Essay 2
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Hebrew language students: discuss an interesting feature of the text.

Many scholars have seen chapters 1-5 of Isaiah as an introductory summary added once the book was completed. Chapter 6 reinforced that idea since it is similar to a call for the prophet to begin his ministry. Thus, begins the book of Isaiah, giving the reader a panoramic view of the book and introducing the beginning of Isaiah's prophecies. However, it is possible to mention other characteristics in these six chapters, such as Isaiah's oracles, its poetic language, the central terms, and the references to other books.

The book of Isaiah is composed of prophetic oracles or sermons mostly. These oracles are messages from God to a specific human group written in a poetic format. Constable notes that at least three basic types of these oracles have been found in the prophets: oracles of judgment, repentance, and prediction of salvation (Constable 2021). Isaiah's oracles fit into one of these three types. In addition, there are other poetic tools, such as songs or songs of lament. Constable considers Isaiah 5 a song about the vineyard that tells the sad story of a person cultivating a vineyard that turns out to be disappointing (Constable 2021). Through this song, Isaiah described God's careful preparation of Israel to bear spiritual fruit. However, Israel did not produce them.

This book also uses poetic language to give the oracles a profound impact. Paronomasia (wordplay) is used to generate a more forceful contrast. Isaiah 5:7, for example, the word play is between מִשְׁפָּט (justice) and מִשְׁפָּח (bloodshed), and צְדָקָה (righteousness) with צָעָקָה (outcry). By these words, the prophet underlines the difference between what was expected and what was received (Oswalt 2003, 113). Isaiah also used graphic figures to describe the spiritual condition of the nation. Isaiah 5-6 uses the image of a wounded body left unattended, and in 1:8, he uses another about an abandoned hut in a mowed field (Oswalt 2003, 73). In addition, this book makes use of figurative language. An example of figurative language in Isaiah is the word trees in 1:30-31. Isaiah refers to the rebellious people as towering trees that will soon be destroyed (Oswalt 2003, 84).

Different authors have found chiasms in Isaiah's message. These are literary devices where ideas are repeated in an increasing (1, 2, 3) and then decreasing order (3, 2, 1). Generally, chiasms share similar words or similar arguments. Constable notes the presence of chiasms in 1:21-31 (with a center in 1:23-24) and 5:8-23 (with a center in 18-19 and 20). These chiasms point to Israel's judgment and sins (Constable 2021). It is possible that, although the material does not mention it, there are other chiasms in these first six chapters.

A frequently used device in these chapters is the interjection הוֹי (woe). This interjection introduces the cries of lament that bring to mind the sadness of funerals (Constable 2021). This device does not appear exclusively in Isaiah. It also appears in other books (1 King) and prophets (Jeremiah 22:18-19 and Amos 5:16). Isaiah 5:8-25 uses this interjection seven times to denounce and

lament Israel's sins. God had called them to live in the covenant. However, Israel lived in the sin of greed, self-indulgence, cynicism, moral perversion, and social injustice (Oswalt 2003, 113). The "woes" warn that this behavior will have tragic results that may have been unnecessary.

Concerning key terms, Isaiah uses many words to illustrate his message. In these chapters, Isaiah refers to Israel as בַּת-צִיּוֹן (the daughter of Zion). This term seeks to underscore God's love and care for his wayward people (Constable 2021). In addition, it highlights Israel's beauty and pride. Isaiah 3:24 also points out that Israel's beauty will be destroyed soon, and she will be in misery. Another term used in Isaiah is בַּת-צִיּוֹן הַיָּמִים (the end of the age). Constable points out that this term has an eschatological sense. It does not refer to a time soon but indicates the farthest point in the future (Constable 2021). Isaiah used the names of God to allude to the judgment that will come upon Israel. Isaiah 1:24 refers to God as יהוה צְבָאוֹת (Jehovah of Hosts). Names of God will appear in other chapters of Isaiah. The term הַר (mountain) also functions as a keyword and a symbol of a nation or authority. This idea could relate to the surrounding nations' thinking about the dwelling of the gods. For Israel, God dwelt on Mount Zion. Although it may not be the highest, that is where the only God is found and where he is to be sought (Oswalt 2003, 89).

One term that catches the attention of Constable and Oswalt is the use of the name עֻזִּיָּהוּ Uzziah (Constable 2021; Oswalt 2003, 126). Both authors ask themselves the same question: Why is it significant that Isaiah's call is after the death of Uzziah? Uzziah's death marked a before and after in Israel. Uzziah was the greatest king since Solomon. He symbolized Israel in many ways. So when he died, the nation felt a great loss. After Uzziah's reign, Jotham and Ahaz could not cope with Assyrian control. This death represented the end of a stage and the beginning of something different for Israel.

The prophetic books show particular and common characteristics. In many books, there are many mentions that prophets received the oracles in visions חָזוֹן (Obadiah 1:1). Isaiah 1:1 affirms that the messages received were by visions. However, throughout Isaiah's book, there is not much mention of that term. Nor is it necessary to state that Isaiah would have received everything under one vision or more visions. Whatever way Isaiah got this message, it came from God. Also, Constable mentions that Isaiah 2:1b-4 is an almost identical prophecy in Micah 4:1-3 (Constable 2021). He warns that it is probable that one of the authors quoted this prophecy from the other or took it from another prophet. However, it is relevant to affirm that, be that the case, both messages came from God, who was able to communicate the same prophecy by both prophets.

Bibliography

Oswalt, John N. *Isaiah. The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003.

Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on Isaiah, 2021 Edition*. Soniclight: 2021.