooms (in our case: intertextually) and puts them into another literary context.<sup>58</sup> He removes them from their traditional system of reference (i.e. the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions) and establishes simultaneously a new reference system in which these de-contextualized elements are fit in. In this, Isaiah reaches a kind of "ambiguity within the fictional text." By means of the prophetic speech, the Judean God is given the possibility of escaping previous patterns of expectation and of establishing his own theo-political reality, or, as Z. Radman put it:

(...) we get to realize that in creating fictional possibilities with metaphorical means we can escape the dictates of determinism, causal connections and patterns of habits, and exercise our freedom, so that we never stop believing that we can do things otherwise.<sup>59</sup>

**3.1.8.** By proclaiming Assyria as the "rod of God's anger," using the Assyrian idiom, the prophet breaks out of previous semantic realms, thereby leaving behind not only the previous system of reference but likewise the primary audience that still adheres to these previous categories. The fiction gives up the original reference and instead arranges what seems impossible or what remains concealed in reality. The audience cannot yet establish any relationship of mental or intellectual

understanding for what the prophet proclaims. This will be possible only in hindsight, following historical events (i.e. 701 BCE).

### 3.2. “Covenant with Death” (Isa 28:14-19\*)

More than Isa 10:5ff.,\* our second example describes a dramatic confrontation between Isaiah and his opponents, the “scoffers.”

- 28:14 Therefore, hear the word of YHWH,  
you scoffers, ‘patter-merchants’<sup>60</sup> of this people in Jerusalem.
- 28:15 Because you have said:  
‘We have made a covenant with death, and with She’ol  
we have a pact.<sup>61</sup>  
When the overwhelming scourge passes through, it will  
not come to us.  
For we have made a lie our refuge, and in falsehood we  
have taken shelter.’
- 28:16 Therefore, thus says the LORD, God:  
‘Behold, I am the one who<sup>62</sup> laid in<sup>63</sup> Zion a stone, a  
massive stone,<sup>64</sup> a precious cornerstone<sup>65</sup> set firmly in  
place.  
The one who trusts will not act hastily.<sup>66</sup>
- 28:17 And I will make justice the measuring line, and  
righteousness the plummet.  
Hail will sweep away<sup>67</sup> the refuge of lie, and waters will  
overflow the shelter.
- 28:18 Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and  
your pact with She’ol will not stand:  
When the overwhelming scourge passes through, you  
will be battered and trampled down by it.  
As often as it passes through, it will take you -  
morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by  
night;  
and it will be sheer terror to understand the message.’

**3.2.1.** Isa 28:14ff. displays a parallel structure to Isa 10:5ff.\* integrating “quotations” of Isaiah’s opponents (... **כִּי אָמַרְתֶּם**; v15) and showing extensive use of metaphorical language as well. With regard to the literary structure, one can see

that the prophetic threat corresponds to the “quotation” of his opponents almost as a mirror image:

Vv15a.18a

וְעַם-שְׂאוֹל עָשִׂינוּ הַזֶּה	כָּרְתָנוּ בְרִית אֶת-מָוֶת
וְחִזּוֹתְכֶם אֶת-שְׂאוֹל לֹא תִקּוּם	וְכִפֹּר בְּרִיתְכֶם אֶת-מָוֶת

Vv15b.18b

כִּי יַעֲבֹר לֹא יִבֹּאֲנוּ (qere)	שׁוֹט שׁוֹטָף (qere)
כִּי יַעֲבֹר וְהִיִּיתֶם לוֹ לְמַרְמָס	שׁוֹט שׁוֹטָף

Vv15bβ.17b

וּבִשְׂקָר נִסְתָּרְנוּ	כִּי שָׁמְנוּ כָזָב מִחֲסֵנוּ
וְסִתֵּר מִיָּמִים יִשְׁטַפוּ	וְיָעֶה בְּרָד מִחֲסֵה כָזָב

**3.2.2.** There is widespread agreement that v15 contains a “faked” quotation.<sup>68</sup> Modern exegesis mostly concentrates on the content(s) of the prophetic threat: Isaiah criticizes the royal elite<sup>69</sup> who seem to feel very safe and, therefore, behave as if they were in league with death and the underworld.<sup>70</sup> In addition, some exegetes see in this text an allusion to necromancy and the occult.<sup>71</sup> Yet, such an interpretation seems to be insufficient because it pays too little attention to the fact that the quotations contain metaphorical language, and that the proposition is established *by means* of the metaphors, *not behind them*.

**3.2.3.** The passage vv15, 18 is based on the structure of the confrontation between “quotation” and “threat” as kind of a “counter-quotation.” In this, the textual construction shows a dialogical character. This structure forces us to consult not

only one element for the interpretation of the section but to determine both elements in their relation to each other. The “quotation” put into his opponents’ mouth formally fulfills the function of a basic outline of Isaiah’s own threat. In other words: Isaiah’s forecast that *‘your covenant with death will be annulled, and your pact with She’ol will not stand’* needs this quotation, since otherwise his threat as a threat would not have fit. It is only in this manner that the “quotation” of Isaiah’s opponents is to be considered a “faked quotation.”<sup>72</sup> There are no other clues for this at a semantic level; the text says...**כי אמרתם**. In terms of the communicative patterns of the passage one can assume that the situation arises from a correction by his opponents: Isaiah quoted “incorrectly” in order to formulate his own threat.<sup>73</sup> However, his opponents would have objected that such a word had ever been spoken. In this case the point of Isaiah’s prophecy would have been lost. The bogus quotation serves only to establish a sharp confrontation to the political behavior of his opponents.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, by means of this “quotation” the political behavior of the opponents is raised to a ‘meta-level.’ It does not arise from any real political perspective and, therefore, does not meet any political reality either.

- 3.2.4.** The quotations in Isa 28:15,18 are based on a structure that has been characterized by H. Weinrich as ‘Konterdetermination’ = ‘counter-determination.’ It concerns the composition of the individual units of the metaphor. Each one originates from a clearly outlined meaning in its original context (‘determination’).<sup>75</sup> For example: **מחסה** “refuge”<sup>76</sup> and **סתר** “shelter” (**\*סתר**, often hi.)<sup>77</sup> originate in prayer and refer to God’s protective care for either the individual or for the whole

people. Isaiah's contemporaries probably relied on this promise and on its divine protection. Likewise the expression **ברית** refers to the covenant between God and Israel.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, **שׂאִיל // מוֹת**,<sup>79</sup> and **שִׁקֵּר // כּוֹזֵב**,<sup>80</sup> especially when used in prophetic language, depict the distance between God and Israel and a wrong relationship between the two in general. The “semantic shock effect” consists in the dissolving of the previous semantic coherence fields<sup>81</sup> and the re-composition of these concepts with expressions and ideas from a semantic realm not compatible with the previous meanings:

- **covenant ≠ death// Sheol ≠ pact**
- **lie ≠ refuge///falsehood ≠ shelter**

**3.2.5.** By means of the metaphorical language, the prophetic interpretation establishes a new horizon of meaning that could not have been within the scoffer's horizon of comprehension.<sup>82</sup> Their horizon was, of course, not the prophetic one. It was limited due to the fact that they had to deal with political realities rather than with prophetic realms. By means of the quotations, therefore, prophetic language realizes a kind of *audiatur et altera pars*: the scoffers are presented with an everlasting voice. In this, Isaiah's threat has indeed become a ‘provoking’ word, bringing about action and consequence (‘Tun-Ergehen’) on one and the same level.

### 3.3. Communicative structures of prophetic activity: the symbolic actions

#### 3.3.1. The action

**3.3.1.1.** Prophetic signs can be seen as a genuine part of prophetic appearance. They should, therefore, be considered when interpreting prophetic activity.<sup>83</sup> Two prophetic signs are found in First Isaiah (8:1-4; 20:1-6). In the following, I will examine the first of these two signs (*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*) more closely. I will not focus on the question of how the prophetic action might have taken place historically, but rather concentrate on the literary structure of the text. The subject matter is particularly concerned with the problem of the temporal sequence as represented in the text.

**3.3.1.2.** Isaiah writes in the presence of two witnesses (Uriah and Zechariah represent the cultic and political elite)<sup>84</sup> the phrase: לְמַהֵר שָׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז ‘[for<sup>85</sup>] *Soon-Spoil-Haste-Prey*’ on a large tablet.<sup>86</sup> The expression בַּחֵרֶט אָנוּשׁ<sup>87</sup> ‘*in common characters*’ emphasizes that Isaiah is not writing some illegible *Menetekel* on the tablet, but something that is completely understandable on the level of the semantics of the Judean language.<sup>88</sup> After his (second) son is born, Isaiah receives the command from God to give the child the name *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*. This command to name the child leads to the announcement of the upcoming destruction of Damascus and Israel (Isa 8:4).

**3.3.1.3.** The announcement of these future events is thus the explanation of the name. It is remarkable that the text describes the prophetic sign as something the witnesses can *see, but not understand*. Nowhere does the text contain an explanation for the

act of writing directed to these two witnesses, nor does it contain an interpretation of the name that is communicated to the public.<sup>89</sup> In addition, the sequence of events fails to make an explicit connection between the command to name the son and the public act of writing. Isa 8:1-4 thus describes a negative situation of communication, as the witnesses are integrated into the events at one point, but simultaneously excluded from any extended understanding of what has happened. The prophetic sign, through which both the prophet as well as the witnesses are lifted into the same sequence of events, impedes the creation of a common ground of communication through its factual realization. The non-comprehension of Isaiah's contemporaries is a result of the prophetic action.

**3.3.1.4.** The peculiarity of the story lies in the fact that the second divine speech to Isaiah (Isa 8:3b,4) connects the command to name his son with a future historical event. The name of the son is thus defined as a sign for a historical event that will be realized only in the future. This sign does not correspond to anything real at the time of its enactment.<sup>90</sup> The immediate inner motivation of the sign is therefore found only in its own factual realization.<sup>91</sup> The prophetic signs can thus be described as outwardly visible but not understandable: the signs could only be said to have immediate meaning, if they indeed corresponded to a real event, which could provide the key to their decoding. Furthermore, the interpretation of the name is known only to the prophet. From what we have described, we can infer a relative chronological sequence of the events:

I	II	III
Date X	approx. 10 months after date X	approx. 21-22 months after date X <sup>92</sup>
למהר שלל חש בז	מהר שלל חש בז	ישא חיל דמשק...
Writing	Naming of the child	Carrying off the spoils of Damascus ...

**3.3.1.5.** On the level of communication, we must credit the sign with complete

‘meaninglessness,’ because, at the time of its enactment, it contributes nothing to the communication between Isaiah and the people, nor does it serve any pedagogical purpose. And even if we took the sign as an ‘iconic sign,’<sup>93</sup> it would cover only single aspects of the event still due to happen.<sup>94</sup> To take it the other way around: an ‘iconic sign’ would, at best, provide the audience with what might be called a ‘surplus of undisclosed meaning,’ thereby causing even more confusion. The symbolic action impedes communication. What, then, is its purpose?

### **3.3.2. The sign**

**3.3.2.1.** A sign always shows a triadic structure,<sup>95</sup> as we can only speak of a sign in the combination of the shape of a sign (the ‘signifier’), the meaning of a sign (the ‘signified’) and the user of a sign.<sup>96</sup> This holds true both for ‘conventional’ and also for ‘non-conventional’ signs, as in this case with the prophetic signs. For a sign to be recognized as a sign, there always has to be a fact or event that can be put in relation to the sign.<sup>97</sup> Only the appearance and realization of that which is signified can verify or falsify a certain interpretation and can legitimize or reject the one who has proposed the interpretation.

**3.3.2.2.** It is because of these thoughts that we cannot characterize Isa 7:3 as a symbolic action bearing a sign. Neither the naming of the son, nor the fact that the son comes along to the meeting with Ahaz are interpreted at any point. The text does not establish any correlation between *signum* and *significatum*. We can assume that the king knew the meaning(s) of the name (he could, after all, speak Judean!), but it is doubtful whether he realized the extended meaning of the name. The name *She'ar-Yashuv* is still translated and interpreted today in at least two contrary ways:<sup>98</sup> (positively: “A remnant of the people will return;”<sup>99</sup> negatively: “A mere remnant will return from the battle”).<sup>100</sup> Modern biblical scholars thus expect something from Isaiah’s contemporaries which they cannot even accomplish *in retrospect*.<sup>101</sup> The mere fact that Isaiah takes a son with him who bears a significant name does not transform this action into a symbolic action.

**3.3.2.3.** The verification of the sign occurs always after completion of the (signified) event. What does this fact have to say in regards to the function of a prophetic sign? Very often, prophetic signs are said to have a pedagogical function. In this case the sign would not refer to an actual event in the future, but would merely describe the most negative possible picture of future events, in order to provoke a reaction in the people who would then work against these possible future events. With this interpretation, the intention of a prophetic sign would not be the transportation of a future reality into the present. On the contrary, the sign as warning intends to prevent this reality from ever happening. An even stronger point is also the fact that the narrative in Isa 20:3 does not define the prophetic sign as a mere warning, but rather as a true sign; or, better, as **אֹת וּמוֹפֵת**, a *portent*. The instances of prophetic signs insist on a *retrospective* correlation between the prophetic sign and historical reality. This historical reality is enriched by qualifying it as divine action, which, however, can only be recognized as such when looking back into the past. The people remain in their prevailing ways of being and doing; their subjective influence upon the signified historical reality does not occur. Based on the analysis of the texts containing prophetic signs, we can further postulate, that the continuing non-comprehension of Isaiah’s

contemporaries is a historical constellation which can only be understood through a retrospective meta-historical interpretation as done by later agents of the Isaianic tradition.

### 3.4. Intermediate results

**3.4.1.** The literal traditions of the prophetic heritage contain the prophet's voice as well as the voice of his opponents. Isaianic prophecy consists of several different modes of language that bear relevance regarding the topic of non-comprehension:

- *The metaphors:* Isaiah uses the metaphors as an instrument of defamiliarization. The metaphorical expressions create new semantic realms in which God as the 'rock of refuge' is transformed into a 'stumbling-stone.'<sup>102</sup> At the same time, metaphorical language encloses a destructive element, since it destroys fundamental ideas and beliefs that Isaiah's contemporaries still adhere to.
- *The quotations:* the quotations fulfill a very important task within prophetic language. These quotations hand down not only the prophet's theo-political view of history, but also the confrontation with the prophetic word and thereby the people's status of non-comprehension. The prophetic word and the word of Isaiah's contemporaries contrast with each other anti-thetically. The literary tradition of the prophetic heritage includes the confrontation and preserves it for later generations without repealing it at a later point. Thus, later generations can not only understand God's "alien work" in history (cf. Isa 28:21), but they will also be able to recognize Isaiah's contemporaries as an integral part of this

work without blurring the boundaries between the theo-political sphere of the prophet and the political realm of history.

- *Fictitious realms*: By means of the fiction elements, the prophet creates a “theo-political” sphere over and against the “geo-political appearance,” thereby giving his God the possibility of escaping the previous patterns of expectation. In view of the political and military circumstances at the end of the eighth century, prophetic fiction represents a kind of Judean “counterpropaganda” for later generations.

**3.4.2.** In this structure of non-communication, the prophecy of Isaiah differs decisively from its Near Eastern parallels. Notwithstanding the different types of Ancient Near Eastern oracles (in Mari or the Neo-Assyrian Prophetic texts), all these oracles share one crucial aspect: by means of prophetic oracles the gods (e.g. <sup>d</sup>Aššur or <sup>d</sup>Ištar) sought to enter into a *positive communicative* relationship, i.e. Divine action and human deeds should correspond to each other in a meaningful way. Most of the oracles (to a great extent oracles of encouragement or salvation)<sup>103</sup> deal with a dangerous situation for the king, either with regard to domestic issues or with regard to foreign policy. The king demands an oracle (or acts in response to an oracle going out spontaneously), in order to (re)assure himself of the victory over his enemies. Almost all of the *›lā tapallaḫ*-oracles, notwithstanding their respective distinctive facets, share two crucial matters: (a) the liability of the divinity to the oracle given; and (b) the liability of the king to the (military or political) instructions being issued with the oracle. Therefore, the god is not only committed to a positive communicative intention (mediated by a

so-called *šapru*,<sup>104</sup> due to a vision), but also to the lack of ambiguity of the instructions and promises offered by the oracle.

**3.4.3.** This structure of politics based on prophetic oracles had determined Assyrian political ideology for centuries. Yet, politics relying on prophecy is unproblematic only as long as politics and military campaigns turn out positively, as can clearly be seen in Assyrian history: the royal representatives were dependant on the successful outcome of foreign policy and military campaigns as much as their gods. The defeat of Harran (609/10), where the fate of Assyria was finally sealed, led not only to the burial of the last Assyrian king (Ashur-uballit II), it also signaled the burial of his God <sup>d</sup>Aššur. A fatal end was enacted for both sides: the Assyrian king was deserted by <sup>d</sup>Aššur, and <sup>d</sup>Aššur became the divine loser within history. In opposition to the Ancient Near Eastern oracles, Isaiah's prophecy insisted on the incompatibility between men's policies and God's action in history. The prophecy of the "strange work" of God (Isa 28:21) sets out to draw a sharp demarcation between God's action and the policy of the Judean kings: no one should refer to God for his military plans within the course of history; no one should make demands on God for his own purposes. In that, Isaiah's prophecy gains significance as a *testimony* to a truth that was to be comprehended by his contemporaries *only at a later point*.

## **4. The implied author and the implied reader**

**4.1.1.** As a final point, we shall briefly discuss the question of the transmission of the (literary) heritage of Isaiah's oracles. The debate on the problem of who collected prophetic oracles, at what time, and for which purpose shows a wide-ranging

disagreement among modern Biblical scholarship. This issue is in particular related to the question how much of the material preserved is due to later redaction. Recently, E. Blum has presented the crystallization of the early Isaianic tradition, in particular chs. 1-11 and 28-32, as a ‘prophetic testament,’ as Isaiah’s ‘self-reflection of the prophetic tasks and functions since Amos.’<sup>105</sup> According to Blum, this ‘self-reflection’ was caused by the failure of Isaiah’s prophetic mission in light of the events of the year 701. Likewise, Chr. Hardmeier has characterized the literary tradition of the prophets as a ‘literature of prophetic opposition’ (“Oppositionsliteratur”) against the contemporary cultic and political elite. According to Hardmeier, Isaiah’s so-called ‘Denkschrift’<sup>106</sup> fulfilled its main task as a document for the stabilization of the identity of a prophetic support-group facing the Judean crisis immediately after 701.<sup>107</sup>

**4.1.2.** By assuming a prophetic support group (which is hardly covered by the text) Blum, Hardmeier and others argue that the literary heritage of the prophetic message was collected and re-shaped from a ‘prophetic point of view.’ Isaiah’s successors presented the material through the ‘lenses of the prophet,’<sup>108</sup> i.e. *pro domo*.<sup>109</sup> In contrast, U. Becker, J. Høgenhaven, Chr. Seitz and others maintain that a large part of the Isaianic tradition (including large portions of chs. 1-12, 28-32) was written by deuteronomistic redaction(s) as a response to the catastrophe of 597/585 BCE. The main issue for this theological school was the supposition that the catastrophe could have been avoided if Israel’s representatives had acted with justice and righteousness. According to Høgenhaven, the prophetic traditions were collected in post-exilic times “by redactors who were, undoubtedly, most

strongly influenced by 'oppositional' or 'anti-official' viewpoints (...),” as kind of an ‘opposition in retrospect.’<sup>110</sup>

**4.1.3.** One may take as fact the idea that the Isaianic traditions as a literary product were collected and selected by an immediate support-group, or that they represent (post)-exilic theological reflection. However, one assumption common to all these arguments is presupposed: the idea that the prophetic message in its oral as well as in its later literary stage faced a twofold group of addressees to be assigned as the primary recipients of ‘oral communication’ on one hand and ‘literary tradition’ on the other. In that, the primary addressees of the prophecies of doom and the later agents of tradition, i.e. the secondary addressees, are regarded as two independent and in any case non-identical groups of people.<sup>111</sup>

<b>addressee</b>	<b>actions</b>
<b>primary addressees of the oral communication</b>	
king, political and cultic elite	Rejection of the prophetic message
<b>secondary addressees of the literary tradition</b>	
prophetic support-group// dtr. circles	‘Listening,’ collecting. Acceptance and authorization of the prophetic message as “Tora” <sup>112</sup>

**4.1.4.** According to the above-mentioned scholars, the oral communication, which was directed mainly against the political representatives, had never been taken up positively. As for its literary function, it have been converted into a mere pedagogical and educational instrument for later generations.

**4.1.5.** At this point I would like to propose a ‘third way’ to elucidate not only the beginnings of the literal prophetic tradition, but also the question of the agents of tradition. A crucial indication for the transmission of prophetic oracles are the two

commands for writing down the oracles addressed to Isaiah in Isa 8:16 and Isa 30:8. Without entering here into the exegesis of Isaiah 8 and 30 in more detail, one has to assume that the process of literal crystallization must have started at the time of the primary confrontation between the prophet and his contemporaries. Like the ‘sealing of the instruction’ (Isa 8:16), Isa 30:8 presents a twofold element: the public proclamation of the prophet’s message, accompanied by a writing act (→ synchronic time-level), and the transformation of this inscription into a ‘witness stand’ for a later date, performed in front of the same public. Those who do not listen to the prophetic word ‘now’ (i.e. at the time when the message is written down)<sup>113</sup> shall be reminded of it at a later stage of history (→ diachronic time-level). Given that, the text’s function is that of a witness,<sup>114</sup> cf. Isa 30:8:

<b>time</b>	<b>addressee</b>	<b>function</b>
עתה <i>Now (... write)</i>	אָהֶם: contemporary public/primary audience:	rebuke
יּוֹם אַחֲרָיוֹן <i>time to come</i>	contemporary public/primary audience:	witness

- 4.6. The element of ‘witness’ forms a constitutive aspect for the process of the literary tradition of the prophetic message. A written testimony as a ‘witness’ contains documentary elements. It preserves the communicative process and, thereby, encompasses *both* parties involved in the communicative relationship. The literary witness serves as the foundation of a successive development of ‘understanding,’ in which the *historical agents* (subjects) find themselves as *literary entities* (objects) of the events described. This applies to the prophet as well as to ‘this

people.’ It seems, therefore, reasonable to claim that a *historical confrontation* was adopted on a literary level and transformed into a *theological dichotomy* between ‘this people’ and the prophet, in order to preserve the status of non-communication for later generations. Against Hardmeier and others, who consider Isaiah’s literary testimony to be a document for the stabilization of a prophetic support group’s identity, I would propose that the written Isaianic tradition served as a tool for the remaining cultic and political elite<sup>115</sup> to (re)-gain their identity as ‘God’s people’ from which God had dissociated himself by means of the prophetic word in the course of history.<sup>116</sup> It was only then that the prophetic oracles of doom found their way as a collective *traditum* into the literary heritage of the people of Israel.<sup>117</sup>

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## 6. Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered at the Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations Department, University of Toronto, in February 2002, and was revised and enlarged for publication. I wish to thank Joachim Vette, University of Heidelberg, for amending and modifying my English.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., among others, Berges, U., *Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt*, Freiburg - Basel a.o. 1998; Beuken, W. A. M., *Isaiah. Part II, Volume 2: Isaiah Chapters 28-39*, Leuven 2000; Clements, R. E., *Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes*, in: *JSOT* 31, 1985, 95-113; *ibid.*, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem. A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament*, Sheffield 1980; *ibid.*, *The Prophecies of Isaiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.*, in: Orton, D. E., (Ed.), *Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Selected Studies from Vetus Testamentum*, Leiden - Boston a.o. 2000, p. 148-163; Melugin, R. F. - Sweeney, M. A. (Ed.), *New Visions of Isaiah*, Sheffield 1996; Seitz, Ch. R., *Zion's Final Destiny. The Development of the Book of Isaiah. A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39*, Minneapolis 1991; Sweeney, M., *Isaiah 1-39. With An Introduction To Prophetic Literature*, Grand Rapids/Mich. - Cambridge 1996; Vermeylen, J. (Ed.), *The Book of Isaiah. Le Livre D'Isaïe. Les oracles et leur relectures unité et complexité de l'ouvrage*, Leuven 1989; *ibid.*, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique. Isaïe, I-XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millénaire d'expérience en Israël*, Tome I, Paris 1977, Tome II, Paris 1978.

<sup>3</sup> As far as I know, it was in particular K. Koch who rejected the term 'judgement' since, according to him, this is a term taken from Christian dogmatic and which should, therefore, not be adopted within a study of Biblical literature; see Koch, K., *Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im*

Alten Testament?, in: *ibid.*, Spuren 65-103; see also Koch, Die Entstehung der sozialen Kritik bei den Profeten, in: *ibid.*, Spuren p. 146-166, 147; Nielsen, K., Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge. An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rîb-Pattern), Sheffield 1978, p. 28.31.75; Tucker, G. M., Sin and 'Judgement' in the Prophets, in: Sun, H. T. C. - Eades, K. L. a.o. (Ed.), Problems in Biblical Theology. Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim, Grand Rapids 1997, p. 373-388, 379.383ff.

<sup>4</sup> Compare the rather critical discussion on that interpretation in Carroll, When Prophecy Failed, 187-88.: "The European Jews were destroyed by the Nazis because of their corrupt way of life and their departure from the Law of God. Furthermore God used the Nazis to punish the Jews (...) There can be no denying that the Jews and Europe suffered terribly during the second European war but this explanation for such suffering is not verified by the fact of a destructive war. Few biblical scholars would tolerate such an equation between event and explanation yet many might be tempted to do so in terms of biblical prophecy and accept the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem as confirmation of the prophetic diagnostic predictions. Why is this so often the case? (...) Yet were Assyria and Babylonia so much more virtuous than Israel or Judah that they could be freely used to punish the smaller nations? Such ways of discussing the matter belong more to biblical ideology but they do illustrate some of the problems inherent in the interpretation of the prophetic traditions."

<sup>5</sup> Kilian, R., Der Verstockungsauftrag Jesajas, in: H.-J. Fabry (Ed.), Bausteine biblischer Theologie, FS G. J. Botterweck, Köln - Bonn 1977, p. 209-225, 215 [in German].

<sup>6</sup> Berges, U., Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt, Freiburg - Basel a.o. 1998, p. 99 [in German].

<sup>7</sup> See esp. Liss, H., Die Funktion der "Verstockung" Pharaos in der Erzählung vom Auszug aus Ägypten (Ex 7-14), in: Biblische Notizen 93, 1998, pp. 56-76, esp. 60 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See von Rad, G., Theologie des Alten Testaments, Vol. II: Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferung Israels, München <sup>9</sup>1987 (= *ibid.*, Old Testament Theology, vol. 2: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions, Edinburgh a.o. 1965), esp. p. 158ff.

<sup>9</sup> See Hubmann, F. D., Der Bote des Heiligen Gottes. Jesaja 6,1-13 im Kontext von Berufung, in: ThPQ 135/4, 1987, p. 328-339.

<sup>10</sup> See Landy, F., Strategies of Concentration and Diffusion in Isaiah 6, in: Biblical Interpretation 7, 1999, 58-86; *ibid.*, Vision and Voice in Isaiah, in: JSOT 88, 2000, p. 19-36.

<sup>11</sup> See Hesse, F., Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament. Eine frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Untersuchung, Berlin 1955, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> This study presents in short the main topics and issues discussed in my book *Die unerhörte Prophetie. Kommunikative Strukturen prophetischer Rede im Buch Yesha'yahu*, Leipzig (forthcoming; in German).

<sup>13</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that the question of communicative structures can (and perhaps even should) include those texts, that owe their origin to the subsequent traditions that handed down Isaiah's activity.

<sup>14</sup> See also Gitay, J., *Isaiah and His Audience. The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12*, Assen - Maastricht 1991, p. 121: "‘Hear,’ indeed, but do not understand” (...) should not be read literally, but has to be heard according to its function and rhetorical impact.”

<sup>15</sup> Brueggemann, W., *Isaiah 1-39*, Louisville 1998, p. 61 regards it as ‘countermessage.’

<sup>16</sup> See Görg, M., *Die Funktion der Serafen bei Jesaja*, in: BN 5, 1978, p. 28-39, esp. 39. Keel, O., *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4*, mit einem Beitrag von A. Gutbub über die vier Winde in Ägypten, Stuttgart 1977, p. 62ff. shows in detail that the Ancient Near Eastern relief portrayals representing rulers in their garments do not depict trains hanging down or hems; see also Driver, G. R., *Isaiah 6:1 ‘His train filled the temple’*, in: H. Goedicke (Ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honour of W. F. Albright*, Baltimore - London 1971, p. 87-96; Eslinger, L., *The Infinite in a Finite Organical Perception (Isaiah VI 1-5)*, in: VT 45, 1995, p. 145-173, esp. p.146ff.

<sup>17</sup> See Brockelmann, C., *Hebräische Syntax*, Neukirchen 1956, §14b; Irsigler, H., *Gott als König in Berufung und Verkündigung Jesajas*, in: F. V. Reiterer (Ed.), *Ein Gott - eine Offenbarung. Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese*, FS N. Füglistner, Theologie und Spiritualität, Würzburg 1991, p. 127-154, 134 incl. note 15.

<sup>18</sup> Most scholars translate with ‘I am lost’ with regard to Ex 3,6; 33,20; Ri 13,22. For the translation proposed here see also RaDaQ's commentary ad loc.: נדמתני נשתתקתי.

<sup>19</sup> See Brown, M., *Kippēr and Atonement in the Book of Isaiah*, in: R. Chazan, W. W. Hallo a.o. (Ed.), *Ki Baruch Hu. Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of B. A. Levine*, Winona Lake 1999, p. 189-202, esp. 194ff.; Lind, M. C., *Political Implications of Isaiah 6*, in: Broyles, C. C. - Evans, C. A. (Ed.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, 2 vol., Leiden - New York a.o. 1997, vol. I, p. 317-338, esp. 321. – Compare also RaShY's commentary on Isa 28:18.; see also the commentaries of R. Yosef Qara ad loc. and R. Yeshaya ben Eliyah di Trani and RaDaQ on Isa 28:18; 47:11.

<sup>20</sup> Comp. Gesenius, W., Hebräische Grammatik. Völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch, Ndr. Darmstadt 1985, §112x.

<sup>21</sup> I will leave out in this place the question of whether Isa 6 describes an inaugural vision.

<sup>22</sup> See RaShY's commentary on Isa 6:5.

<sup>23</sup> Landy, Strategies 64 regards even the twofold repetition of the 'qadosh'-call of the *seraphim* as "a failure of language, which is reduced to tautology."

<sup>24</sup> According to Janowski, Isa 6 does not mirror neither the Mesopotamian mouth purification rites nor the Egyptian mouth opening rites (see Janowski, B., Sühne als Heilsgeschehen. Traditions- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift, Neukirchen-Vluyn <sup>2</sup>2000, esp. p. 127ff.); for a different view see Hurovitz, A. (= V.), Isaiah's Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Mouth Purification and Mouth Purity in Akkadian Sources, in: HUCA 60, 1989, p. 39-89, esp. 73ff.; Weinfeld, M., Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature, in: Orton p. 84-101, 86f. For further details see also Berlejung, A., Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia, in: van der Toorn, K. (ed.), The Image and the Book. Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East, Leuven 1997, p. 45-72.

<sup>25</sup> See also Landy, Strategies 66.68; Roberts, J. J. M., Double Entendre in First Isaiah, in: CBQ 54, 1992, p. 39-48, esp. 45f.

<sup>26</sup> \* דַּמָּה / דַּמָּה connotating 'name of underworld' as well.

<sup>27</sup> In that, the concept of God's holiness resembles remarkably the concept expressed in the Priestly code, comp. Knohl, I., The Sanctuary of Silence. The Priestly Torah and the Holiness school, Minneapolis 1995, p. 151: "Such an encounter necessarily engenders feelings of guilt and sin and the need for atonement. This guilt is not associated with any particular sin; rather, it is a result of human awareness of insignificance and contamination in comparison with the sublimity of God's holiness." The relationship between Isaiah's concept of the Holy One and P will be examined in more detail with special regard to the question of the dating of P in a study of its own.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ... הָא שׁוֹיִתִּי פִתְנָמִי נְבוֹאָתִי בַפּוֹמֶךְ, Targum Isa 6:7. See also RaDaQ on Jer 1:9.

<sup>29</sup> Comp. also Mic 3:8.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, Isaiah 233.

<sup>31</sup> הוּא בִידָם has to be taken as a gloss; see e.g. Childs, B.S., Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis, London 1967, p. 39 incl. note 36; Ehrlich, A. B., Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel.

Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches, Vierter Band: Jesaia, Jeremia, Leipzig 1912, Ndr. Hildesheim 1968, p. 41; Hardmeier, Chr., Texttheorie und biblische Exegese. Zur rhetorischen Funktion der Trauermetaphorik in der Prophetie, München 1978, p. 230; comp. also Blenkinsopp, Isaiah p. 252.

<sup>32</sup> Qere: וּלְשׁוֹמוֹ.

<sup>33</sup> This phrase represents a subtle wordplay based on reciprocal exchange of monarchic designations in Hebrew and Akkadian: Akk. *šarru* ('king') corresponds to Hebr. שָׂר ('commander'; 'local official'; 'prince'); Akk. *malku* ('prince') corresponds to Hebrew מֶלֶךְ ('king'). The expression alludes to the Assyrian practice of leaving the מֶלֶךְ -title to the rulers of the subjugated small states, see Machinist, P., Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah, in: JAOS 103, 1983, p. 719-737, 734f; Wildberger, H., Jesaja, 1. Teilband: Jesaja 1-12, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1972; *ibid.*, Jesaja, 2. Teilband: Jesaja 13-27, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978; *ibid.*, Jesaja, 3. Teilband: Jesaja 28-39. Das Buch, der Prophet und seine Botschaft, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982, vol. 1, p. 397.

<sup>34</sup> Kalno/Kalne = akk. *kullāni* (cf. Am 6:2); see Forrer, E., Die Provinzeinteilung des assyrischen Reiches, Leipzig 1920, p. 57; Na'aman, N., Sennacherib's 'Letter to God' on His Campaign to Judah, in: BASOR 214, 1974, p. 25-39, 37; according to Lamprichs, R., Die Westexpansion des neuassyrischen Reiches. Eine Strukturanalyse, Kevelaer-Neukirchen-Vluyn 1995, p. 115 is the city *kullania*, which is mentioned in the Eponym canon, identical to *Kinalia*, capital of Tutamu of Pattina.

<sup>35</sup> Based on the translation of the Septuagint (LXX) and Targum, some read Impf. cons. וְאָסִיר; comp. Ibn Ezra ad loc. who takes the Impf. as present tense (comp. also Ibn Ezra on Isa 64:4; Ps 73:17; 80:9 e.fr.); see also Machinist, Assyria 725 incl. note 27.

<sup>36</sup> The term וְעֵתִידוֹתֵיהֶם (qere: וְעֵתוֹדוֹתֵיהֶם) was given widespread explanations: RaShY's explanation is based on Q, he regards it as מְעַמְדִם וּמְצַבֵּם (← עֵתוֹד II); see also Yeshaya ben Eliyah di Trani's understanding of the term as כָּל עֵתוֹדֵי אֶרֶץ (similar also Yosef Qara, Ibn Ezra and RaDaQ ad loc.). Only Mittmann's interpretation, in: Mittmann, S., 'Wehe! Assur, Stab meines Zorns' (Jes 10,5-9.13aβ-15), in: Fritz, V. - Pohlmann, K.-F. a.o. (Ed.), Prophet und Prophetenbuch. FS Otto Kaiser, Berlin - New York 1989, p. 111-132, 120 is based on עֵתוֹד II, and translated as 'bellwethers' ('Leitböcke').

<sup>37</sup> Gallagher, W. R., Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah. New Studies, Leiden – Boston a.o. 1999, 77 incl. note 77 translates יושבים as “those who are enthroned;” see also Brueggemann, Isaiah 92 (‘those who sat on thrones’).

<sup>38</sup> I will neither discuss here the different problems of literary or redactional unity, nor the question of the rhetorical function of the Woe-oracles in general. See in particular Hardmeier, Texttheorie.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. Lamprichs, Westexpansion; Mayer, W., Politik und Kriegskunst der Assyrer, Münster 1995.

<sup>40</sup> The handing over of the rod is the symbolic handing over of property (people; cattle; estate). Compare e.g. the representation of King Sua of Gilzanu on the so-called ‘black obelisk’ who submits to Shalmaneser III by handing over his rods (<sup>GIŠ</sup>hu-ta-ra-te<sup>MEŠ</sup>); see Bär, J., Der assyrische Tribut und seine Darstellung. Eine Untersuchung zur imperialen Ideologie im neuassyrischen Reich, Kevelaer - Neukirchen-Vluyn 1996, esp. 151f.

<sup>41</sup> (Ka-šu-uš DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ); see e.g. Grayson, A. K., Assyrian Rulers of the Early first Millennium BC. I (1114-859 BC), Toronto - Buffalo a.o. 1991, p. 288.357 (Aššur-Nasir-apli II) a. fr.; see also Grayson, A. K., Assyrian Royal Inscriptions Part 2. From Tiglath-pilešar I to Ashur-nasir-apli II, Wiesbaden 1976, p. 118ff.

<sup>42</sup> See von Soden, W., Die Assyrer und der Krieg, in: Iraq 25, 1963, p. 131-144, 137 incl. note 1; Oded, B., “The Command of the God” as a Reason for Going to War in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, in: Cogan, M - Eph'al, I. (Ed.), Ah, Assyria ... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor, Jerusalem 1991, p. 223-230, esp. 226f.; Oded, B., War, Peace and Empire. Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Wiesbaden 1992, p. 18ff.

<sup>43</sup> Compare e.g. the idioms *ina qibīt* DN, *ina tukulti* DN a.o. (see Liverani, M., Kitru, katāru, in: Mes. 17, 1982, p. 43-66, esp. 60).

<sup>44</sup> Compare the examples in Borger, R., Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien, Graz 1956, Ndr. Osnabrück 1967, §65, S. 98; Otto, E., Die besiegten Sieger. Von der Macht und Ohnmacht der Ideen in der Geschichte am Beispiel der neuassyrischen Großreichspolitik, in: BZ 43, 1999, p. 180-203, 194; Grayson, Assyrian Rulers p. 280.323.

<sup>45</sup> See Oded, War, esp. p. 146ff.

<sup>46</sup> For the Assyrian characterization of the “dastardly” foreign nations (the enemy of Ashshur is ‘evil’ [*nākīru limnu, ēpiš limutti*] and, therefore, due to destruction), see Fales, F. M., The Enemy

in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: 'The Moral Judgement,' in: Nissen, H. J. - Renger, J (Ed.), Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn. Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im Alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr., Berlin <sup>2</sup>1987, p. 425-435, esp. 428ff.; Grayson, Assyrian Rulers p. 280.323; Liverani, M., The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire, in: Larsen, M. T., (Ed.), Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires, Kopenhagen 1979, p. 297-317, esp. 309ff.; Zaccagnini, C., The Enemy in the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The "Ethnographic" Description, in: Nissen - Renger p. 409-424, esp. 412f.

<sup>47</sup> See Renger, J., Aspekte von Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in den assyrischen Königsinschriften, in: Waetzoldt, H. - Hauptmann, H. (Ed.), Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten. XXXIXe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Heidelberg 1997, p. 169-175, 174; *ibid.*, Neuassyrische Königsinschriften als Genre der Keilschriftliteratur. Zum Stil und zur Kompositionstechnik der Inschriften Sargons II. von Assyrien, in: K. Hecker - W. Sommerfeld (Ed.), Keilschriftliche Literaturen - Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Münster 1985, Berlin 1986, p. 109-128, esp. 119ff.; Schramm, W., Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften. Zweiter Teil: 934-722 v. Chr., Leiden - Köln 1973, p. 126.131; Reade, J., Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art, in: Larsen p. 329-343, esp. 330ff.; Levine, L. D., Preliminary Remarks on the Historical Inscriptions of Sennacherib, in: Tadmor, H. - Weinfeld, M. (Ed.), History, Historiography and Interpretation. Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures, Jerusalem - Leiden 1984, p. 58-75, 64ff.

<sup>48</sup> See also Lamprichs, Westexpansion, esp. p. 112ff.

<sup>49</sup> The Assyrian annals report for instance of Mutallu, ruler of the Kummuhu region who fled at the advance of the Assyrian troops and left his family as well as the population and his property (see Luckenbill, D. D., The Annals of Sennacherib, Chicago 1924, II p. 44; Lamprichs p. 141f.). The king of Assa (Ḫanūnu) fled from Tiglat-Pil' eser III to Egypt (see Alt, A., Tiglathpilesers III erster Feldzug nach Palästina, in: *ibid.*, Kleine Schriften II, p. 150-162, esp. 157ff.). King Luli of Sidon leaves the city of Tyros and fled to Cyprus by the time the troops of Sennacherib were approaching (see Lamprichs 149; Laato, A., Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, in: VT 45, 1995, 198-226, p. 223f.).

<sup>50</sup> See the report of Sargon's campaign against Urartu, in: Mayer, W., Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu - 714 v. Chr. Text und Übersetzung, in: MDOG 115, 1983, p. 65-132, 99, line 291.

<sup>51</sup> See already Machinist, Assyria 729: "In Isaiah we are evidently dealing with the effects of Assyrian Propaganda" (compare the examples given here); see also Gallagher, esp. p. 77ff. In particular the inscriptions of Asarhaddons and Assurbanipals present as one distinctive stylistic

feature the use of quotations in direct speech, see Fales, *Enemy* p. 431; Gerardi, P., *Thus, He Spoke: Direct Speech in Esarhaddon's Royal Inscriptions*, in: *ZA* 79, 1989, p. 245-260, esp. 247ff.; Renger, *Aspekte* p. 173.

<sup>52</sup> See Gallagher, p. 75ff.

<sup>53</sup> See dazu Mayer, *Kriegskunst* 481; Na'aman, N., *Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan*, in: *IEJ* 50, 2000, p. 92-104, 94f.); Nevling Porter, B., *Assyrian Propaganda for the West: Esarhaddon's Stelae for Til Barsip and Sam'al*, in: Bunnens, G. (Ed.), *Essays on Syria in the Iron Age*, Louvain 2000, p.143-176; Röllig, W., *Aramäer und Assyrer: die Schriftzeugnisse bis zum Ende des Assyrischen Reiches*, in: Bunnens (Ed.), *Essays on Syria in the Iron Age 177-186*.

<sup>54</sup> This question of how Isaiah gained access to the Assyrian literary sources is discussed in Machinist, *Assyria* 732ff.; Tadmor, H. *The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact*, in: Nissen - Renger 449-470; *ibid.*, *On the Use of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire: Three Observations on a Relief of Sargon II*, in: A. Ben-Tor - J. C. Greenfield a.o. (Ed.), *Eretz-Israel. Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies, Yigael Yadin Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem 1989, p. 249-252 (in Hebrew), esp. 250. - Tadmor, *Aramaization*, esp. p. 452ff. and Mayer, *Kriegskunst* p. 314 refer to bi-lingual relief-inscriptions (Assyrian; Aramaic) and to the fact that Aramaic had been introduced as the language of administration by Tiglat-Pileser III at the latest; see also Knauf, E. A., *War 'Biblisch-Hebräisch' eine Sprache? Empirische Gesichtspunkte zur linguistischen Annäherung an die Sprache der althebräischen Literatur*, in: *ZAH* 3, 1990, p. 11-23, 12 incl. note 5; Lipiński, E., *The Linguistic Geography of Syria in Iron Age II (c. 1000-600 B.C.)*, in: Bunnens (Ed.), *Essays on Syria in the Iron Age 125-142*; vSoden, W., *Gab es im vorexilischen Hebräisch Aramaismen in der Bildung und Verwendung von Verbformen?*, in: *ZAH* 4, 1991, p. 32-45, 33f..

<sup>55</sup> See for instance Gitay, *Isaiah* p. 192: "Isaiah's goal is to assure his audience that there is a divine plan which incorporates Assyria as well. Actually, Isaiah argues that Assyria's power is limited by God."

<sup>56</sup> Likewise already Murray, D. F., *The Rhetoric of Disputation: Re-Examination of a Prophetic Genre*, in: *JSOT* 38, 1987, p. 95-121, 109: "to have made such a claim at all [Assyria as Yahweh's instrument] must have struck most of the prophet's contemporaries as eccentric; to have persisted in that claim when all around them the evidence seemed to give it the lie, as perverse."

<sup>57</sup> See in particular Iser, W., *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie*, Frankfurt/M. 1991, esp. P. 24-51; *Das Fiktive*, bes. 24-51; Moers, G.,

Fiktionalität und Intertextualität als Parameter ägyptologischer Literaturwissenschaft.

Perspektiven und Grenzen der Anwendung zeitgenössischer Literaturtheorie, in: Assmann, J. - Blumenthal, E. (Ed.), *Literatur und Politik im pharaonischen und ptolemäischen Ägypten*, Le Caire 1999, p. 37-52, 40ff.

<sup>58</sup> See Iser, W., *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, München <sup>4</sup>1994, esp. p. 155ff.

<sup>59</sup> Radman, Z., *Fictional Meanings and Possible Worlds - A Case of Metaphor*, in: Danneberg, L. - Graeser, A. a.o. (Ed.), *Metapher und Innovation. Die Rolle der Metapher im Wandel von Sprache und Wissenschaft*, Bern - Stuttgart a.o. 1995, p. 126-137, 137.

<sup>60</sup> LXX reads ἄρχοντες τοῦ λαοῦ. The *Poterim* translated the term מושלי as אישנפלנצ *èsenplanç* (“qui inventent des fables”, in: *Le Glossaire de Bâle. Corpus Glossariorum Biblicorum Hebraico-Gallicorum Medii Aevi*, Vol. 1: Introduction, Vol. 2: Texte, ed. by M. Banitt, Jerusalem 1972, II p. 310); RaShY’s explanation is based on the twofold meaning of מושלי העם: מושל לשון (a similar reading is proposed by Yeshaya ben Eliyah di Trani; see also Barthel 306f.; Exum, J. C., “‘Whom will he Teach Knowledge?’ A Literary Approach to Isaiah 28,” in: Clines - Gunn p. 108-139, 124). Ibn Ezra and Elieser aus Beaugency translated according to Targum. - Since the phrase כי אמרתם forms the introduction of the מושל as mocking sayings of those in Jerusalem, I prefer מושל\* I (comp. also Barth, J., *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Jesaiah*, in: *Berichte des Rabbinerseminars zu Berlin 1883/84*, p. 23; Wildberger, *Jesaja III* p. 1064, Kaiser, O., *Das Buch des Propheten Jesaja, Kapitel 1-12*, Göttingen <sup>5</sup>1981; *ibid.*, *Der Prophet Jesaja, Kapitel 13-39*, Göttingen <sup>3</sup>1983, II p. 197).

<sup>61</sup> See LXX: συσθηκη; V: *pactum*; see also RaShY and Ibn Ezra ad loc.

<sup>62</sup> See RaShY ad loc.: ... והנני הוא אשר יסד כבר בציון אבן; see also Beuken, W. A. M, *Isaiah 28: Is It Only Schismatics That Drink Heavily? Beyond the Synchronic Versus Diachronic Controversy*, in: J. C. de Moor (Ed.), *Synchronic Or Diachronic? A Debate in Old Testament Exegesis*, Leiden - New York a.o. 1995, p. 15-38, 16; Chakham, A., *Sefer Yesha'yahu*, 2 vol, vol. 1: Jerusalem, 10<sup>th</sup>. ed., 1996, vol. 2: Jerusalem, 6<sup>th</sup>. ed., 1992 (Hebrew), I p. 290; Gesenius.- Kautzsch §155f. Most scholars read according to 1QIs<sup>a</sup> (מיסד Pt. pi.) and Q<sup>b</sup> (יוסד Pt. qal), see e.g. Barthel 308f.; Kaiser, *Jesaja II* 198; Roberts, J. J. M., *YAHWEH’s Foundation in Zion (Isa 28:16)*, in: *JBL* 106, 1987, p. 27-45, 28f.

<sup>63</sup> כּ-*essentiae*; see Gesenius-Kautzsch §119i; Irwin, W. H., Isaiah 28-33. Translation with Philological Notes, Rom 1977, p. 30f.

<sup>64</sup> The *Poterim* translated as פּוֹרֵט פּיִירָא *piyèrè fort* (“une pierre solide”; see Glossaire de Bâle II 310); compare Chakham, Yesha’yahu I 290. Roberts, Foundation p. 29ff. (based on the term כּהַן as used in Qumran text’s) translates “a stone used in building a fortress” (see also Ibn Ganâch, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, ed. by Bacher [Bacher, W., *Sepher Haschoraschim. Wurzelwörterbuch der hebräischen Sprache von Abulwalîd Merwân Ibn Ganâh (Rabbi Jona). Aus dem Arabischen in’s Hebräische übersetzt von Jehuda Ibn Tibbon, Berlin 1896, Repr. Amsterdam 1969]* p. 60 and Ibn Ezra ad loc.).

<sup>65</sup> See also Gesenius-Kautzsch §130f incl. note 3; see also Roberts, Foundation 34.

<sup>66</sup> See Driver, G. R., “‘Another Little Drink’ - Isaiah 28:1-22,” in: *Words and Meanings. Essays Presented to D. W. Thomas*, ed. by P. R. Ackroyd - B. Lindars, Cambridge 1968, p. 47-67, 60; Roberts, Foundation 36.

<sup>67</sup> For יְעִדָּה\* (see also Ex 38:3) see Ibn Ganâch, *Sefer ha-Riqma*, ed. by Wilensky [Abu al-Walîd Merwân Ibn Ganâch (R. Yona Ibn Ganâch), *Sefer ha-Riqma*, ed. by M. Wilensky, 2 vol., Jerusalem, Repr. Jerusalem 1964] p. 165 and Ibn Ganâch, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, Ausg. Bacher p. 199 (likewise Ibn Ezra und RaDaQ ad loc.).

<sup>68</sup> See esp. Wolff, H. W., *Das Zitat im Prophetenbuch*, in: *ibid.*, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, München 1964, p. 36-129, 71.

<sup>69</sup> The root מִשַׁל\* (v14) is but one of the many puns used in Isaianic oracles as a means for obfuscating the message and thereby confusing the audience; see e.g. the alliteration of \* קִשֵּׁר und \* קִדְשׁ in Isa 8:12-14, the pun in Isa 29:9 based on the use of root \* תִּנְמָה (qal; hitp.), or the hidden characterization of בִּשְׁת (‘shame’) enclosed in \* שִׁבְתָּ\* in Isa 30:3a.5b (see also Beuken, W. A. M., *Isaiah 30: A Prophetic Oracle Transmitted in Two Successive Paradigms*, in: Broyles - Evans, *Isaiah I*, p. 369-397, 374). - In this respect, the term אֲנָשִׁי לְצִוּן might also refer to Isaiah’s rebuke of the priests and prophets Isa 28:7ff. Halpern proposes for Isa 28:9ff. (*Zaw la-Zaw...*) an interpretation according to which Isaiah reproaches the priests and prophets of having participated in a *marzeach* and providing the audience with prophecies exposed by Isaiah as ‘babyisms’ (see Halpern, B., “The Excremental Vision; the Doomed Priests of Doom in Isaiah 28,” in: *HAR* 10, 1986, p. 109-121, 110ff., with reference to Montgomery, J. A., *Notes on the Old Testament*, in:

JBL 31, 1912, p. 140-146, 141. See also Asen, B. A., The Garlands of Ephraim: Jes 28.1-6 and the *marzēah*, in: JSOT 71, 1996, p. 73-87, 82ff.). Consistent with that is another interpretation that understands *Zaw la-Zaw* as an *onomatopoeia* which then would have to be translated as ‘chitchat.’ It is the prophetic ‘chitchat’ that is taken up by the rulers of Jerusalem, and by which Jerusalem is ruled (see also Roberts, Double Entendre p. 43).

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Barthel 319.

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. Blenkinsopp, J., Judah’s Covenant With Death (ISAIAH XXVIII 14-22), in: VT 50, 2000, p. 472-483, esp. 476ff.; Toorn, K. van der, Echoes of Judaeen Necromancy in Isaiah 28,7-22, in: ZAW 100, 1988, p. 199-217, esp. 203f.; Wildberger, Jesaja III p. 1073ff.

<sup>72</sup> See also Wolff, Zitat p. 70.

<sup>73</sup> See already RaShY ad loc.; see also Blenkinsopp, Covenant p. 473f.; Klopfenstein, M. A., Die Lüge nach dem Alten Testament. Ihr Begriff, ihre Bedeutung und ihre Beurteilung, Zürich - Frankfurt/M. 1964, p. 148; Wildberger, Jesaja III p. 1073; Wolff, Zitat p. 123 (with reference to Isa 30:10).

<sup>74</sup> See also Landy, F., Tracing the Voice of the Other: Isaiah 28 and the Covenant with Death, in: Exum, J. Ch. - Clines, D. J. A. (Ed.), The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible, Sheffield 1993, p. 140-162, 142: “Poetry, as player, is the antagonist of death.”

<sup>75</sup> See Weinrich, H., Sprache in Texten, Stuttgart 1976, p. 319.

<sup>76</sup> Ps 46:2; 61:4; 62:8f.; 71:7; 91:2 a. fr.

<sup>77</sup> Ps 17:8; 27:5.

<sup>78</sup> Comp. Hos 2:20 (see also Hos 10:4; 12:2); Ps 50:5.16; 132:12 a.fr.

<sup>79</sup> Comp. Hos 13:14; Ps 6:6; 18:6; 49:15; 89:49 a.fr.

<sup>80</sup> Hos 7:1.13; 12:2; Am 2:4; Mi 2:11; Ps 33:17; 40:5; 101:7 a.fr.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. also Landy, Vision 27: “The prophetic word is (...) metaphorical, transporting us somewhere beyond, or to a different place, unsettling and destroying, the familiar.” Landy, Tracing the voice p. 147 characterizes Isaiah’s poetics as a “breakdown of symbolic order.”

<sup>82</sup> Compare in particular the distinction made by Ricœur between ‘rhetoric’ and ‘poetic’ language patterns: rhetoric speech seeks to persuade, whereas a poetic idiom seeks to depict reality in an innovative way: The new is constituted by the relationship of the metaphoric elements of the metaphor (comp. Ricœur, P., Stellung und Funktion der Metapher in der biblischen Sprache, in: Ricœur, P. - Jünger, E., Metapher. Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache, München 1974, p. 45-70, 53f.). See also Ricœur, P., Die Metapher und das Hauptproblem der Hermeneutik, in: Haverkamp, A. (Ed.), Theorie der Metapher, Darmstadt 1983, p. 356-375.

<sup>83</sup> See e.g. Fohrer, G., *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten*, Zürich - Stuttgart <sup>2</sup>1968, p. 109.

<sup>84</sup> With regard to Urijah, the High Priest, see 2Ki 16:10ff. (see already Ibn Ezra ad loc.); Secharya ben Yeverechya represents a high-ranking public. Traditional exegesis has always identified Urijah with Uriah, the prophet, son of Shemaiah, (Jer 26:20ff.; comp. bMak 24b; EkhaR 5,18; RaShY ad loc.). In this context, the witnesses represent the ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ power, of which none should be excluded from Isaiah’s sphere of action. The fact that, according to the text, apparently both personalities made themselves available without any problems, underlines once again Isaiah’s prominent position within the elite of Jerusalem.

<sup>85</sup> According to Barthel p. 185 incl. note 14; Gesenius-Kautzsch § 119u; Hayes, J. H. - Irvine, S. A., *Isaiah. The Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching*, Nashville 1987, p. 142 a.o. to be understood as a *Lamed Inscriptionis*, this view being rejected by Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 238; for further reference see also Avigad, N., *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah. Remnants of a Burnt Archive*, Jerusalem 1986.

<sup>86</sup> RaShY explains: מְגִילָה אִוּ לֹחַ (cf. Targum ad loc.; see also RaDaQ). Tur-Sinai, N. H. (= Torczyner), *Lachish I (Tell ed Duweir). The Lachish Letters*, London - New York a.o. 1938, p. 16 incl. note 1 refers to Isa 3:22f. (see already Ibn Ezra ad loc.), in which חֲרִיטִים and גְּלִינִים are mentioned equivalent to one another, and therefore translates as ‘cape; cloth’. Galling, K., *Tafel, Buch und Blatt*, in: H. Goedicke (Ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W.F. Albright*, Baltimore 1971, p. 207-223, 221f. derives the word from \*גִּלָּה pi ‘(to) polish; smooth’, a procedure indispensable for papyrus as well as for leather (see also Haran, M., *Scribal Workmanship in Biblical Times - The Scrolls and the Writing Implements*, in: *Tarb.* 50, 1980/81, p. 65-87 [Hebrew], 82 incl. note 33); Krauss, S., *Talmudische Archäologie*, 3 vol., Leipzig 1910-1912, vol. 3, p. 176 considers גְּלִיין to be part of a scroll of parchment, in particular the edge of the parchment, which is unrolled first.

<sup>87</sup> RaShY’s understanding of the term is based on the Targum in the sense ‘for everybody readable/understandable’; the suggestion made by Kaiser, *Jesaja I* p. 174 incl. note 2, to vocalize אֲנוּשׁ instead of אָנוּשׁ is not necessary (see also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* p. 237). Talmage also vocalized אֲנוּשׁ. See Talmage, F., *בהרט אנוש* in *Isaiah 8:1*, in: *HTR* 60, 1967, 465-468, esp. 467. He understands the expression on the basis of the basic meaning of (assy.) *enēšu(m)* “to

be(come) weak” as “broad nibbed, flexible pen capable of making the bold stroke expected in the context.” Presupposed is the understanding of גלילין as (a sheet of) papyrus.

<sup>88</sup> See Knauf, War ‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache?, p. 125-142.

<sup>89</sup> The ו-sentence (v4) follows immediately the request for the naming of the child. The interpretation of the name is thus given only to Isaiah and is not meant to be explained in public by that time.

<sup>90</sup> The same structure holds true for the second prophetic sign described in Isa 20, despite the fact that here we have a third person narrative.

<sup>91</sup> See also Hayes - Irvine p. 144: “By means of their [Uriah’s and Zechariah’s] official testimony, Isaiah could later protect himself against the sceptical charge of *ex eventu* prophecy.”

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Isa 8:4 (a child - even a prophetess’ child - learns to say ‘Mummy’ and ‘Daddy’ not earlier than by the age of 10 months).

<sup>93</sup> See in particular Eco, U., Einführung in die Semiotik, München <sup>6</sup>1988, p. 200ff. , Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 238 considers the name to be a “slogan” or “war cry.”

<sup>94</sup> Regarding different factors of ‘codification’ see esp. Eco, Semiotik p. 206ff.

<sup>95</sup> “A *Sign* or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is *genuine*, that is, its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations. That is the reason the Interpretant, or Third, cannot stand in a mere dyadic relation to the Object, but must stand in such a relation to it as the Representamen itself does” (Peirce, Ch. S., Collected Papers, Vol. I: Principles of Philosophy, Vol. II: Elements of Logic, ed. by Ch. Hartshorne u. P. Weiss, Cambridge/Mass. <sup>2</sup>1960, 2.274); see also Peirce, Semiotische Schriften, Vol. 1, ed. by Ch. Kloesel u. H. Pape, Frankfurt/M. 1986, p. 64.72ff.

<sup>96</sup> See Aichele, G., Sign, Text, Scripture. Semiotics and the Bible, Sheffield 1997, esp. P. 62ff.; Eco, U., Lector in fabula. Die Mitarbeit der Interpretation in erzählenden Texten, München <sup>3</sup>1998, p. 31ff.; Eco, Semiotik 76ff.; Schönrich, G., Zeichenhandeln. Untersuchungen zum Begriff einer semiotischen Vernunft im Ausgang von Ch. S. Peirce, Frankfurt/M. 1990, p. 96ff.

<sup>97</sup> See Morris, Ch. W., Grundlagen der Zeichentheorie. Ästhetik der Zeichentheorie. Mit einem Nachwort v. F. Knilli, Frankfurt/M. 1988, p. 20ff.; *ibid.*, Zeichen, Sprache und Verhalten. Mit einer Einführung von K.-O. Apel, Düsseldorf 1973, p. 77ff.

<sup>98</sup> See e.g. Barth, H., Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit. Israel und Assur als Thema einer produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajaüberlieferung, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1977, p. 38ff.; Hayes - Irvine 123; Irvine, St. A., Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis, Atlanta 1990, p. 142ff.; Irvine, Isaiah's *She'ar-Yashub* and the Davidic House, in: BZ NF 37, 1993, 78-88, p. 79; Steck, O. H., Bemerkungen zu Jes 6, in: *ibid.*, Wahrnehmungen Gottes im Alten Testament. Ges. Studien, München 1982, p. 149-170, 163f. incl. note 30.

<sup>99</sup> See already the commentary by Abravanel ad loc. (Don Yizchaq Abravanel, *Perush 'al Nevi'im Acharonim*, Pesaro 1511/12, Repr. Jerusalem - Tel Aviv 1976, ad. Loc. p. 62b.)

<sup>100</sup> See RaDaQ ad loc.

<sup>101</sup> With regard to Isa 10:20-23 see e.g. Barthel p. 240.

<sup>102</sup> Isa 8:14.

<sup>103</sup> In recent years scholars have worked in particular on the relationship between Biblical prophecies and the Neo-Assyrian prophecies with special reference to the biblical **אל תירא** formula and the Assyrian '*lā tapallah*'-formula (*Lā tapallah*[...] *atabbe uššab*; *Atta lū qālāka Aššur-ah-iddina*, a.fr.); see the examples given in Nissinen, M., Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie für die alttestamentliche Forschung, in: Dietrich - Loretz 217-258, esp. 247ff.; Parpola, S., Assyrian Prophecies, Helsinki 1997; Weippert, M., Assyrische Prophetien der Zeit Asarhaddons und Assurbanipals, in: F. M. Fales (Ed.), Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literal, Ideological and Historical Analysis, Rom 1981, p. 71-115, 81ff.; Weippert, M., Aspekte israelitischer Prophetie im Lichte verwandter Erscheinungen des Alten Orients, in: G. Mauer - U. Magen (Ed.), Ad bene et fideliter seminandum, FS K. Deller, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988, 287-319, and recently Weippert, M., Ich bin Jahwe - Ich bin Istar von Arbela. Deuterojesaja im Lichte der neuassyrischen Prophetie, in: Huwlyer, B. – Mathys, H.-P. a.o. (Ed.), Prophetie und Psalmen, Festschrift Klaus Seybold, Münster 2001, p. 31-59, esp. 37ff.

<sup>104</sup> One of the temple officials, see e.g. Weippert, Assyrische Prophetien 97f. incl. note 62.

<sup>105</sup> See Blum, E., Jesajas prophetisches Testament. Beobachtungen zu Jes 1-11 (part I), in: ZAW 108, 1996, p. 547-568; (part II), in: ZAW 109, 1997, p. 12-29 Testament II 27. The first to use the expression '(kind of) testament' was Duhm (see Duhm, B., Das Buch Jesaja, Göttingen <sup>5</sup>1968, p. 64).

<sup>106</sup> See Budde, K., Jesaja's Erleben. Eine gemeinverständliche Auslegung der Denkschrift des Propheten (Kap. 6,1-9,6), Gotha 1928, p. 1ff.; *ibid.*, Über die Schranken, die Jesajas prophetischer Botschaft zu setzen sind, in: ZAW 41, 1923, p. 154-203, esp. 165f. Budde's

hypothesis has gained wide acceptance, see e.g. Barthel, esp. p. 37ff.; Berges, Jesaja p. 87ff.; Hardmeier, Verkündigungsabsicht p. 237f.; Hubmann, Bote p. 331f.; Steck, Bemerkungen, bes. 161ff. Only a few scholars reject the assumption of a 'Denkschrift', see Irvine, St. A., The Isaianic *Denkschrift*: Reconsidering an Old Hypothesis, in: ZAW 104, 1992, p. 216-231, 231; Reventlow, H. Graf, Das Ende der sog. 'Denkschrift' Jesajas, in: BN 38/39, 1987, p. 62-67.

<sup>107</sup> See Hardmeier, Chr., Verkündigung und Schrift bei Jesaja. Zur Entstehung der Schriftprophetie als Oppositionsliteratur im alten Israel, in: TGl 73, 1983, p. 119-134, 120.131.

<sup>108</sup> See also Wieringen, A. L. H. M. van: The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12, Leiden - Boston a.o. 1998, p.85: "This means that the implied author helps the implied reader to accept God's word's just as some characters have done with the help of the character Isaiah. Both communication instances, the implied authors and the character Isaiah, function as a prophet: Isaiah is a prophet for the other characters, the implied author, in the wake of Isaiah, for the implied reader;" similarly determines Laato, A., History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature. A Semiotic Approach to the Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets, Stockholm 1996, p. 328 Amos as the 'implied prophet' and his contemporaries as the 'implied audience' and prolongs the relationship between the prophet and his contemporaries to the relationship between the 'implied author' and the 'implied reader' (criticized by K. Niensens in: K. Nielsen, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Books. Response to Antti Laato, in: SJOT 8, 1994, p. 298-301, esp. 300).

<sup>109</sup> This is the case even when scholars, like the representatives of the Scandinavian school, in particular H. Birkeland; I. Engnell; S. Mowinckel; E. Nielsen (comp. e.g. J. Engnell, Gamla Testamentet. En traditionshistorisk inledning, Uppsala 1945; *ibid.* Profetia och Tradition, 1948; S. Mowinckel, Oppkomsten af profetlitteraturen, in: NTT 43, 1942, p. 65-111), assume a literary prophetic tradition to be initiated at a late stage of Israelite history, i.e. in post-exilic times. According to Engnell, prophetic oracles were collected within oral tradition, and only later (re-) written by a prophetic support-group: "The prophet-master and his group are one" (Engnell, I., The Call of Isaiah. An Exegetical and Comparative Study, Uppsala - Leipzig 1949, p.23; see also *ibid.* Prophets and Prophetism in the Old Testament, in: *ibid.* Critical Essays on the Old Testament, London 1970, p. 123-179, 152ff.).

<sup>110</sup> Høgenhaven, J., Prophecy and Propaganda. Aspects of Political and Religious Reasoning in Israel and the Ancient Near East, in: SJOT 3, 1989, p. 125-141, 141.

<sup>111</sup> Becker, Jesaja, p. 113f. labels those who took up the message as '*ecclesiola in ecclesia*' This understanding illustrates very clearly how and to what extent the exegesis of prophetic literature

books is influenced by the reading of the New Testament: In opposition to Isaiah's contemporaries (the 'impious'), the agents of the literary transmission of the prophetic oracles are declared 'disciples' as described in the New Testament, and the New Testament's disciples' relationship to the 'master' simply assigned to the generation of the 8<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-century prophets.

<sup>112</sup> Jeremias, J., *Das Proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie*, in: *ibid.*, Hosea und Amos. Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheten, Tübingen 1996, p. 20-33, 30.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. also Jer 36:10.15: Baruch reads *from the book the words of Jeremiah (...) to all the people*.

<sup>114</sup> See also Blenkinsopp, Isaiah p. 238; Sonnet, J.-P., *Le Motif de l'endurcissement (Is 6,9-10) et la lecture d' 'Isaie'* in: *Biblica* 73, 1992, p. 208-239, esp. 220f.

<sup>115</sup> See already Sonnet, *Le Motif*, p. 216.

<sup>116</sup> This interpretation corresponds to an explanation given by K. Nielsen. According to Nielsen, the fact that the prophet initiates a lawsuit, yet never concludes with a final judgment, proves that the final verdict is to be asserted by the people themselves, i.e. the political and cultic elite: "It is the people who are accused; it is likewise they who must pronounce judgment upon themselves," in: Nielsen, K., *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge. An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rib-Pattern)*, Sheffield 1978, p. 31; see also Nielsen, K., *Das Bild des Gerichts (Rib-Pattern) in Jes. I-XII. Eine Analyse der Beziehungen zwischen Bildsprache und dem Anliegen der Verkündigung*, in: *VT* 29, 1979, p. 309-324, esp. 315.

<sup>117</sup> In that, Clements (in: Clements, R. E., *Zion as Symbol and Political Reality: A Central Isaianic Quest*, in: Ruiten, J. van - Vervenne, M. (Ed.), *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*. FS W. A. M. Beuken, Leuven 1997, p. 3-17, 5) is right, when he defines "prophecy (...) as a marker for community identity."