

Chapter Five

The Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah: Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39

I. Introduction

Thus far in this thesis we have covered a vast range of issues that all have bearing on our central argument that the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah sets up chapters 7-12 and 36-39 as two “bookends” that highlight Isaiah’s “Immanuel prophecies” during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the fulfillment of those prophecies during the invasion of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah’s reign. At the heart of this “bookend structure” we find the central figure of Immanuel (understood as Hezekiah) whose birth was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 and during whose reign the greater prophecies of Isaiah 7-12 (as well as elsewhere in Proto-Isaiah) came to fulfillment.

Making such an argument, though, is a very difficult and laborious undertaking, for both Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 are fraught with exegetical difficulties and scholarly controversy. There are the controversies surrounding the specifics of Isaiah 7:14 and its immediate context of 7:13-25, as well as chapters 7-12 (chapter 2); there is the controversy surrounding the chronology of II Kings (chapter 3); and there are the controversies of the priority of either II Kings or Isaiah, the literary unity of Isaiah 36-39, and the historical reliability of Isaiah 36-39 (chapter 4). Now that we have analyzed, discussed, and come to our conclusions concerning these issues, we now are able to turn our attention to analyzing the “bookend structure” of Proto-Isaiah that lies at the very heart of the argument of this thesis.

II. The Structure of Proto-Isaiah

It has long been noted that Isaiah 36-39 plays a significant role within the structure of Isaiah. It not only serves as a conclusion to Proto-Isaiah, but it also acts as a springboard that takes the reader forward to the later part of the exilic period, to Isaiah 40 in which God calls his people out of the very exile about which Isaiah prophesies in Isaiah 39. Yet because of the general consensus among scholars regarding the priority of II Kings 18-20 over Isaiah 36-39, the “historical” debate has tended to focus on the II Kings account, whereas the Isaiah account has traditionally been regulated to questions of literary structure and its place and function within Isaiah as a whole. In other words, since Isaiah 36-39 has been generally regarded as a later legendary and unhistorical account of Sennacherib’s invasion, many scholars dismiss the notion that Isaiah 36-39 actually was ever a part of Proto-Isaiah. In light of this, many scholars have divided Proto-Isaiah as consisting of chapters 1-33 or chapters 1-35, with chapters 36-39 being attributed to the work of Deutero-Isaiah, who borrowed from II Kings and placed chapters 36-39 in their present place to function as a “bridge” between Proto-Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Unfortunately, this view has led to an inability to see, not only the historical significance of Isaiah 36-39 itself, but also how the very literary structure of Proto-Isaiah, consisting of chapters 1-39, reveals a clear theological/political interpretation of the both Ahaz’s unfaithfulness during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and Hezekiah’s faithfulness during Sennacherib’s invasion, namely that (a) Hezekiah was the prophesied Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14, (b) the Assyrian oppression was the consequence of Ahaz’s unfaithful actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, and (c) Sennacherib’s failure to take Jerusalem and Hezekiah’s faithfulness to YHWH was prophesied by Isaiah.

In order to understand the structure of Proto-Isaiah, one must recognize that in its original context Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy that (a) centered on the birth of Hezekiah, (b) warned of YHWH's impending judgment on Israel and Judah, and (c) announced YHWH's salvation of the remnant who survived his judgment. This prophecy, therefore, found its *immediate* fulfillment within the reign of Hezekiah: Israel was destroyed by Assyria; Judah was oppressed by Assyria and, during Sennacherib's invasion, was "flooded up to the neck" with the Assyrian armies. Yet YHWH saved the faithful remnant in Jerusalem from total destruction precisely because Hezekiah put his faith in YHWH in a time of national crisis. Therefore, because of these historical events of both the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib, the writer of Proto-Isaiah chose to arrange his work around these defining moments in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ahaz's faithless actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis brought about a prophecy of YHWH's judgment by the means of Assyria; yet along with that prophecy of judgment came a promise of YHWH's salvation of a remnant by the means of a faithful royal son, which was seen as being fulfilled during the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE, in the faithful actions of Hezekiah, Ahaz's son.

By showing that the prophecies of Isaiah had indeed been fulfilled during Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE, Proto-Isaiah not only vindicated the prophetic career of Isaiah, but it also insured its own retention and survival—the work of the true prophets of YHWH was preserved, whereas the work of false prophets was discarded. In light of the prophet's vindication and Proto-Isaiah's retention, later scribal exegetes built upon Isaiah's work and expanded its prophetic influence to the surviving remnant that returned to Judah after the Babylonian Exile.

Yet this bookend pattern of prophecy-and-fulfillment found in Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 leaves open the question of Isaiah 1-6 and its place within Proto-Isaiah. To this question, we must present a number of clarifications. First, one might assume, since this thesis is arguing that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 act as “literary bookends” within Proto-Isaiah, this thesis is also arguing that chapters 1-6 were later insertions to the text, possibly at the time when chapters 40-66 were added. After all, the term “bookends” indicates that one bookend stands at the beginning of a work and the other stands at the end of a work. Yet this is not what this thesis is arguing. Rather, the argument of this thesis regarding the structure and composition of Proto-Isaiah is that (a) the various prophecies and oracles within Proto-Isaiah were recorded in some fashion or another during the lifetime of the prophet Isaiah, and (b) shortly after Hezekiah’s death, when conflict arose over how to interpret the events of Sennacherib’s invasion and Manasseh began to re-institute pagan worship, and, if there is any amount of credibility to Jewish tradition, when Manasseh had Isaiah killed, the disciples of Isaiah and/or scribes who were devoted to the sole worship of YHWH collected Isaiah’s oracles (of which chapters 1-6 were a part) and stitched them together within what was essentially a “Book of Isaiah” that served to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH, vindicate Hezekiah as a righteous king who was faithful to YHWH, and place the blame for Judah’s recent hardships on the unfaithful and idolatrous practices most typified by the actions of Hezekiah’s father Ahaz. As Christopher Seitz has mentioned, “It comes as no surprise that as the Isaiah traditions developed and took form, the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah was yet furthered strengthened. Jerusalem’s deliverance in 701 BC was a powerful confirmation of the prophet’s Immanuel promises.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ *Isaiah 1-39*, 71.

This interpretation of the events during Isaiah's lifetime eventually won the day in the life of ancient Israel. Hezekiah went down in history as a righteous king and Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH. Later on during the exile, later scribes and prophets sought to speak to their exilic and post-exilic audience by building on the prophetic vision of Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah, therefore was essentially born out of the original book of Isaiah, now known as "Proto-Isaiah." While there is no doubt these later scribal exegetes probably edited certain sections of Proto-Isaiah as they added Deutero-Isaiah on to the original,²⁸⁰ the extent to which they did this can only be a matter of speculation. Therefore, unless there is some compelling evidence to doubt the historical and literary unity of chapters 1-39, this thesis holds that we should not only view these chapters as a literary whole, but that the historical impetus for the composition of these chapters was most likely to have been early on during Manasseh's reign, when there would have undoubtedly been controversy and debate over the interpretation and meaning of the events from the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis up through Sennacherib's invasion.

This leads us to our second point concerning Isaiah 1-6: although there is general consensus that chapters 1-12 form a distinct unit within Proto-Isaiah, there has still been different opinions as to how those chapters function together as a unit. Christopher Seitz makes the argument that chapters 1-4 "certainly set the tone for what follows" in chapters 5-12.²⁸¹ In saying this, Seitz clearly sees the "song of the vineyard" in chapter 5 and Isaiah's call in chapter 6 as being intimately connected to chapters 7-12. John Oswalt,

²⁸⁰ For example, the placement of chapters 38-39 after 36-37, even though we can be fairly certain that Hezekiah's illness and the visit of the envoys from Babylon happened before Sennacherib's invasion, can be easily explained by the realization that later scribal exegetes wanted to have Proto-Isaiah end with the envoys from Babylon, so it could act as a bridge to Isaiah 40 and the call to come out from the Babylonian exile.

²⁸¹ *Isaiah 1-39*, 30.

though, divides things in the following manner: chapters 1-5 act as the introduction to the entire book of Proto-Isaiah, chapter 6 tells about Isaiah's call to servanthood, and chapters 7-12 illustrate the dilemma of whom to trust, God or Assyria.²⁸² Brevard Childs also sees chapter 6 as a lynchpin that both points backwards to chapter 5 and forward to chapter 7.²⁸³ This thesis tends to agree with the structural outlines of Oswalt and Childs. The mention of the "vineyard" in Isaiah 1:8 finds parallels in 3:14 and 5:1-10, but then virtually disappears from the rest of Isaiah. For that reason alone, one can argue that chapters 1-5 should be seen as a smaller literary unit within chapters 1-12. With that in mind, one can also view chapter 6 as the bridge between the prologue of chapters 1-5 and the historical narrative of Isaiah's confrontation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. After introducing the prophet Isaiah, chapter 6 not only links itself to the destroyed vineyard of chapter 5 with its imagery of desolation and a fallen stump (6:11-13), but also links itself to the Immanuel child (and also the royal child of 9:1-5 and 11:1-11) with its imagery of the "holy seed" being in the stump of the fallen tree (6:13).

What this brief discussion has tried to show is that although this thesis is arguing that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 act as "literary bookends" within Proto-Isaiah, it is not suggesting that Isaiah 1-6 is secondary or superfluous material. It is extremely crucial, in that it not only lays out the major themes and strands of emphasis within Proto-Isaiah, but it introduces the prophet Isaiah himself. But as far as the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah as a whole is concerned, it is the two historical episodes of Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and Hezekiah and Sennacherib's invasion that serve as its literary framework. Without these two historical episodes, the themes and imagery introduced in

²⁸² *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39.*

²⁸³ *Isaiah*, 62.

chapters 1-6 and found throughout Proto-Isaiah would remain ambiguous and *ahistorical*. In that sense, Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 not only act as literary bookends to Proto-Isaiah, but they also provide the historical framework in which to interpret the themes and strands of emphasis found throughout Proto-Isaiah.

What we find in Proto-Isaiah, therefore, is this overall structure: (a) *Chapters 1-5* act as a prologue to Proto-Isaiah. The very first verse, by claiming that Isaiah's ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, impels us to view chapters 36-39 as part of Proto-Isaiah, for they took place during Hezekiah's reign. These chapters not only mark out the historical time period in which Proto-Isaiah is to be interpreted, but they also act to set out the general themes and motifs that will run throughout Proto-Isaiah; (b) *Chapter 6* functions as both an introduction to the prophet Isaiah and as a lynchpin between the prologue of chapters 1-5 and the narrative/prophecy regarding the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis; (c) *Chapters 7-12* act as the first bookend to the main body of Proto-Isaiah by providing the narrative and subsequent prophecy surrounding Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. These chapters, in effect, provide a historical "fleshing out" of the general themes put forth in the prelude of chapters 1-6; (d) *Chapters 13-19* contain the first set of various oracles, primarily concerning surrounding nations, in which the themes and motifs introduced in chapters 1-6 and "fleshed out" in chapters 7-12 are further developed; (e) *Chapter 20* gives a short narrative account of Isaiah's actions during the Ashdod campaign of 714 BCE; (f) *Chapters 21-35* contain a second set of various oracles, primarily focusing on Jerusalem, in which the same themes and motifs are further developed; (g) *Chapters 36-39* act as the second bookend within the body of Proto-Isaiah in which the various themes and motifs are brought to their

conclusion in the narrative concerning Hezekiah reign and the invasion of Sennacherib. Scholars have differed as to how to classify and organize chapters 13-35, but one thing is obvious: within Proto-Isaiah there are three narrative sections: Isaiah 7-12 contains narrative and prophecy directly related to that narrative; Isaiah 20 contains a narrative regarding Isaiah's actions during the Ashdod campaign; and Isaiah 36-39 contains a narrative surrounding Hezekiah's reign, primarily focusing on the invasion of Sennacherib.

In this chapter we will analyze the literary "bookend structure" within the main body of Proto-Isaiah that was used to vindicate Isaiah's prophetic career by highlighting Isaiah's Immanuel prophecies in Isaiah 7-12 and the fulfillment of those prophecies in Isaiah 36-39. It has been long noted by numerous scholars that there are various items within these two sections that can be seen as directly contrasting the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ironically though, despite general agreement among scholars, there is rarely any full discussion of the contrasts between these two kings. It is the view of this thesis that these contrasts between Ahaz and Hezekiah are not simply random and isolated features within the texts, but that they are a major part of the very structure of Proto-Isaiah. Furthermore, it is this bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah that highlights the contrast of these two kings that both the writer of Kings and Chronicles pick up on and work into their own accounts as well.

III. Intertextuality within the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

A literary analysis of the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah shows far more than just a simple contrast between a bad king and a good king, although that becomes very clear within the text. What it shows is a much wider matrix of meaning that involves the

idea of prophecy-fulfillment centered on the promised royal son Immanuel, Hezekiah. Indeed, what is involved in this literary structuring is an element of intertextuality and inner-biblical exegesis. This was touched upon with our discussion of Michael Fishbane in chapter one. Our premise here is that Isaiah 36-39 was composed with clear intertextual echoes to Isaiah 7-12²⁸⁴: various phrases, places, and themes found within Isaiah 36-39 find direct correlation and cohesiveness with the events and prophecies in Isaiah 7-12, the end result being that the ultimate interpretation of these two passages in Isaiah is dependent upon seeing each one's relationship to the other.

Yet one might ask, "How can we be sure that there is intentional intertextuality on the part of any given writer?" In his book, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard Hays offers a brief checklist of items that help us assess whether or not a biblical writer is intentionally making intertextual connections within his work. Although his work deals with Old Testament reinterpretation in Paul, the tests he proposes to guide intertextual analysis are equally applicable to the later Old Testament writers who drew upon earlier Old Testament works. According to Hays, and to a number of other scholars as well, the probable intention of the author and understanding of the original audience is of primary importance in any definition of biblical intertextuality.²⁸⁵ He writes, "Claims about intertextual meaning effects are strongest when it can be credibly demonstrated that they occur within the literary structure of the text and that they can plausibly be ascribed

²⁸⁴ The potential date of composition of Isaiah 36-39 was discussed in chapter 4, "The Occasion and Purpose of Isaiah 36-39," pages 35-45.

²⁸⁵ "Responsible exegesis involves not only a responsibility towards the possible intentions of 'an original author' or 'editor', but also a willingness to include meanings that were not intended but which arise in the dialogue with later texts." Kirsten Nielsen, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* (ed. A. Lemaire and M. Saebo; Boston: Brill, 2000), 31.

to the intention of the author and the competence of the original readers.”²⁸⁶ Granting the inherent subjectivity in such an assessment, as in most historical-critical assessments, when suggesting an intertextual connection within a given biblical text, the scholar must be able to make a plausible case that either when the author said *X* that he was intentionally making a reference to *Y*, or when the original audience read *X* that they understood it to be referring to *Y*. If so, then that impels us to consider that connection when trying to determine the meaning of the text. This leads to the question, “What are the indicators that show there is a legitimate connection between two texts?”

The most obvious indicator of intertextuality is when there is an explicit citation of a *tradtum* within the *tradio*. Yet Fishbane points out that “the vast majority of cases of aggadic exegesis in the Hebrew Bible involve *implicit* or virtual citations.”²⁸⁷ Given this fact, there must be definitive indicators that aid the scholar in making the judgment as to whether or not a proposed case of intertextuality could have been intended by the author and/or understood by the original audience. Such indicators are provided by Hays in the form of seven tests: (1) *Availability*: Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or original readers? (2) *Volume*: Is there a large degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns? In other words, if there is no direct citation of a previous work, one should look for a “grouping” or “pattern” of catch words or images that the text shares with a prior text.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, one should ask if there is a similar storyline or pattern of events that the text shares with a prior text. (3) *Recurrence*: How

²⁸⁶ Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 28.

²⁸⁷ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 285.

²⁸⁸ “Of particular aid and importance in this judgment is the dense occurrence in one text of terms, often thoroughly reorganized and transposed, and found elsewhere in a natural, uncomplicated form.” Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 291.

often does the author cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? (4) *Thematic Coherence*: How well does the echo fit into the line of argument being developed? (5) *Historical Plausibility*: Could the author have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could the original readers have understood it? (6) *History of Interpretation*: Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes? (7) *Satisfaction*: Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? If one is guided by these seven tests, one will be able to differentiate between legitimate cases of intertextuality and those that are somewhat problematic. When these tests are used in our analysis of the bookend structure of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39, it becomes abundantly clear that this intertextual phenomenon was intentional, and it further strengthens Seitz's argument that Isaiah 36-39 was written shortly after the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah and thus formed the conclusion to Proto-Isaiah.

IV. Recurring Themes and Motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah

Yet there is more to Proto-Isaiah than just a highlighted "bookend" structure. The primary function of any two bookends is obviously to hold together various books. In the case of chapters 7-12 and 36-39, these literary bookends hold together a number of significant themes and motifs that run throughout Proto-Isaiah. These themes and motifs that are found throughout the many prophecies and oracles in Proto-Isaiah are given a distinct structure and focus by the two bookends of chapters 7-12 and 36-39; in other words, these two bookends provide the literary structure and highlight the historical backdrop in which to understand and interpret the totality of the oracles, themes, and motifs that are woven together in Proto-Isaiah. Scholars might disagree over whether or not certain passages in Proto-Isaiah are historically reliable and whether or not certain

passages in Proto-Isaiah are simply later additions and glosses, yet one thing is certain: the *intended* historical setting presented in Proto-Isaiah is that of the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Therefore, any literary analysis of Proto-Isaiah must be done with the understanding that Proto-Isaiah is presented as *having taken place* during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, roughly 742-698 BCE. Furthermore, if our historical reconstruction of the events that led to the compilation of Proto-Isaiah is found plausible, we can be certain that Proto-Isaiah would have spoken to the theological-political controversies that would have undoubtedly arisen when Manasseh attempted to reverse the policies of his father Hezekiah. Once we acknowledge the obvious fact that it begins with a narrative concerning Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and concludes with a narrative concerning Hezekiah and the events of Sennacherib's invasion, it should come as no surprise to find that there are a number of themes and motifs that are developed throughout Proto-Isaiah and come to a certain resolution within chapters 36-39.

So what are these recurring motifs and themes? Although there are various ways to address these motifs and themes, this thesis will choose to present them in the following manner. Essentially there are three strands of focus throughout Proto-Isaiah. The first strand focuses on the *sinful state* of humanity. Sometimes Jerusalem is highlighted, sometimes other nations are highlighted. Within this strand of focus we find the following recurring language: (a) condemnation of idol worship; (b) lack of knowledge and wisdom; (c) blindness and deafness; (d) haughtiness and pride; and (e) the rejection of YHWH's counsel and the acceptance of poor counsel; the result of all this ends up in (f) the oppression of the poor. The second strand in Proto-Isaiah focuses on the *judgment of YHWH* upon sinful nations whose sinful state from the first strand is

condemned. Within this strand we find YHWH's judgment described in the following recurring language: (a) YHWH's hand stretching out in judgment; (b) foreign oppression and trampling; (c) burning fire; (d) the bringing down of those who are haughty and arrogant; and (e) spoil and plunder; the result of all this is ends up in (f) devastation to the point where only a remnant is left. The third strand in Proto-Isaiah focuses on the *exaltation of YHWH* and the *salvation of his people*. Within this strand we find the following recurring language: (a) YHWH's hand stretching out for salvation; (b) true knowledge and wisdom; (c) the opening of blind eyes and deaf ears; (d) faithfulness, righteousness and justice; and (e) the heeding of the counsel of YHWH; the result of all this is (f) the refined remnant of YHWH's people acting as a signal to the nations and the nations coming to a true worship of YHWH. These three strands of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah—the sinful state of humanity, the judgment of YHWH, and the exaltation of YHWH and the salvation of his people—are woven throughout virtually every prophetic oracle within Proto-Isaiah and are emphasized by means of this recurring language just highlighted above. We see this in every major section in Proto-Isaiah.

V. The Narrative Artistry of the Three Strands of Emphasis

The way the recurring themes and motifs of these three strands of emphasis are woven throughout Proto-Isaiah is extremely complex. Therefore, before we look at how these strands and recurring motifs and themes actually work their way through Proto-Isaiah, we must first explain the “narrative artistry” of these strands, motifs, and themes: (A) how the themes and motifs within each strand relate to each other, and (B) how the themes and motifs in one strand relate to the themes and motifs in the other strands.

We will first look at the strand that emphasizes the *sinful state* of either Israel or mankind in general. It is quite clear in Isaiah that the ultimate root of the sinful state of both Israel and mankind is idolatry (a).²⁸⁹ The reason for this is because it is the willful rejection of the true God, YHWH, and the purposeful embracing of worshipping images made of wood and stone and carved in the images of various beasts. As is so ruthlessly articulated in Deutero-Isaiah, idol worship is both the ultimate rebellion and the ultimate stupidity (44:9-20). Therefore, people who worship idols do not have true knowledge and wisdom of YHWH (b).²⁹⁰ Their blindness and deafness are a result of their worshipping of idols that cannot see or hear—they become like the thing they worship (c).²⁹¹ Ironically though, idol worship fills the idol worshipper with haughtiness and pride (d).²⁹² Because of such arrogance, the leaders of the idol-worshipping nation reject the counsel of YHWH and rely on their own counsel, which is inevitably foolish, due to the fact that they are spiritually blind and deaf, with no sense, knowledge, or understanding (e).²⁹³ The final result of all this is seen in political corruption and the oppression of the poor. Instead of ruling in righteousness and justice, idolatrous leaders who do not have the knowledge of YHWH, who are blind, deaf, and arrogant, and who do not seek the counsel of YHWH, become corrupt and end up oppressing the poor (f).²⁹⁴

Isaiah's condemnation of the idolatrous state of Israel and mankind in general contains clear echoes of the creation account in Genesis, specifically 1:26-27, where God

²⁸⁹ References to idol worship can be seen not only when idols are expressly mentioned, but also with the mentioning of craftsmen, trees, gardens, and orchards; for not only is it craftsmen who fashion the idols, but these shrines were often associated with sacred gardens and orchards. [See 1:22, 25, 29-30; 2:6-8; 7:2; 16:7-10, 12; 19:3]

²⁹⁰ See 1:18; 5:13, 21; 6:5, 9-10; 27:11; 29:14

²⁹¹ See 1:15; 6:9-10; 28:23; 29:9-11; 30:10; 33:15

²⁹² See 3:16; 9:8; 10:8-14; 13:3; 14:13-14; 16:6; 28:1

²⁹³ See 5:12, 19, 21, 24; 7:12; 19:3, 11-14; 26:10; 28:7-13; 29:15; 30:1-2, 9, 12; 31:1

²⁹⁴ See 1:2, 10, 17, 21, 23; 3:9-12, 14-15; 5:7-8, 23; 9:14-16; 10:1-2; 24:5, 16; 28:14; 32:6-7;

33:15

makes man in his image. This language in Genesis is foundational to some of the most basic beliefs put forth in the Old Testament. Simply put, it is “idol language” that, by application, contributes to the commandment in Exodus 20:3-6 that forbids the worship of idols. Genesis 1:26-27 emphasizes that man is created and fashioned *in the image of God*; therefore man should not bow down and worship other gods that are nothing more than idols of gold, silver, or wood that were created and fashioned by a man’s own hand. In other words, man should worship the one who created him, not something that he himself has created. This is not only seen as rebellious against the true God, but also incredibly stupid. In addition to this, Genesis 1:26-27 contains a second emphasis: since mankind is created in the image of God, he is, in a sense, “God’s idol” within God’s creation. In other words, mankind is the visual representation of God in the world and therefore is to reflect God’s image—His righteousness, justice, mercy and love—throughout His creation. The problem in Isaiah is obviously this was not happening: not only were the surrounding pagan nations obviously given over to idol worship, but YHWH’s own people and the Davidic king Ahaz himself had turned away from worshipping only YHWH and had followed after idols. We must remember, though, that it is not only Judah that is condemned for its idol worship. Within Proto-Isaiah there are many nations who are condemned for idol worship as well—the northern kingdom of Israel, Assyria, Moab, Babylon, and Egypt all draw the wrath of YHWH. Given this fact, we must note a further connection to Genesis within these various passages in Proto-Isaiah. In many places where English translations have either “mankind” or “people,” the actual word in the Hebrew is אָדָם, Adam. It obviously means “mankind,” but we cannot overlook the intertextual connection these passages have with Genesis 1:26-27.

With this in mind, the challenge found in Isaiah for Israel and the other nations (mankind) is this: Will you worship the true God, YHWH, and in turn *be* and *reflect* the image of God in the world by caring for His creation and practicing righteousness and justice, or will you worship idols, the perverted work of your own hands, and in turn *be* and *reflect* this distorted image of false gods in the world by oppressing the poor and practicing corruption and bloodshed? Simply put, idol worship leads to the marring of the image of God among mankind and within God's creation. The ultimate concern in Proto-Isaiah, therefore, revolves around the image of God, the worship of false idols, and the failure of Israel and mankind as a whole to reflect the image of God within the world.

With this first strand within Proto-Isaiah put into its proper light, we can now elaborate upon the second strand—that of the *judgment of YHWH* upon Israel and mankind for their failure to reflect his image in the world. Ultimately the judgment of YHWH can be seen in the imagery of YHWH stretching forth His hand against the sinful and idolatrous nation (a).²⁹⁵ This judgment ultimately comes in the form of foreign oppression and is described in a variety of ways: there is the recurring motif of trampling and devouring, obviously by a foreign army (b);²⁹⁶ there is the recurring motif of burning fire, signifying both the destruction wrought by a foreign army as well as the anger of YHWH (c);²⁹⁷ this judgment by the hand of YHWH through the means of foreign oppression has the ultimate purpose to bring down those corrupt leaders who are haughty and arrogant (d);²⁹⁸ and there is also the recurring mention of spoil and plunder (e).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ See 1:25; 5:25; 9:11, 17, 20; 10:4; 14:27; 23:11; 25:10-11; 26:11; 29:23; 30:30-32

²⁹⁶ See 1:7, 12, 20; 5:5, 26-29; 6:11-12; 7:17, 25; 8:7-8; 9:4, 11, 19-20; 10:5-6, 13; 13:4-5, 17-18; 14:19, 22; 22:3, 15-19; 25:10; 26:6; 28:3; 29:1-3; 31:4; 33:1

²⁹⁷ See 1:7,31; 5:24; 6:6; 7:4; 9:4, 17-18; 10:16-18; 13:13; 18:4; 26:11; 27:4, 9; 29:6; 30:27, 30,33; 31:8-9; 33:11-12, 14; 34:9-10

²⁹⁸ See 2:9, 12-17; 3:3, 17-26; 5:15; 6:13; 8:9; 10:10, 12, 33-34; 13:11, 19-22; 14:4-12, 15-20, 24-27; 18:5; 19:1; 21:9; 24:4; 25:12; 26:5; 27:4; 28:3; 29:4-5

Finally, we are told that the result of YHWH's judgment will be so severe that only a small remnant of that given nation, be it Israel, Assyria, or Egypt, will be left over (f).³⁰⁰

Within this second strand of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah we are able to note a number of connections to the first strand of emphasis. First, just as the craftsman subjects gold and silver to *fire* in order to form an idol with his *hands*, YHWH is seen as a craftsman who reaches out his *hand* and subjects the idol-worshipping nation to *fire* as well. Ironically, as will be seen in the third strand of emphasis, this burning fire of *judgment* by the hand of YHWH is also a *refining* fire that will purify, refashion, and reform the surviving remnant into His true image once again (Genesis 1:26-27). Because of sin and idol worship, “impurities” had crept into mankind (אֱנוֹשׁ) and had prevented him from properly reflecting the image of the true God in the world; consequently, we find in Proto-Isaiah the picture of YHWH refining mankind (אֱנוֹשׁ), both Israel and the nations, so that אֱנוֹשׁ can properly reflect the image of God once again.

Secondly, when it comes to YHWH's judgment upon Judah, there is a sense of poetic justice in that Judah ends up being oppressed and trampled by the very foreign nations whose idols they followed after. Thirdly, the bringing down of the haughtiness of אֱנוֹשׁ, regardless of the nation specifically addressed within Proto-Isaiah, can be seen in the tearing down of foreign idols and the cutting down of the forests from which wood is provided to carve idols. When YHWH brings down a nation because of its idol worship, the physical expression of that nation's demise will undoubtedly be found in the tearing down of that nation's idols and the destruction of those forests and gardens that were so

²⁹⁹ See 8:1-4; 10:6, 13; 11:14; 13:16; 23:12; 24:3; 33:4, 23

³⁰⁰ See 1:9; 6:13; 7:22; 10:20-23; 13:16; 14:22; 15:9; 16:14; 17:3; 18:6; 21:17

integral in that nation's idol worship. Fourthly, the language of spoil and plunder has an ironic twist to it—the corrupt leaders who spoil and plunder the poor will be the spoil and plunder of foreign armies. This is such a key motif in Proto-Isaiah that we find that Isaiah named his own son Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Finally, similar to the language of fire and YHWH's hand, the recurring motif of a remnant has a dual purpose. It not only highlights YHWH's judgment and devastation by emphasizing the small number of survivors, but it also, as will be seen in the third strand of emphasis, highlights YHWH's salvation—this remnant will be the purified remnant who will worship YHWH as the true God.

The third strand of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah is the *exaltation of YHWH* and the *salvation of his people*. And, like the previous two strands of emphasis, this one as well holds its recurring themes and motifs together very neatly. YHWH's salvation of His people is depicted as YHWH stretching out His hand once again to refine and redeem those very people who suffered under His judgment (a).³⁰¹ When YHWH's judgment is complete, when $\square\uparrow\aleph$ is brought low and YHWH is exalted as the one true God, there will be a tremendous reversal of that earlier sinful state of both Judah and mankind. Because they will worship the true God, YHWH, His people will display true knowledge and wisdom (b);³⁰² because they will worship the living God, and because they become like the thing they worship, His people will no longer be blind and deaf, for they will receive back their sight and hearing (c);³⁰³ this recovery of knowledge, wisdom, sight and hearing will make it possible for God's people to be faithful to him and exercise righteousness

³⁰¹ See 11:11, 15; 34:16-17

³⁰² See 11:2; 29:24; 32:4; 33:6

³⁰³ See 11:3; 29:18; 30:19-21, 30; 32:3; 33:17; 34:1; 35:5

and justice within His creation (d);³⁰⁴ and this faithfulness will be displayed in God's people listening to his counsel (e).³⁰⁵ The ultimate result of YHWH's refinement of Israel into being true worshippers of YHWH who reflect His image to the world by means of practicing righteousness and justice will be that the formerly idolatrous nations, like Assyria and Egypt, will one day come to the true worship of YHWH, and in this, all of mankind will recover the image of God (f).³⁰⁶ In other words, all of בְּנֵי אָדָם will be completely redeemed and will again reflect God's image.

As should be obvious, this third strand of emphasis is intimately connected with the previous two strands of emphasis. First, as was already mentioned, there is the connection between YHWH's *hand* and the craftsman's *hand*. Both are fashioning an image in *fire*, and that fire not only burns away impurities, it refines precious material. Secondly, there is the obvious reversal of a number of the effects of the sinful idol worship from the first strand: those with no knowledge and no wisdom will attain true knowledge and wisdom; those who are blind and deaf will have their eyes and ears opened; and those leaders who once rejected YHWH's counsel will be replaced with leaders who now heed it. Thirdly, those leaders who corrupted justice and oppressed the poor will be replaced with leaders who now practice righteousness and justice and who care for the poor. Fourthly, it is precisely the oppressed poor from the first strand who eventually become the refined remnant of the third strand who stand as a signal to the nations to come and worship the true God, YHWH.

³⁰⁴ See 1:26-27; 2:18, 20; 9:6; 11:4-5; 16:3-5; 17:7-8; 26:2, 7-9; 27:9; 28:6; 30:18, 22; 31:7; 32:1-2, 16-19; 33:5-6, 15

³⁰⁵ See 11:2; 16:3; 23:8-9; 25:1; 28:29

³⁰⁶ See 2:2-4; 4:2-4, 5-6; 6:13; 7:3; 9:2; 10:20-23; 11:1-10, 11-16; 12:1-6; 14:1-2; 19:18-24; 23:18; 25:4-5, 6-9; 26:15, 19; 27:2-5, 13; 28:5; 29:19-21; 30:25-26, 29; 33:20-24; 35:1-4, 8-10

As has now been clearly shown, these three strands of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah, along with the recurring motifs and themes upon which they are supported, hearken back to the most fundamental of biblical concepts: man being made in the image of God. Thus the primary focus in Proto-Isaiah is on the idolatry, judgment and refinement of Judah in order to more properly reflect the image of God to the world. The secondary focus comes in the form of looking forward to that time when surrounding nations like Assyria and Egypt, when they see the image of God reflected in the refined remnant of Judah, will come to a true knowledge of YHWH and will join in the worship of YHWH. Nevertheless, there is one more key element in all of this that has not yet been addressed—the image and role of the Davidic king.

In his book, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, John H. Walton compares and contrasts the ancient Israelite concept of kingship with those of the surrounding nations and cultures in the ancient Near East. While noting similar ideas about the king's divine sonship and responsibilities, Walton nevertheless emphasizes some key differences between how kingship was viewed in Israel and how it was view elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For example, in the ANE there often was the concept that kingship “was the creation of the gods given as a boon to humans.”³⁰⁷ This is quite obviously different than what we find in the Old Testament, where YHWH begrudgingly allows Israel to have a king (I Samuel 8). Walton also points out that there is a clearly negative view of kingship presented in Deuteronomy 18.³⁰⁸ And while Walton is correct when he says, “Archetypal humanity bears the image of God rather than this being

³⁰⁷ John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2006, 280.

³⁰⁸ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 281.

distinctive of the king,”³⁰⁹ we cannot escape the fact that even though the Old Testament goes to great lengths to show that the Davidic king was clearly human and clearly capable of a multitude of sins, he was nevertheless the representation of YHWH to YHWH’s people.³¹⁰ Yes, Genesis 1:26-27 teaches that humankind, אָדָם is made in the image of God, but it is also clear with passages like Psalm 2 and II Samuel 7 that YHWH incorporated this concept of kingship into His covenant with His people.

Unlike the other kings of the ANE, who were often seen as divine in and of themselves, the Davidic king was clearly only human. Nevertheless, he was to be YHWH’s representative to His people; he was to reflect the image of God to His people through a faithful reign characterized by righteousness and justice. In a sense, we can say that the Davidic king was the figurehead of YHWH’s people—he was to encapsulate and reflect everything that YHWH’s people should be. Simply put, he was to reflect the *image of God* to not only YHWH’s people, but to the other nations as well. If he faithfully worshipped YHWH and exercised YHWH’s righteousness and justice to YHWH’s people, the Davidic king would essentially be reflecting the image of God to YHWH’s people and leading them in living faithfully to YHWH. This in turn would mean that the people of YHWH as a whole would end up reflecting the image of God to the surrounding nations, which would, hopefully, result in the nations renouncing their idols and coming to Jerusalem to worship YHWH, the true creator God.

With that said, it becomes quite obvious why, both in Proto-Isaiah as well as elsewhere throughout the entire Old Testament, the prophets are so critical of the various leaders throughout the history of Israel and Judah. It was not simply a matter of them

³⁰⁹ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 281.

³¹⁰ In Psalm 2:7 the Davidic king is called YHWH’s son; and in II Samuel 7:13-14 YHWH tells David that his son, the Davidic king, will be a son to YHWH.

being “bad” kings. The entire witness of the Old Testament emphasizes both the roots and the results of that “badness.” When the leaders of Israel and Judah in general, and the Davidic kings in particular, turned away from the faithful worship of YHWH and to the adulterated worship of foreign gods and idols, they essentially compromised their kingly vocation and marred the very representation and image of YHWH that they were supposed to reflect and live out among the people of YHWH—and that, as we have already seen, had disastrous consequences. It was the idolatrous kings who time and time again led Israel and Judah into idolatry. The prophets are unambiguous and intentional on this point: they blame for Israel and Judah’s idolatry and sinfulness rests solely on the idolatrous kings and leaders who led Israel and Judah down that path.³¹¹

The reason why it is so important to understand this is because it is the underlying concept that shapes the entire narrative structure in Proto-Isaiah. The three strands discussed above find their historical foundations in the two narrative bookends about king Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis (chapters 7-12) and king Hezekiah and the invasion of Sennacherib (chapters 36-39).³¹² The first bookend (chapters 7-12) focuses on the unfaithful and idolatrous Davidic king, Ahaz, who by all biblical accounts was one of the most sinful kings in the history of Judah, whose actions were seen as leading Judah into idolatry and sin, and whose unfaithfulness to YHWH during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis brought about the judgment of YHWH and opened the door to Assyrian oppression. The second bookend (chapters 36-39) focuses on the faithful Davidic king, Hezekiah, who by

³¹¹ Throughout the Old Testament, kings are found guilty of committing the “sin of Jeroboam,” meaning they led Israel and Judah into idolatry. See I Kings 14:16; 15:29-30, 34; 16:18-19, 26, 31; 22:52; II Kings 3:3; 10:29-31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:22.

³¹² Properly speaking, the bulk of chapters 7-12 is prophetic oracles and not narrative per se, but these prophecies are clearly attached to the narrative in chapter 7. Similarly, chapters 38-39 are not about Sennacherib’s invasion, but about two other events during the reign of Hezekiah. Still, these two events are clearly a part of the greater narrative section of Hezekiah’s reign.

all biblical accounts was considered to be one of the best kings in the history of Judah, whose actions were seen as leading Judah back to the true worship of YHWH, and whose faithfulness to YHWH in Judah's darkest hour was the reason why YHWH spared Jerusalem and decimated the Assyrian forces. Simply put, these three strands of emphasis have their genesis in the narrative of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, where we see an unfaithful Davidic king refusing to reflect the image of God, and their conclusion in the narrative of the invasion of Sennacherib, where we see another Davidic king—the very one about whom Isaiah prophesied during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis—whose faithful worship and reliance upon YHWH not only show him fulfilling his kingly vocation by reflecting the image of God, but also is the reason for YHWH sparing Jerusalem. In between these two narratives, these three strands of emphasis are woven throughout the prophetic oracles of Proto-Isaiah.³¹³ In other words, the literary parallels between chapters 7-12 and 36-39 *set up* these two passages as literary bookends to Proto-Isaiah; the recurring themes and motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah *reinforce* and *strengthen* this bookend structure in Proto-Isaiah.

VI. The Literary Parallels between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39

We are now ready to analyze the specific literary parallels in Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39.³¹⁴ Not only do we see the how the three strands of emphasis come to their fitting conclusion in chapters 36-39, but we also are able to draw a number of different connections between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39. When analyzing the two sections of Isaiah 7-

³¹³ A chart covering these themes and motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah can be found in Appendix B.

³¹⁴ In a very slight variation of this view, P.R. Ackroyd has argued that Isaiah 36-39 bears a general resemblance to Isaiah 1-12, and a more specific resemblance to Isaiah 6:1-9:6. See: P.R. Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg, O.P. zur Vollendung des siebsigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979* (ed. W.C. Delsman et al.; Germany:Neukirchener Verlag, 1982).

12 and 36-39, many scholars have already noted that there is a general contrast of the two kings, Ahaz and Hezekiah.³¹⁵ We notice that (a) both accounts involve kings of Judah faced with the defining crisis in their respective reigns—Ahaz was faced with the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, whereas Hezekiah was faced with the invasion of Sennacherib; (b) both accounts involve each king’s reaction to, and relationship with, Isaiah the prophet—Ahaz refused to obey Isaiah’s advice, and thus was antagonistic, whereas Hezekiah sought out Isaiah and trusted him; and (c) both king’s actions have consequences that involve Assyria—Ahaz’s faithless actions usher in Assyrian oppression, whereas Hezekiah’s faithful actions bring about a miraculous deliverance from Assyrian oppression. On this general level, many scholars have rightfully acknowledged the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah. Yet the literary connections between the two passages go much deeper than that. Time and time again there are recurring statements, places, and phrases that further link Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39.

We first must note how each narrative account begins: with an announcement of *foreign oppression*. Isaiah 7:1 tells us that in the days of Ahaz, Rezin and Pekah had wanted to attack Jerusalem but were unable to do so; Isaiah 36:1 tells us that in the “twenty-fourth” year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib invaded Judah and captured the fortified cities.³¹⁶ Both accounts begin ominously, with a very real threat to Jerusalem and to the Davidic house. We must further note, though, that Isaiah 36:1 is not the first time in Isaiah where the Assyrian threat is mentioned. The first mention in Isaiah of coming

³¹⁵ John Goldingay notes, “As the situation parallels that in chapter 7, so Hezekiah’s response begins to contrast with Ahaz’s. Hezekiah is modeling how to cope with a crisis.” *NICB: Isaiah*, 207.

³¹⁶ Ackroyd points out that aside from 1:1, 6:1, and 14:28, the only two other historical notes are here in 7:1 and 36:1. See: Ackroyd, “Isaiah 36-39.”

Assyria oppression is found in 7:17-20, *immediately after Isaiah condemns Ahaz for his lack of faith in YHWH, and prophecies about the Immanuel child.*

The reason why this is significant should be obvious. This theme of Assyrian oppression is first introduced during Isaiah’s confrontation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. We are further told in 8:7-8 that the king of Assyria “and all his glory” will “sweep into Judah like a flood” and “reach up to the neck” of Immanuel’s land. These prophecies in chapters 7-8 regarding the coming Assyrian oppression clearly foreshadow the events of 701 BCE when Sennacherib invaded Hezekiah’s land. Granted, Assyria seized control of the area long before 701 BCE—both history and the greater part of Proto-Isaiah serve as a witness to this fact.³¹⁷ Yet any honest reading of Proto-Isaiah would have to conclude that the depiction of Sennacherib invading Judah, capturing Judah’s fortified cities, and coming against Hezekiah in Jerusalem most closely resembles the metaphorical language of a coming Assyrian flood sweeping into Judah and reaching up to the neck of Immanuel’s land. In other words, if the reader of Proto-Isaiah got to 7:17-18 and 8:7-8 and asked, “When will this prophecy be fulfilled?” that reader would conclude, upon reading Isaiah 36-37, that it was fulfilled during Hezekiah’s confrontation with Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The prophecy of 7:17-18 was uttered immediately after the Immanuel prophecy and the prophecy of 8:7-8 describes a coming Assyrian flood into Judah, which is called Immanuel’s land. Not only do the events of Isaiah 36-37 fit the prophecy of 8:7-8, but when one considers the fact that the king of Judah in 701 BCE was Hezekiah, that the land in 8:8 is called Immanuel’s land, and that

³¹⁷ II Chronicles 28:20-21 clearly blames Ahaz for opening the door to Assyrian oppression by appealing to Tiglath-pileser for help during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. Thus we can conclude that the overall biblical view is that Assyrian oppression and domination over Judah began shortly after Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser, roughly around 734 BCE.

the initial prophecy of the coming Assyrian oppression is found in 7:17-18, immediately after the prophecy about Immanuel's birth, one must admit that all indications point to the identification of the Immanuel child in 7:14 as being that of Hezekiah.

In light of the threats in both 7:1 and 36:1, a second point must be noticed: there is the repeated mention of "*the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field*" in both 7:3 and 36:2. What we find is that the very place where Isaiah first confronts Ahaz with a challenge for him to not fear the threat and to instead put his faith in YHWH, is the exact place where the Rabshakeh first confronts Hezekiah, mocking his faith in YHWH and attempting to cause fear throughout Jerusalem by saying that it was YHWH who told Sennacherib to destroy Jerusalem.³¹⁸ The ultimate test of faith in both accounts begins in the same place: "the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field." Once again, the key event Isaiah records about Hezekiah's reign finds a clear connection with the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.

A third connection between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 is that of a *sign*. In Isaiah 7, after Isaiah offers Ahaz a chance to ask for any kind of sign from YHWH and after Ahaz refuses to ask for any sign at all (7:11-12), Isaiah proceeds to give the "Immanuel" sign (7:14 ff). This sign essentially is a prophecy about the destruction of not only Aram and Israel by Assyria, but also of Assyrian oppression of Judah within Immanuel's lifetime. Yet in addition to this, we see that there is a positive, salvific aspect to the Immanuel sign

³¹⁸ Ackroyd notes this similarity as well and says that although "in neither case does this play any further part in the narrative, arguably it is connected with the siege situation in both instances. It provides an incidental point of cross-reference." See: Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39," 17. Goldingay also has noted this connection: "That eastern side of the city symbolizes Hezekiah's achievements in seeking to ensure his city's security. There the Assyrian stands to confront the king, at the very spot where Isaiah had confronted Ahaz, which reminds both the king and the story's audience of the confrontation in chapter 7." *NIBC: Isaiah*, 203. John Hayes and Stuart Irvine have also made this connection. *Isaiah: The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 124. Christopher Seitz notes, "The Rabshakeh is dispatched by Sennacherib from Lachish; the Assyrian envoy confronts the envoy of Hezekiah at the scene of an earlier moment of decision for Hezekiah's predecessor Ahaz." *Zion's Final Destiny*, 55.

as well. In both 9:1-7 and 11:1-5 we have the celebration of a royal *child* being born who will rule righteously and bring to an end the yoke and trampling of the oppressor (9:1-7) and a *shoot* from the stump of Jesse (clearly Davidic and royal in nature) who will rule righteously and “kill the wicked” with the “breath of his mouth” (11:1-5). Many scholars³¹⁹ see some sort of connection between the Immanuel of 7:14, the royal child of 9:5, and the shoot from the stump of Jesse in 11:1. Therefore, when considering the significance of the sign of the Immanuel child, we must acknowledge both aspects of the sign: punishment and destruction during Immanuel’s lifetime, yet also YHWH’s salvation by the means of Immanuel’s rule.

When turning to Isaiah 36-39, we find both parallel and prophetic fulfillment to the Immanuel sign in 7:14 and its related prophecies of 9:1-7 and 11:1-5. In Isaiah 37, in response to Hezekiah’s prayer to YHWH, Isaiah prophesies that Assyria would be turned back, and gives a sign that within three years Jerusalem would be sowing, reaping, planting vineyards and eating their fruit (37:30-32). What we have here is sign, obviously given during the high point of Assyrian oppression, of the end of that very oppression and of Jerusalem’s future flourishing. Thus this sign can clearly be paralleled with, and seen as the fulfillment of, the Immanuel sign back in 7-12. Related to this is another sign mentioned in Isaiah 38 where, in response to Isaiah’s prophecy that Hezekiah would

³¹⁹ When discussing the particulars of the child of 9:5, John N. Oswalt says, “All of this points to a remarkable congruence with the Immanuel prophecy. Somehow a virgin-born child would demonstrate that God is with us (7:14). Now he says “to us a child is born” (Isaiah including himself with his people in their deliverance as he did in their sin [6:1]) and this child has those traits which manifest the presence of God in our midst. Surely this child (also described in 11:1-5) is presented as the ultimate fulfillment of the Immanuel sign.” *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 247. Christopher Seitz also notes, “Just as it is impossible to read the Immanuel texts in isolation from the royal oracle of 9:2-7, so too the royal oracle at 11:1-9 tends to affect our comprehensive vision of kingship as found in chapters 1-12.” *Isaiah 1-39*, 75. Brevard Child also notes, “This unfolding presentation of the entrance of God’s rule in the midst of terrifying disasters culminates the history of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis [i.e. Immanuel of 7:14] with the messianic promise of chapter 9 and anticipates its ultimate expansion in chapter 11. *Isaiah*, 81.

recover from his illness (38:4-6), Hezekiah asks for a sign that would tell him when he should go up to the House of YHWH (38:21-22). The sign that YHWH gives is that the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz would go backwards ten steps (38:7-8). It is interesting to note that the sign given here involves a miraculous occurrence involving something Ahaz has made.³²⁰ To sum up: in Isaiah 7-12, after Ahaz refused to ask for a miraculous sign, he was given another sign. This sign (a) involved a child, (b) prophesied coming Assyrian oppression that would occur by the time the child knew to choose the good and refuse the bad, and (c) looked forward to a time when YHWH would do away with that oppression through that very Immanuel child. Consequently, in Isaiah 36-37, not only does Hezekiah (a) come face to face with that Assyrian oppression, but because of his faith in YHWH, (b) YHWH turns back the Assyrian army and does away with Assyrian oppression. And then, in Isaiah 38-39, when Hezekiah asks for a sign in response to his miraculous healing,³²¹ that sign is itself a miraculous sign that literally “turns back the clock” of Ahaz. Once again, we see not only a clear parallel between chapters 7-12 and 36-39, but more importantly a clear indication that what was prophesied in Isaiah 7-12 is presented as having been fulfilled in Isaiah 36-39.

A fourth connection can be seen in Isaiah’s appeal to both kings. In 7:4, Isaiah urges Ahaz with the words: אֶל-תִּירָא וְלֹבְבָךְ אֶל-יִרְךָ (“do not be afraid and do not let your heart be faint”). In 10:24, again there is the appeal אֶל-תִּירָא עַמִּי יֵשֶׁב צִיּוֹן מִאֲשׁוּר

³²⁰ Ackroyd also sees this recurrence of a “sign” as confirmation that these two sections should be viewed in light of each other. See Ackroyd, “Isaiah 36-39,” 17. Stuart and Irvine also notes that “The scene here [in chapter 7] bears resemblance to the legendary account of Hezekiah’s healing in Isaiah 38.” *Isaiah: The Eighth-century Prophet*, 131.

³²¹ “Unlike Hezekiah, who had rightfully requested from Isaiah a sign confirming a divine promise, Ahaz had refused a sign verifying the truth of Yahweh’s pledge to the Davidic house.” Stuart and Irvine, *Isaiah: The Eighth-century Prophet*, 133.

(“do not be afraid, O my people who live in Zion, of Assyria...”). In 37:6, when faced with Sennacherib’s threats, Isaiah tells Hezekiah not to be afraid of the words of the king of Assyria: אֶל־תִּירָא מִפְּנֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ אֲשֶׁר נִדְּבָּו נַעַרֵי מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר אוֹתִי.³²² The difference, of course, is that Ahaz’s fear of Aram and Israel drove him to reject YHWH and to instead appeal to Assyria, whereas Hezekiah, when faced with the possibility of utter destruction by Assyria, appealed to YHWH for help.

The fifth connection is closely related to the previous point. Not only does Isaiah appeal to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to not fear, there also is the essential challenge of faith. In 7:9 Isaiah challenges Ahaz by saying, “*If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all*” (אִם לֹא תִאֱמִינּוּ כִּי לֹא תִאֱמָנוּ). Clearly this is precisely what happened with Ahaz. He did not stand firm in faith to YHWH and was soon oppressed by Assyria. Turning to chapters 36-37, we find that this issue of faith once more takes front and center. The very first words out of the Rabshakeh’s mouth are in 36:4, “*On what do you base this confidence (הַבְּטָחוֹן) of yours?*” Later on in his speech the Rabshakeh mocks their reliance on YHWH and appeals to the people of Jerusalem not to let Hezekiah make them trust in YHWH (36:14-15). Eventually Sennacherib himself writes a letter to Hezekiah and tells him not to trust in YHWH (37:10). The key verb used in these verses is בָּטַח, which is mostly translated as “to trust,” but also as “to have confidence” or “to rely.” This word is also very similar to אָמַן, which is used in Isaiah 7:9. Even though the exact word is not found in these two passages, the question and challenge of trusting or having faith in YHWH is clearly seen in both Isaiah 7-12 and 36-37.

³²² Goldingay has also noticed the echoes of 7:4, 8:12, and 10:24 here in 37:6. *NICB: Isaiah*, 208.

A sixth connection can be seen in the repetition of the phrase “*the zeal of YHWH will do this*” (קִנְיַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה-זֹאת).³²³ The first instance of this phrase is found in 9:7, when after announcing the birth of the royal child, celebrating the people’s freedom from oppression, and describing the royal child’s righteous reign, Isaiah announces that “The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.” As we have seen earlier, the identity of the child in 9:6-7, as well as the Immanuel child in 7:14 and the shoot in 11:1, has been a point of scholarly debate for some time. The main argument of this thesis is that the bookend structure of chapters 7-12 and 36-39 helps point us toward properly identifying this mysterious child in chapters 7-12 with Hezekiah. As with so many other points already made thus far, the strategic placement of the phrase, “the zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this” helps us identify the Immanuel child in 7-12 with Hezekiah, for the second instance of this phrase is found in 37:32, when in response to Hezekiah’s appeal to YHWH, and after giving the sign that of vineyards within three years, and relating it to the remnant of Jerusalem, Isaiah once again says “The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.” As one can see, both passages involve a prophecy involving freedom from oppression and both passages conclude with the same statement. We can therefore assume that the royal child in 9:6-7 is to be identified with Hezekiah in 36-37.

Related to the first point, the seventh example involves the constant references to *Assyria*, specifically the prophecies regarding Assyria’s defeat and the fulfillment of those prophecies in chapters 36-37. Not only is Assyrian oppression prophesied, but so is Assyria’s defeat. Consider the following references in Isaiah 7-12: first, it is prophesied that YHWH would bring Assyria against Judah (7:17-20); second, Assyria is compared to

³²³ Ackroyd also has noticed the recurrence of this phrase in 9:6 and 37:32. See Ackroyd, “Isaiah 36-39,” 18-19.

the mighty flood waters of the River that comes up to the neck and fills the land of Immanuel (8:7-8); third, although Assyria is called YHWH's "rod of my anger" (10:5), it is also prophesied that YHWH would one day break the "rod" of Assyria (9:4), that one day the house of Jacob would no more lean on the one who struck them (10:20), and that they need not fear the Assyrians "when they beat you with a rod..." (10:24). All of these prophecies of Assyria's demise find their fulfillment in Isaiah 36-37. Clearly by that time Assyria had indeed wielded a rod of oppression over Judah ever since the days of Ahaz; clearly Sennacherib had captured the fortified cities of Judah, Hezekiah's land, and had made his way to Jerusalem, much like flood waters having come up to the neck; and finally, as we find in 37:36, we are told that because the angel of YHWH struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers that Sennacherib pulled up camp and went back to Nineveh, thus fulfilling what was prophesied in 9:4. Related to this last point, it cannot be overlooked that in 10:16 Isaiah prophesies that YHWH would "send a wasting disease among his [the king of Assyria] stout warriors." Seitz notes that "the references to a 'wasting sickness among his stout warriors' at 10:16 and the sick man who 'wastes away' at 10:18 certainly appear related to the punishment finally visited on the Assyrian forces outside Jerusalem in 701 BC."³²⁴ All of these prophecies about not only Assyria's oppression, but most notably YHWH's breaking of Assyrian oppression, find specific fulfillment in chapters 36-37.

An eighth connection concerning the portrait of Assyria in these bookend passages has to do with Assyria's *arrogance and boasting* as being the reason YHWH will cut them down after he has used them to chastise Judah. In 10:7-14 we find an elaborate description of Assyria's arrogance that can be fully seen also throughout the

³²⁴ *Isaiah 1-39*, 94.

Sennacherib account of chapters 36-37. In 10:7-14, after YHWH says that, although he will use Assyria to punish Jerusalem, he will also deal with Assyria because it is not intending to solely do YHWH's work, but rather to destroy many nations, we are given a speech from the mouth of Isaiah, as if it is coming from the king of Assyria. When this speech is paralleled to the speeches in Isaiah 36-37, the connections are striking:

Isaiah 10:7-14	Isaiah 36-37
<p>10:7 והוא לא־כן ידְמָה וּלְקָבוֹ לא־כן יִחַשֵׁב כִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד בְּלִבָּבוֹ וּלְהַכְרִית גּוֹיִם לֹא מֵעַט</p>	<p>37:18-19 אָמְנָם יְהוָה הַחֲרִיבוּ מַלְכֵי אֲשׁוּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת וְאֶת־אֲרָצָם וְנָתַן אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בְּאֵשׁ כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה כִּי אִם־מַעֲשֵׂה יַד־אָדָם עֵץ וְאֶבֶן וְיֶאֱבָדוּם</p>
<p>10:8 הֲלֹא שָׂרֵי יַחְדּוֹ מְלָכִים</p>	<p>37:11 הִנֵּה אַתָּה שָׁמַעַת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ מַלְכֵי אֲשׁוּר לְכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת לְהַחְרִימָם וְאַתָּה תִּנְצַל</p>
<p>10:9-11 הֲלֹא כִכְרַכְמִישׁ כָּלְנוּ אִם־לֹא כְּאַרְפַּד חֲמַת אִם־לֹא כְדַמְשֶׁק שְׁמֵרוֹן כְּאֲשֶׁר מִצָּאָה יָדֵי לְמַמְלַכַת הָאֱלִיל וּפְסִילֵיהֶם מִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִשְׁמֵרוֹן הֲלֹא כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְשְׁמֵרוֹן וְלֵאלִילֵיהָ כֵּן אַעֲשֶׂה לִירוּשָׁלַם וְלַעֲצָבֵיהָ</p>	<p>36:19-20 אֵיחָ אֵיחָ אֱלֹהֵי חֲמַת וְאַרְפַּד אֵיחָ אֱלֹהֵי סַפְרוּיִם וְכִי־הֲצִילוּ אֶת־שְׁמֵרוֹן מִיָּדֵי מִי בְּכָל־אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת הָאֵלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־הֲצִילוּ אֶת־אֲרָצָם מִיָּדֵי כִי־יִצִּיל יְהוָה אֶת־ירוּשָׁלַם מִיָּדֵי</p> <p>37:12-13 הֲהֲצִילוּ אוֹתָם אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁחִיתוּ אֲבוֹתַי אֶת־גִּזְזוֹן וְאֶת־חֶרֶן וּבְנֵי־עֶדֶן אֲשֶׁר בַּתְּלָשָׁר אֵיחָ מֶלֶךְ־חֲמַת וּמֶלֶךְ אַרְפַּד וּמֶלֶךְ לְעִיר סַפְרוּיִם הִנֵּעַ וּרְצַף וְעוֹהָ</p> <p>36:18 פֶּן־יִסִּית אֶתְכֶם חֲזַקְיָהוּ לֵאמֹר יְהוָה יִצִּילֵנוּ הֲהֲצִילוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אִישׁ אֶת־אֲרָצוֹ מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר</p>



	<p>37:20 וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ מִיָּדוֹ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ</p>
<p>10:12 וְהָיָה כִּי־יַבְצֵעַ אֲדָנִי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּהַר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם אֶפְקֹד עַל־פְּרִי־גִדְלֵי לֵבָב מִלֶּךְ־אֲשׁוּר וְעַל־תַּפְאֶרֶת רוֹם עֵינָיו</p>	<p>37:23 אֶת־מִי חֲרַפְתָּ וְגִדַּפְתָּ וְעַל־מִי הָרִימוּתָה קוֹל וַתִּשָּׂא מְרוֹם עֵינֶיךָ אֶל־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>
<p>10:13-14 כִּי אָמַר בְּכַח יָדִי עָשִׂיתִי וּבְחֶכְמָתִי כִּי נִבְנוֹתִי וְאָסִיר גְּבוּלֹת עַמִּים וְעִתּוּדוֹתֵיהֶם שׁוֹשֵׁתִי וְאוֹרִיד כַּאֲבִיר יוֹשְׁבֵים וַתִּמְצָא כַּקֵּן יָדִי לַחִיל הָעַמִּים וְכַאֲסֹף בַּיָּצִים עֲזוֹבוֹת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי אֶסְפְּתִי וְלֹא הָיָה נִדְרַךְ כִּנְף וּפְצָה פֶה וּמִצַּפְצָף</p>	<p>37:24-25 בְּיַד עֲבָדֶיךָ חֲרַפְתָּ אֲדָנִי וַתֹּאמֶר בְּרַב רַכְבֵּי אֲנִי עָלִיתִי מְרוֹם הָרִים יִרְכָּתִי לְבָנוֹן וְאַכְרַת קוֹמַת אֶרְצוֹ מִבְּחַר בְּרִשְׁוֹ וְאָבֹא מְרוֹם קְצוֹ יַעַר כְּרַמְלוֹ אֲנִי קָרַתִּי וְשָׁתִיתִי מִיַּם וְאַחֲרַב בְּכַף־פַּעֲמֵי כָל יְאֹרֵי מִצּוֹר</p>

Isaiah 10:7-14	Isaiah 36-37
<p>10:7 But this is not what he intends, nor does he have this in mind; <i>but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.</i></p>	<p>37:18 “Truly, O LORD, <i>the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,</i> 19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands-- wood and stone-- and so <i>they were destroyed.</i></p>
<p>10:8 “Are not my commanders all <i>kings</i>?”</p>	<p>37:11 “See, you have heard what <i>the kings of Assyria</i> have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered?”</p>
<p>10:9 “Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not <i>Hamath</i> like <i>Arpad</i>? Is not <i>Samaria</i> like Damascus? 10 As <i>my hand</i> has reached to the <i>kingdoms of the idols</i> whose images were greater than those of <i>Jerusalem and Samaria</i>, 11 shall I not do to <i>Jerusalem</i> and her <i>idols</i> what I have done to <i>Samaria and her images</i>?”</p>	<p>36:19 “Where are the gods of <i>Hamath</i> and <i>Arpad</i>? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered <i>Samaria out of my hand</i>? 20 Who among all the <i>gods</i> of these countries have saved their countries <i>out of my hand</i>, that the LORD should save <i>Jerusalem out of my hand</i>?”</p>



	<p>37:12 “Have the <i>gods of the nations</i> delivered them, the <i>nations</i> that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of <i>Hamath</i>, the king of <i>Arpad</i>, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?”</p> <p>36:18 Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the <i>gods of the nations</i> saved their land <i>out of the hand of the king of Assyria</i>?</p> <p>37:20 So now, O LORD our God, <i>save us from his hand</i>, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.”</p>
<p>10:12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish <i>the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride</i>.</p>	<p>37: 23 Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have <i>you raised your voice and haughtily lifted your eyes</i>? Against the Holy One of Israel!</p>
<p>10:13 “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; <i>I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have plundered their treasures; like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones. 14 My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped.</i>”</p>	<p>37:24 “By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, <i>‘With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. 25 I dug wells and drank waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.’</i>”</p>

As one can see, at numerous points this prophecy about Assyria in 10:7-14 finds parallels with the Sennacherib account in 36-37: (a) Assyria laying waste to the nations; (b) the military conquests of the kings of Assyria; (c) Jerusalem and Samaria are mentioned; (d) the gods/idols of the nations are compared to the gods/idols of Jerusalem and Samaria; (e) there is the repeated reference to the “hand” of Assyria, as well as the repeated mocking question, “Do you think your gods/God will deliver/save you?”; (f) the specific accusation YHWH levels at Assyria has to do with is haughtiness; and (g) there is the repeated boasting and aggrandizement of the king of Assyria. These parallels are not isolated coincidences, but rather reflect the conscious decision of the writer/scrival

redactor to connect the prophecy of Isaiah during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis to its fulfillment during the events of 701 BCE. And if this is the case, if the writer/scribal redactor is going to these lengths to connect these two passages and historical events, it becomes that much more logical to connect the royal son, Immanuel, the shoot of Jesse found within Isaiah 7-12 during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis with the one who was the king of Judah in Isaiah 36-39 during Sennacherib's invasion, namely Hezekiah.

A ninth connection can be found in the references to *Egypt*. Throughout Proto-Isaiah the two most referenced foreign nations are that of Assyria and Egypt.³²⁵ Interestingly, the first time both Assyria and Egypt are mentioned in Isaiah is in the Immanuel prophecy: Assyria is first mentioned in 7:17 and Egypt is first mentioned in 7:18. From the very outset, Immanuel, Assyria, and Egypt seemed to be joined at the hip in Isaiah. Interestingly, throughout Proto-Isaiah whenever the salvation of Jerusalem is mentioned, there is the idea that in some way both Egypt and Assyria will come to Jerusalem to worship YHWH.³²⁶ Clearly, these two nations play a big role in Isaiah.

In chapter 7 we have the prophesied picture of Egypt coming into Judah and then Assyria laying waste to Judah. Also, just as there are numerous prophecies leveled against Assyria, there are also prophecies that speak of Egypt's humiliation and defeat. Most of Isaiah 19 is about the foolishness of Egypt and their destruction. We are even told in 19:4 that a "harsh king" will rule over them. We find in Isaiah 20 a specific prophesy leveled against Egypt, about how Assyria would take some of them into exile. Finally, in chapters 30-31 we find Isaiah condemning the leaders in Jerusalem for

³²⁵ Assyrian references: Isaiah 7:17-18, 20; 8:4, 7; 10:5, 12; 11:11, 16; 19:23-25; 20:1, 4, 6; 23:13; 27:13; chapters 36-37. Egypt references: 7:18; 10:26; 11:11, 15-16; 19:1, 12-15, 18-25; 20:3-5; 23:5; 27:12-13; 30:2-3; 31:1; 36:6, 9; 37:25.

³²⁶ See 11:11, 15-16; 19:22-25; 27:12-13

appealing to Egypt for help against Assyria. We are specifically told in chapter 31 that these leaders in Jerusalem are placing their trust in Egypt's horses and chariots.

All of these references and prophecies regarding Egypt seem to come to a head in chapters 36-37, in the account of the invasion of Sennacherib. In 36:4-9 we find a direct allusion to 31:1-3: the Rabshakeh mocks the leaders of Jerusalem for appealing to Egypt for chariots and horsemen.³²⁷ Then in 37:9 and 25 we find mention of king Tirhakah of Ethiopia (i.e. Egypt) coming to fight against Sennacherib and of his defeat. This defeat of Egypt seems to fulfill not only the general pattern of prophecy found in Isaiah 7, but also the actual prophecy of destruction in Isaiah 19.

A tenth connection can be found in 11:10, which says, "*the root of Jesse* will stand as a *standard to the nations*; the nations will seek him out, and his resting-place will be glorious." What we find in chapter 39 is that envoys from Babylon came to Hezekiah and that he showed them his treasure house. Related to this is II Chronicles 32:23, that tells us after Sennacherib's defeat, that Hezekiah was "exalted in the eyes of all the nations from that time on," and II Chronicles 32:27-29, that tells us, "There was for Hezekiah riches and very much glory." What we see alluded to in Isaiah 39 and elaborated upon in II Chronicles 32 reflect what can be described as Hezekiah's reputation and stature in the collective memory of the Jews. Hezekiah, clearly from "the root of Jesse," was seen as a king who was indeed a "standard to the nations," whom the nations sought out, and who had "very much glory."

³²⁷ Brevard Childs notes that in the Rabshakeh's speech (II Kings 18:17-35), there are a number of "quite audible echoes of the oracles of the prophet Isaiah. One could naturally argue that the reference to the worthlessness of the Egyptians as allies (Isaiah 30:2f.) and the futility of Judah in trusting on horses (Isaiah 31:3) was so obvious as to preclude a dependency on Isaiah." See Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 84.

An eleventh connection is in the conclusion of each section. Isaiah 12 is a *concluding chapter of praise to YHWH* for the salvation he will bring about through all of what chapters 7-11 have prophesied. Time and time again we find phrases like, “Surely God is my salvation” (v. 2), “YHWH God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation” (v. 2), and “Give thanks to YHWH, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations” (v. 4). In Hezekiah’s prayer of thanksgiving to YHWH for saving him from his illness (38:20), we find him saying, “YHWH will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of YHWH.”

A twelfth connection can be seen the references to the *remnant*. The theme of the remnant figures very prominent within Isaiah 7-12. First, it is introduced in the figure of Isaiah’s son, Shear-jashub, whom he takes to confront Ahaz in 7:3. Shear-jashub’s name means “a remnant will return,” (שָׂאֵר יָשׁוּב). Secondly, later on in the chapter, after the declaration that Immanuel will eat “curds and honey” (חֶמְצָאָה וְדָבָשׁ) in 7:15, and after prophesying the coming destruction by Assyria, Isaiah states in 7:22 that “all those who are left over in the land” (כָּל-הַנּוֹתָר בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ) will eat “curds and honey” (חֶמְצָאָה וְדָבָשׁ). Although the actual word for “left over” is not the same as שָׂאֵר, they are nonetheless synonyms. What this seems to be saying is that Immanuel will share in the diet of the remnant of Jerusalem. Thirdly, in 10:19-22, “the remnant” is mentioned five times within four verses. In these verses Isaiah prophesies that “the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, in truth” (10:20), that “a remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God” (10:21), and that although the people of Israel were like the sand of the sea, “only a remnant of them will return” (10:22). Ironically, the

surviving remnant of Israel in chapter 10 is in direct contrast with the “remnant” of Assyria that will be left after YHWH destroys it (10:19). Fourthly, “the remnant” is once again mentioned in 11:11, where YHWH declares that he will stretch out his hand a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people from the surrounding nations: Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands of the sea. Finally, in 11:16, there is the prophecy that there will be a highway from Assyria for “the remnant that is left of his people.”

What we see with the treatment of the remnant in Isaiah 7-12 is the incorporation of both prophesied destruction of the people of YHWH (both Israel/Samaria and Judah/Jerusalem), as well as the promise of salvation for those who “survive” judgment and are “left over” from Assyria’s aggression. And, as anyone who is familiar with the history of Israel would know, from the time when Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser to the time Sennacherib invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem in 701 BCE, Assyria, in fact, destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and oppressed the southern kingdom of Judah. This culminated in his invasion of 701 BCE, where the very existence of Judah and the Davidic line were in jeopardy.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to find in Isaiah 37 a number of references to “the remnant.”³²⁸ The first reference in 37:4, has Hezekiah sending messengers to Isaiah for help. He instructs them to ask Isaiah to “Lift up a prayer on behalf of the remnant that is found!” Who is this “remnant” to which Hezekiah is referring? It is none other than those Jews in Jerusalem who quite literally are the only ones left from YHWH’s people, both from Israel and Judah, who have not yet been conquered by

³²⁸ Goldingay has also pointed out that “The image of Jerusalem as Judah reduced to a remnant recalls 1:8-9.” *NICB: Isaiah*, 207.

Assyria. The second reference in 37:31-32 is found in Isaiah's prophetic answer to Hezekiah's prayer to YHWH. Isaiah prophesies that "the escaped remnant of the House of Judah" will once again take root, and that there will be a "remnant" that will go out from Jerusalem. It should be noted that in this prophecy that YHWH will save Jerusalem from Assyria, this specific mention of "the remnant" should alert the reader back to what was prophesied in Isaiah 7-12, and help the reader see that the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Assyria in chapter 37 is meant to be seen as a fulfillment of the "remnant prophecies" in Isaiah 7-12. Simply put, "the remnant" in Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 37 is not a reference to the remnant that will eventually come out of the Babylonian exile, but rather to the remnant of the people of YHWH that survives the Assyrian destruction and oppression that came about because of Ahaz's faithless actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.³²⁹

A thirteenth connection can be seen in the recurring *agricultural imagery* throughout Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39. As with the theme of the remnant, this imagery is also introduced in chapters 1-6, and comes to a head in 6:11-13, when in response to Isaiah's question concerning how long he would have to prophesy to the deaf and blind people of Judah, YHWH responds by saying,

"Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until YHWH sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

³²⁹ Seitz further points out that this mention of "the remnant" in both chapter 37 and earlier in chapter 7 "points up the contrast between Hezekiah and Ahaz." *Zion's Final Destiny*, 89. He also points to other connections already presented in this thesis, namely "the sign," "the conduit of the upper field," and the phrase, "the zeal of YHWH of hosts will accomplish this," and asks the question, "Would it be too much to suggest that Isaiah's promise of a remnant, scattered throughout 1-35 and now interwoven with post-587 material, finds its culmination here, in the sign given to Hezekiah?" (90).

With this declaration from YHWH, Isaiah begins his prophetic ministry, and, beginning in chapters 7-12, we find, right along with prophecies of destruction, a constant reference to destruction of crops, trees, etc.

Initially we find the House of David, in light of the threat of Aram and Israel, described as “the trembling trees of the forest in the face of a wind” (7:2). Given this introductory metaphor that equates the royal house of David, and by extension Judah itself, with trees, it should come as no surprise to find this metaphor extended along with Isaiah’s prophecy of destruction: (a) in 7:23-25 three times Isaiah prophesies that the land will be filled with “thorns and briars;” (b) in 9:17-20, when describing the wickedness of Israel, Isaiah says that the wickedness “burned like a fire, consuming briars and thorns; it kindled the thickets of the forest, and they swirled upward in a column of smoke; (c) in 10:15-18, after Assyria is equated with both an ax and a saw that attempts to vault itself over the one who uses it, YHWH says He, the light of Israel, will become a flame and will “burn and devour” Assyria’s briars and thorns in one day (v. 17), and will destroy Assyria’s “forest and fruitful land” (v. 18);³³⁰ (d) in 10:33-34 there is the description of YHWH lopping off boughs, cutting down tall trees, hacking down the thickets of the forest with an ax, and felling the majestic trees of Lebanon; yet (e) in the midst of the prophecies of destruction, and the agricultural imagery with it, we find in 11:1 and 10 the equation of the coming Davidic king with “a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse,” and “the root of Jesse,” point toward the promise of salvation: amid the agricultural devastation, there is a sign of new growth, in the form of the royal child Immanuel.

³³⁰ As previously mentioned, unlike the surviving remnant of Israel, the “remnant of trees” of Assyria will be so few that a child can write them down.

Turning to Isaiah 36-39 we find more agricultural imagery. First, in 36:16-17, we find the Rabshakeh offering the people of Jerusalem, in exchange for their surrender, the opportunity for each man to “eat from his own vine...and fig tree...and drink from his own well,” and to eventually be taken to “a land like your own land—a land of grain and fresh wine; a land of bread and vineyards.” In essence, the Rabshakeh is offering to take the people of Jerusalem to the Assyrian version of the Promised Land. Secondly, in 37:24-25, in YHWH’s condemnation of Assyria’s pride, YHWH portrays Assyria as cutting down the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon. Finally, in 37:30-32, when YHWH gives a sign to Hezekiah that Sennacherib would not succeed, the sign involves sowing, reaping, planting vineyards, and eating of their fruit.

The fourteenth and final connection we find centers on the idea of *planning* and taking *counsel*. The Hebrew words to note here are עֲצָה (the noun that can mean either “plan” or “counsel”) and יָעַץ (the verb that can mean either “to plan” or “to counsel”). We have already noted that the main issue at stake in Isaiah 7 is whether Ahaz would heed YHWH’s counsel or whether he would trust in his own counsel and appeal to Assyria for help. Ahaz’s subsequent rejection of YHWH’s counsel ends up highlighting a divide between YHWH’s plans and the plans of men, not only Ahaz himself, but later leaders in Jerusalem, as well as plans of other nations. In light of Ahaz’s rejection of YHWH’s counsel, YHWH immediately proceeds to spell out His “new” plan in the Immanuel prophecies found in chapters 7-12. Because of Ahaz’s unfaithfulness, YHWH was going to bring in Assyria to oppress Judah. Yet Isaiah also prophesied that YHWH would bring His judgment upon Assyria because of Assyria’s arrogance and boasting, and that He would deliver His people from Assyria’s yoke. What is interesting is that

YHWH's plan actually incorporated the plans of Ahaz, whose plan was to appeal to Assyria for help. Ironically, by appealing to Assyria for help, Ahaz actually ended up furthering YHWH's plan.

This concept—namely YHWH's plan going forward despite men's attempts to plan otherwise—plays itself out throughout Proto-Isaiah. In 14:24-27, in the midst of an oracle against Babylon (chapters 13-14), we find immediately after Isaiah prophesying that YHWH will “break Assyria *in my land*,” the emphasis that this is what YHWH had planned all along. The answer to the question, “Who will annul it [i.e. YHWH's plan]?” is obvious—no one can. Regardless of what any nation plans, YHWH's plan will come to fruition. We find a similar prophecy against Egypt in chapter 19. In this oracle Isaiah mocks Egypt for relying on the counsel of their foolish sages and then proceeds to reveal YHWH's plan against Egypt (19:12, 17), which includes both Egypt's humiliation and defeat, as well as its eventual turning to the worship of YHWH. Once again, we find YHWH's plan essentially overriding the plans of Egypt. In 22:11 we find a condemnation of those in Jerusalem who, in the midst of war preparations, did not have regard for the one [i.e. YHWH] who “planned it long ago.” In 23:8-9, in the midst of the oracle against Tyre, we find the declaration that YHWH was the one who “planned” Tyre's destruction. Then in chapter 25, a chapter seemingly focusing on Jerusalem, we find Isaiah praising YHWH for the plans of old that YHWH has brought about (25:1). Those plans involve the devastation and destruction that YHWH has brought upon Jerusalem.

The most interesting references to plans and counseling, though, can be found in chapters 29-31, which clearly condemn certain unnamed leaders in Jerusalem who refuse to trust in YHWH. In 29:15 we find Isaiah condemning those who try to hide their plans

from YHWH, and in 30:1-2 we get a better idea regarding what those plans consist of: appealing to Egypt for help, presumably against Assyria. Similar to the situation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, there is the picture of leaders in Jerusalem rebelling against YHWH, not heeding his counsel, and choosing rather to place their trust in Egypt; and similarly the result of such behavior is the same—humiliation and devastation for Judah, yet eventual refinement and faithfulness for the people of YHWH. We find this spelled out both in chapter 30 as well as chapter 31.

Yet as was mentioned earlier, we would be wrong to assume that that this condemnation in chapters 29-31 of the leaders of Jerusalem is a condemnation of King Hezekiah. Just as in chapters 7-12, where the faithless actions of both Ahaz and the other leaders in the House of David were contrasted with those of the Immanuel child (7:14) who would sit on David's throne and establish justice and righteousness (9:5-6) and who would sprout up from the stump of Jesse and have the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of YHWH (11:1-5), we find the actions of the faithless leaders in Jerusalem contrasted with the righteous king in chapters 32-33. It is quite clear in chapters 32 that the king who reigns in righteousness will bring about the opening of eyes and ears (32:3) and good judgment (32:4). It is also clear that this king is contrasted with the corrupt fools mentioned in 32:5-7. Verse 8 declares, "But those who are noble *plan* (נְעִימָה) noble things, and by noble things they *stand*." This verse contains striking similarities to the challenge Isaiah issued to Ahaz back in 7:9, when he told Ahaz that if he did not stand firm in faith to YHWH (i.e. heed YHWH's counsel) that he would not stand at all.

This contrast is once again emphasized in chapter 33, where we have a picture of the “sinners in Zion” being terrified of the consuming fire (33:13-14), followed by a picture of the one “walking in righteousness” who will be “faithful” (33:15-16). Then Isaiah states in 33:17, “Then your eyes will see the king in his beauty.” This is followed in verses 18-24 with a picture of Jerusalem at peace, with YHWH as its judge and ruler and king. We should not assume that the king mentioned in 33:17 is necessarily YHWH himself, even though YHWH is called “king” in 33:22. We need to see that the king in 33:17 is a reference to Hezekiah. This makes complete sense, given the overall picture the biblical witness gives concerning him. Hezekiah is constantly depicted as the faithful and righteous king whose faith in YHWH brought about an end to the Assyrian assault in 701 BCE. He was the Davidic king who faithfully reflected the image of God to His people and to the nations.

It is important to note not only how this idea of “plans and counsels” works throughout Proto-Isaiah, but more precisely how chapters 29-33 present a similar situation to what we find in chapter 7, for both situations deal with a coming threat and the issue of faithfulness to YHWH. The plan of YHWH that unfolds in response to Ahaz’s rejection of YHWH’s counsel centers on the figure of Immanuel and emphasizes both judgment upon Judah as well as the eventual salvation of Judah and judgment upon Assyria. Here in chapters 29-33 the stage is once again set in similar fashion: there is a coming Assyrian threat (ironically the very one prophesied about in YHWH’s plan in chapters 7-12) and there is the challenge of faithfulness to YHWH one again. Here in chapters 29-33, though, we have a picture of the righteous king Hezekiah at odds with the other sinful leaders of Jerusalem who want to follow the example of Ahaz by appealing

to another nation for help. This faithfulness to YHWH on the part of Hezekiah points the reader forward to the concluding section of Proto-Isaiah, that of chapters 36-39. The obvious question is this: “Will Hezekiah’s faithfulness to YHWH pay off?” Or perhaps more specifically, “Will YHWH’s plans come to full fruition?” Chapters 34-35 prophesy that they will indeed; yet it is in chapters 36-39 where these plans are realized in the historical reality of Sennacherib’s invasion.

Ironically, it does not seem that Hezekiah’s strategy will work. That is certainly what the Rabshakeh is determined to prove in 36:5, when he says, “*Do you think that mere words are strategy and might for war* (עֲצָה וְגִבּוֹרָה לְמִלְחָמָה)?” Yet what the Rabshakeh is unaware is that he is mocking the very “counsel and might” that Isaiah prophesied YHWH would bestow upon the Immanuel child in 11:2: “*The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might* (רוּחַ עֲצָה וְגִבּוֹרָה), *the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*” What we find here, therefore, is that Immanuel child of 11:2 is none other than Hezekiah, and that Assyria’s boastful mocking of Hezekiah, Isaiah’s prophesied Immanuel, the anointed king of Israel, not only results in YHWH’s sparing of Jerusalem and His routing of the Assyrian armies, but that these very actions had been prophesied by Isaiah long before.³³¹ And in case these actions did not make it obvious enough that YHWH’s plans that were articulated as far back as chapters 7-12 had been fulfilled, the writer of Proto-Isaiah inserted 37:26 as a part of Isaiah’s prophecy against Assyria. In this verse YHWH says to Sennacherib, “Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of

³³¹ John Goldingay notes that it is in 36:18-20, where the Rabshakeh shifts from questioning the competence of Hezekiah to questioning the competence of YHWH, that “the commander makes his comprehensive, fatal mistake.” This move, “is equivalent to the one that lies behind Isaiah’s direct assessment of Assyria in 10:5-11.” *NICB: Isaiah*, 206.

old what now I bring to pass....” Because of Sennacherib’s boasting, YHWH was going to exact His judgment on Assyria outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

What all of these literary connections attempt to bring out in these two bookend sections of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 that describe two major events in the reigns of both Ahaz and Hezekiah is that despite the unfaithfulness of Ahaz that ushered in years of Assyrian oppression, there was nevertheless a prophetic promise of salvation through his royal son, Hezekiah. The very mention of an “Immanuel” child (7:14), a “child born for us” (9:6-7), “the shoot from the stump of Jesse” (11:1) who righteously rules God’s people (11:2-9), and “the root of Jesse” who stands as a signal to the nations (11:10-12) and who brings harmony between Judah and Ephraim (11:13-14)—all of these imply a Davidic/Messianic king who (a) survives/rises up from a severe chastening/destruction by YHWH, (b) re-establishes a just and righteous kingdom, (c) is exalted in the eyes of the nations, and (d) brings harmony between Judah and Israel. All of these traits are fulfilled in some way or another in the person of Hezekiah: he was a Davidic/Messianic king who: (a) survived the Assyrian oppression that was brought on by YHWH because of his father’s unfaithful actions, (b) goes down in history as being a just and righteous king (II Kings 18:1-12; II Chronicles 28-32), (c) was exalted by the nations (II Chronicles 32:23, 27-29), and (d) appealed to the remnant from the destruction of Samaria to come and observe Passover in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 28-32).

VII. Similar Parallels in II Kings 16-20

It should now be obvious that the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah in Proto-Isaiah is much more elaborate and fundamental to the narrative structure within Proto-Isaiah than most scholars have realized. This contrast can be seen in the bookend units of

chapters 7-12 and 36-39 and is strengthened by not only specific literary connections between the two sections, but also by the numerous recurring themes and motifs that run all throughout Proto-Isaiah. Yet, in addition to everything found within Proto-Isaiah that has been discussed thus far, there is yet another contributing factor that enhances the argument of this thesis: the fact that a similar contrasting picture of Ahaz and Hezekiah is found in II Kings 16-20.

Regardless whether one concludes that Proto-Isaiah has priority over II Kings, and that the writer of II Kings borrowed his material in II Kings 18-20 from Isaiah 36-39, or vice versa, one thing is certain: there is a close connection between these two sections. Consequently, it should not be surprising at all to find a similar kind of contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah in II Kings as well. When one looks at these verses that are in II Kings but omitted in Isaiah, one can clearly see that the writer of II Kings used these verses to contrast Hezekiah with what we are told about Ahaz in II Kings 16:1-20 in terms of specific political actions:

<i>Ahaz: (II Kings 16:1-20)</i>	<i>Hezekiah (II Kings 18:1-16)</i>
<p>16:2 וְלֹא-עָשָׂה הַיֵּשֶׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו כְּדֹר אָבִיו</p>	<p>18:3 וַיַּעַשׂ הַיֵּשֶׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה דָּוִד אָבִיו</p>
<p>16:4 וַיִּזְבַּח וַיִּקְטֹר בַּבָּמֹת וְעַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת וַתַּחַת כָּל-עֵץ רַעְנָן</p>	<p>18:4 הוּא הִסִּיר אֶת-הַבָּמֹת וְשִׁבַּר אֶת-הַמִּצֵּבֹת וְכָרַת אֶת-הָאֲשֵׁרָה</p>
<p>16:5 אִז יַעֲלֶה רַצִּין מֶלֶךְ-אַרָם וּפְקַח בֶּן- רַמְלִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיִּצְרוּ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִלָּחֵם-עַל-אַחִז לַמְּלָחָמָה</p>	<p>18:13 וּבְאַרְבַּע עָשָׂר שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּה עָלָה סַנְחֲרִיב מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר עַל כָּל-עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת וַיִּתְּפָשֶׂם</p>
<p>16:7 וַיִּשְׁלַח אַחִז מַלְאָכִים אֶל-תְּגַלְתַּת פְּלֹסָר מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר לֵאמֹר עֲבֹדָךְ וּבְנֶךָ אָנִי</p>	<p>18:7 וַיִּמְרֹד בְּמֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר וְלֹא עָבְדוּ</p>



<p>16:8 וַיִּקַּח אַחִז אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־הַזָּהָב הַנִּמְצָא בֵּית יְהוָה בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח וּבְאֲצֵרוֹת לְמֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר שְׁחָד</p>	<p>18:15 וַיִּתֵּן חֲזַקְיָה אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בֵּית־יְהוָה וּבְאֲצֵרוֹת בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ</p>
<p>16:9 וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר אֶל־דְּמוֹשָׁק וַיִּתְּפֹשֶׁה</p>	<p>18:9 עָלָה שְׁלֹמֹנָסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עַל־שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיִּצַר עָלָיָה</p>
<p>16:10 וַיִּלְךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחִז לְקַרְאֵת תְּגִלַּת פְּלֹאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ דְּמוֹשָׁק אֲשֶׁר בְּדְמוֹשָׁק 16:14 וְאֵת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּקְרַב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי הַבַּיִת</p>	<p>18:4 וְכַתַּת נְחֹשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה כִּי עַד־הַיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה הָיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִקְטָרִים לוֹ וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ נְחֹשֶׁתָן</p>

<i>Ahaz: (II Kings 16:1-20)</i>	<i>Hezekiah (II Kings 18:1-16)</i>
16:2 Ahaz <i>did not</i> do what was right in the eyes of YHWH, like his father David	18:3 Hezekiah <i>did</i> what was right in the eyes of YHWH, like his father David
16:3-4 He made pagan sacrifices on the <i>high places</i> and on the <i>hills</i> and under every <i>fresh tree</i>	18:4 He removed the <i>high places</i> , broke down the <i>pillars</i> , and cut down the <i>sacred pole</i>
16:5 He was <i>threatened by Aram and Israel</i> , but not completely overrun	Ch. 18-20 He is <i>threatened by Assyria</i>
16:7-8 He <i>appealed to Assyria for help</i> , and sent him the <i>treasure of the Temple</i>	18:7, 14-15 He <i>rebelled against Assyria</i> and he eventually sends the <i>treasure of the Temple to Assyria to try to get them to leave</i>
16:9 Assyria captured Damascus	18:9-12 Assyria captures Samaria, then turns toward Judah
16:10-16 Ahaz was so impressed with the <i>pagan altar</i> in Damascus that had one <i>built to replace the bronze altar in the Jerusalem Temple</i>	18:4 Hezekiah <i>destroys the bronze serpent of Moses</i> , because the people were worshipping it

As one can see, the account of Hezekiah's bout with Assyria is told in such a way that the reader clearly sees the stark contrast of Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH to Ahaz's unfaithfulness to YHWH. At every major point in II Kings 18:1-16, Hezekiah's situation mirrors Ahaz's actions of II Kings 16. Hezekiah has to deal with the threat of

Assyria, and the writer of II Kings gives the distinct impression that the threat of Assyria was brought on by Ahaz's original appeal to them for help, and thusly he lays the blame squarely on Ahaz. In addition, even the mention of Hezekiah breaking the bronze serpent of Moses seems to contrast the story of Ahaz's building of the pagan altar in the Temple, and putting it alongside the original bronze one. Ahaz brings pagan idol worship into the Temple itself, whereas Hezekiah would rather destroy something used by YHWH in the past, than see it degraded and worshipped as a pagan idol. These contrasts clearly drive home the point that Hezekiah was faithful to YHWH, whereas Ahaz was unfaithful, and was guilty of bringing about this Assyrian threat upon Judah.³³²

Yet it must also be pointed out that no such parallels can be seen between what II Kings 16 relates about Ahaz's reign and the information found in II Kings 18-20. The contrasting parallels in II Kings between Ahaz and Hezekiah are found in those passages unique to II Kings, and not in the parallel passages of II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39. Indeed, the information in II Kings 18-20 does not seem to relate in any substantial way to the literary structure that highlights the contrasting reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. What this indicates is that although both II Kings and Isaiah share a common historical viewpoint that sees Ahaz and Hezekiah as polar opposite kings and have highlighted this contrast between the two kings in different ways, it is clear that the material found in II Kings 18-20/Isaiah 36-39 is much more important to the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah than it is to the literary structure of II Kings. What this means is that although it is certainly *possible* that the material in II Kings 18-20/Isaiah 36-39 came from an earlier

³³² One additional note about II Kings 18:2 is that the writer mentions who Hezekiah's mother is: Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. It is very possible that since the writer of *Isaiah* was already using *II Kings* 18-20 in his own work in describing Sennacherib's invasion, that he took that little fact about Hezekiah's mother as a cue to relate the circumstances of Hezekiah's conception and birth during the events of *Isaiah* 7, and used those events to contrast Ahaz and Hezekiah in yet another way.

source that both the authors of II Kings and Proto-Isaiah borrowed from, its vital role within the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah points to the *probability* that it was originally written as a part of Proto-Isaiah and was later added to the exilic work of II Kings.

VIII. Final Thoughts on the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

In this chapter we have analyzed not only the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah, but along with that, the three strands of emphasis that run throughout the entirety of Proto-Isaiah. In doing so we have argued that chapters 36-39 form an integral and essential part of the literary structure and integrity of Proto-Isaiah. Simply put, without chapters 36-39, Proto-Isaiah would be an incomplete and incomprehensible work. The three strands of emphasis (the sinful state of Israel/Judah, YHWH's judgment, and YHWH's salvation) that are introduced in chapters 1-6 and run throughout Proto-Isaiah are crystallized within the two bookend narrative sections of chapters 7-12 and 36-39. The key figure in both of these bookends, of course, is that of Hezekiah. The Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7-12, uttered during a time of national crisis as a response to the unfaithfulness of king Ahaz, focused on the yet-to-be-born son of Ahaz. This son would become the next king and would demonstrate faithfulness to YHWH. Nevertheless, Judah would suffer as a result of Ahaz's unfaithful actions. Isaiah prophesied that Assyrian oppression would reach up to the neck of Judah, but because of Immanuel's faithfulness and righteousness, YHWH would save Jerusalem and eventually crush the Assyrian threat. What we find in chapters 36-39, therefore, is the fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy. During another moment of national crisis, in which Assyrian oppression seemed at its worst, YHWH crushed the Assyrian threat and was faithful to his promise to save Jerusalem because of Hezekiah's faithfulness and righteousness.

Given this intimate connection to the literary integrity of Proto-Isaiah, it becomes very difficult to think that Proto-Isaiah ever existed without chapters 36-39. If this interpretation of those national events had not been there from the beginning, one must ask why then would have Isaiah's prophecies been preserved in the first place? He would have surely been considered to be a false prophet, his prophecies would have been disregarded, and Hezekiah would have gone down in history as a foolish king. But the fact is the exact opposite point of view is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Why? We must conclude that the *literary* structure of Proto-Isaiah reflects a *prophetic* interpretation of real *historical* events that sought to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH, Hezekiah as the faithful Immanuel, and YHWH Himself as the one true God of Israel who brings both judgment for the unfaithful and salvation for the righteous. Therefore it is the assertion of this thesis that this proposal regarding (a) the literary unity of Proto-Isaiah, (b) the historical reliability of both Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39, (c) the occasion and purpose for the writing of Proto-Isaiah, and most importantly (d) the central identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah, is more coherent and more plausible than the previous proposals put forth by scholars to date.

Chapter Six

Conclusions: Coming to a True Old Testament Understanding of Immanuel

I. Introduction

British poet John Donne penned the famous line, “No man is an island entire of itself.” That insight is not simply applicable to human beings, but to the exegetical task as well. No single exegetical task or proposal is an island unto itself either: it is inevitably connected to some other exegetical question, task, or issue. Not only will it inevitably *influence* other exegetical issues, but it will also *be influenced by* other exegetical issues. Exegetical meaning not only demands adherence to literary and historical context, but one’s findings will also have an impact on the overall context of scholarly debate. The exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 proves this to be true on a variety of levels. In the course of this thesis, we have seen how the exegesis of one verse, Isaiah 7:14, affects how one understands Isaiah 7-12, Isaiah 36-39, and Proto-Isaiah as a whole. We have also seen how the exegesis of this verse opens the door to various issues concerning historical reliability, literary artistry, scribal redaction, exegesis and errors, textual priority, the purpose and meaning of prophecy, and the historical circumstances that occasioned the writing of Proto-Isaiah. If nothing else, one thing is certainly clear: the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 is anything but simple. It is a highly complex process that forces one to delve into numerous pools of muddy exegetical waters. Nevertheless, since this is the task of the exegete, it must be done.

This thesis has attempted to clear up some of the “muddy waters” surrounding, not only the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14, but also Proto-Isaiah as a whole. It has made a multi-

faceted argument that has serious implications for how one wrestles with many exegetical issues regarding Proto-Isaiah. At its heart, this thesis has attempted to show that Isaiah 7:14 is not an island unto itself. Its proper exegesis demands context, context, and more context.

II. A Review of the Findings in this Thesis

We began in chapter one with a discussion of a number of misconceptions and exegetical landmines surrounding a proper understanding of Isaiah 7:14. We noted two fundamental problems with understanding Isaiah 7:14: (a) the decidedly a-historical way in which traditional Church teaching has interpreted Isaiah 7:14, and (b) the admittedly ambiguous nature of Isaiah 7:14 itself. When attempting to understand Isaiah 7:14 in its original context, we noted that there are five exegetical landmines that confront any scholar who exegetes Isaiah 7:14: (a) the identity of the Immanuel child and how he relates to the greater prophecy on chapters 7-12, (b) the chronological difficulties in II Kings 16-20 concerning the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, (c) the relationship between Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20, and the question of priority, (d) the literary coherence and historical reliability of Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39, (e) the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah and the puzzle of Isaiah's growth.

We then discussed the evolution of modern biblical methodologies and the two basic shortcomings of these historical-critical methods: (a) an overzealous suspicion of the historical reliability of biblical texts, and (b) a tendency to divide historical concerns from literary concerns. In this discussion, we appealed to scholars Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long, and Tremper Longman to argue for the general acceptance of the historical reliability of the biblical texts and for acknowledgement of the literary artistry of the

biblical texts as well. After another discussion focusing on Michael Fishbane's explanation of biblical interpretation in ancient Israel, we emphasized the need to read the Bible as *history*, *literature*, and *prophecy*. In terms of Proto-Isaiah, we noted that the texts in question ought to be read as (a) testimonies to actual historical events, (b) highly stylized literary works, and (c) prophetic works that attempt to put forth a theological interpretation of historical events through a literary genre.

In chapter two we focused on Isaiah 7:14 in its immediate context of chapters 7-12. We first overviewed past scholarship and noted that there were generally four proposals concerning the identity of the Immanuel child: (a) Jesus, (b) a generalized term referring to any child born during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, (c) Isaiah's son, or (d) Hezekiah. We then looked at the textual variants in Isaiah 7:14 and concluded that although the verse itself is, in and of itself, ambiguous, when seen in the context of chapters 7-12, it seems to point to the Immanuel child being a son of Ahaz. In fact, once one takes into consideration the passages in chapters 7-12 that identify the child with a royal child who would one day rule, it becomes quite probable that the Immanuel child is to be further identified with Hezekiah.

In chapter three we analyzed the primary objection to the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah: the chronological problem found in II Kings 16-20. We noted that the chronology derived from II Kings 16-20 is too problematic to be considered reliable in its current form. Simply put, the chronology as it is found in II Kings 16-20 is historically impossible. There is no way Hezekiah could have been in his sixth year as king in 721 BCE and in his fourteenth year as king in 701 BCE. When faced with this chronological error, we argued that a plausible chronology for Hezekiah's reign could be

constructed by suggesting revisions to two possible scribal errors: (a) Isaiah 36:1/II Kings 18:13 should read “Hezekiah’s twenty-fourth year” instead of “fourteenth year” and (b) II Kings 18:2 should read that Hezekiah became king at the age of fifteen, and not twenty-five. These two revisions would place Hezekiah’s birth around 742 BCE, and this would mean that Hezekiah would have been born in the midst of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, well-within the time period when Isaiah would have uttered his Immanuel prophecy. Thus, the argument that Hezekiah could *not* have been the prophesied Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 on the basis of the chronology of II Kings 16-20 was shown to be unconvincing. One cannot make II Kings 16-20 the basis for rejecting an Immanuel-Hezekiah connection because not only is the chronology itself faulty, but there is a plausible historical-critical reconstruction of the timeline of Hezekiah’s life and reign. The aim of this chapter was not so much to argue for a definite historical-critical reconstruction *for* the time of Hezekiah’s birth, but rather to show that the current historical-critical argument *against* the proposal that equates Hezekiah with Immanuel is not convincing on historical-critical grounds.

In chapter four we looked at the exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20. After reviewing the general scholarly consensus regarding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 we concluded the following: (a) it was more probable that II Kings 18-20 borrowed its material from Isaiah 36-39, (b) Isaiah 36-39 consists of a single unified literary unit, (c) Isaiah 36-39 reflects a generally historically reliable interpretation of various events during Hezekiah’s reign, most notably Sennacherib’s invasion, and (d) the more believable occasion for the writing of Isaiah 36-39 and the compilation of Proto-Isaiah was that of the theological/political controversy brought on by Manasseh who, in

light of the fallout from Sennacherib's invasion, attempted to undo Hezekiah's reforms and, in turn, promoted the worship of pagan idols in Judah. This action would have caused the worshippers of YHWH who were loyal to Hezekiah and who regarded Isaiah as YHWH's prophet to compile Proto-Isaiah as a way to argue against Manasseh's actions and to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet, Hezekiah as a righteous and faithful king, and YHWH as the true God of Israel.

Finally, in chapter five, we argued that there is a clearly discernable "bookend structure" to the main body of Proto-Isaiah that serves to highlight the identification of the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7-12 with King Hezekiah in Isaiah 36-39. What we essentially find is that there are a host of intertextual connections between Isaiah 36-39 and Isaiah 7-12. Now the question concerning this proposed "bookend structure" is, "Can these intertextual connections be considered intentional by the "original author" and would they have been obvious to the "original audience"? We noted that Richard Hays proposed seven tests that would help answer that question. The seven tests are (a) Availability, (b) Volume, (c) Recurrence, (d) Thematic Coherence, (e) Historical Plausibility, (f) History of Interpretation, and (g) Satisfaction. If our proposed argument regarding the "bookend structure" of Proto-Isaiah is to be deemed credible, it must pass these seven tests.

We then noted that there are essentially three thematic strands of emphasis that run throughout Proto-Isaiah: the sinful state of humanity, the judgment of YHWH, and the exaltation of YHWH and the salvation of his people. Within these three strands of emphasis are numerous recurring motifs that are outlined and discussed in the rest of chapter five. It is in the discussion of these recurring themes and motifs that one can

discern clear intertextual connections between Isaiah 36-39 and Isaiah 7-12 that reinforce the proposal of this thesis that there is a clear and intended bookend structure in Proto-Isaiah that highlights an Immanuel-Hezekiah connection. In summary fashion, the literary parallels/intertextual connections noted in chapter five are:

- A. An announcement of *foreign oppression*
- B. The repetition of the location: “*the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller’s field*”
- C. The emphasis of a *sign from YHWH*
- D. Isaiah’s appeal to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to *not be afraid*
- E. The challenge to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to remain *faithful*
- F. The repetition of the phrase “*the zeal of YHWH will do this*”
- G. The repeated emphasis on *Assyrian oppression*
- H. The repeated emphasis on *Assyria’s arrogance and boasting*
- I. The repeated references to *Egypt*
- J. The picture of a Davidic king receiving glory from the nations
- K. A *concluding chapter of praise* in both bookend sections
- L. The repeated references to *the remnant*
- M. The recurring *agricultural imagery* in both bookend sections
- N. The repeated references to *planning and counsel*

After this lengthy discussion of the intertextual connections between Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39, we also pointed out in chapter five that similar contrasting parallels between Ahaz and Hezekiah could be seen between II Kings 16:1-20 and 18:1-16. The point we attempted to make with this brief look at II Kings 16 and 18 was twofold: (a) the biblical contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah was not unique only to Isaiah, and thus Isaiah’s contrasting pictures of Ahaz and Hezekiah can be seen as consistent with other biblical testimonies, and (b) the contrasting picture between Ahaz and Hezekiah in II Kings is confined to those sections in II Kings *that are unique to II Kings*, thus reinforcing the argument that the material found in Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18:13, 17-20:21 is original to Isaiah, only to later be inserted into II Kings.

III. The Significance of this Thesis to Old Testament Studies

This thesis has had essentially two goals. Its first goal has been to show that in its original context within Proto-Isaiah, Isaiah 7:14 was understood to be a prophecy about the birth of Hezekiah and what events would unfold in Judah within Hezekiah's lifetime. The way in which this first goal has been argued leads us to the second goal of this thesis: to show the clear shortcomings scholars encounter when they fail to incorporate a holistic exegetical approach that includes *both* historical-critical *and* literary methods working together, and instead limit themselves to an *either/or* approach of exegesis. Simply put, solid biblical exegesis requires historical competency, literary competency, and a reasonable amount of faith in the biblical text itself. Being historically competent means, as has been argued by Provan, Long, and Longman, that scholars take seriously the historical claims within the biblical text. Being literarily competent means that, as has been argued specifically by Long and Seitz, scholars attempt to read any given biblical text as a coherent whole, and not simply as a collection of random and poorly-stitched together sources that have no discernable purpose. Furthermore, both competencies demand that the exegete exercise a certain amount of faith that the biblical writers were competent themselves, and able to recount historical events and interpret them through literary means. If the modern scholar does not exercise a reasonable amount of faith in the testimony found in the biblical texts he is attempting to exegete, then his exegesis can hardly be called "biblical." In fact, it cannot really even be called "exegesis."

The findings of this thesis have demonstrated that it is possible to view Proto-Isaiah not only as a reliable window into the major crises of eighth-century Judah BCE, but also as a competent and purposed literary work whose aim was to provide a prophetic

interpretation of these major historical crises during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. This thesis has shown that it is possible to critically analyze Proto-Isaiah's accounts of both the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib using historical-critical methods and still be able to treat these biblical texts as reliable testimony to real historical events. The long-standing scholarly consensus that demonstrates an overzealous and unhealthy suspicion of the reliability of the biblical texts *simply because they are biblical and "religious"* must be shown for what it is: a naïve bias based on a faulty caricature of what the biblical text truly is. At the same time this thesis has also shown that it is possible to critically analyze the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah and still respect the text enough to interpret it as a coherent literary work. The long-standing scholarly consensus that views biblical texts simply as poorly redacted collections of past sources that have no literary integrity and only serve the theological agendas of much later exilic communities must be shown for what it is: evidence of the failure of many historical-critical scholars to be able to read and appreciate the Bible as literature and to identify the obvious literary structures and patterns that any competent literature major would immediately recognize.

In terms of specific exegetical contributions, this thesis has aided studies of Proto-Isaiah on numerous fronts. First, it has further solidified the traditional Jewish claim that the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 is to be identified with Hezekiah. Second, by addressing the chronological objection to such an identification, this thesis has not only successfully refuted that objection, but has also put forth an extremely plausible historical reconstruction that not only places Isaiah's utterance of the Immanuel prophecy shortly before the birth of Hezekiah, around 742 BCE, but also helps give a clearer historical chronology of that time period. Third, this thesis has contributed to the growing view that

the material in Isaiah 36-39 holds priority over its parallel sections in II Kings 18-20 by showing that the material in question is extremely vital to the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah, but appears to hold no literary significance to the structure of II Kings. Fourth, this thesis has suggested a very intriguing proposal concerning the historical occasion for the compilation of Proto-Isaiah: the aftermath of Sennacherib's invasion, when Manasseh had begun to reinstitute the worship of foreign gods. Finally, this thesis has proposed a comprehensive and detailed literary analysis of the two bookend sections in Proto-Isaiah that not only provide the structural foundation for Proto-Isaiah, but also the prophetic interpretation of the two major national crises for the kingdom of Judah in the latter half of the eighth-century BCE.

IV. Further Implications this Thesis has for New Testament Studies

When one considers all the evidence proposed in this thesis, it becomes quite clear that, in the form that has been handed down to us, Proto-Isaiah portrays the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7-12 as none other than King Hezekiah. Such an identification is not only *historically* plausible and *literarily* coherent, but it helps clarify the *prophetic intent* of Proto-Isaiah. Simply put, given the findings in this thesis, one can see why Proto-Isaiah was preserved in the life of ancient Israel and later added to during and after the exile in the form of Deutero-Isaiah. The work of Proto-Isaiah vindicated Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH. What he had prophesied had come to pass: the destruction of Aram and Israel, the birth of Hezekiah, and his subsequent “showdown” with Assyria, where, because of Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH, Assyria suffered a mysterious defeat outside of the walls of Jerusalem. For this reason, Proto-Isaiah was preserved and later used as a sort of “grid” through which the exilic and post-exilic community

interpreted the events of their own day and looked forward to a future ultimate restoration of the people of YHWH.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, to see how influential the book of Isaiah was to not only the post-exilic community, but also to other communities, particularly the Qumran community and early Christian community. For in the pages of Proto-Isaiah these communities came to eventually look *through* the immediate prophecies and events surrounding Hezekiah (i.e. the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib), *to* a future Messiah that would fulfill the salvation of YHWH that had been slowly filling up throughout Israel's history. Simply put, because these prophecies had revealed the way YHWH had saved his people *in Hezekiah's day*, later communities looked to these same prophecies to form their expectations as to how YHWH would once again save his people *in the future*.

This appreciation and interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in its original context, therefore, has tremendous implications for not only the way in which Christians have traditionally understood numerous issues within Christian theology, but also for the 2,000 year old debate between Christians and Jews concerning Isaiah 7:14 and the concept of "fulfilled prophecy." In regards to this 2,000 year old debate, the findings of this thesis open up the possibility of a certain amount of reconciliation between the traditional Christian and Jewish interpretations.

This thesis began with a brief look at one of the earliest recorded debates between Christians and Jews over Isaiah 7:14, Justin Martyr's *Dialogues with Trypho*. When one looks at this debate closely, one can see that the breakdown in the argument between Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew was that the two men were talking past each other and

answering different questions regarding Isaiah 7:14. Trypho's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 was essentially a *historical* one: the prophecy was to be understood in the context of Isaiah's life and times and therefore Trypho and his fellow Jews had always understood Immanuel to be Hezekiah. Justin Martyr's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, on the other hand, was essentially an *a-historical* one: he determined that since Matthew claimed Isaiah 7:14 was "fulfilled" with the conception and birth of Jesus, it must have been a *prediction* of Jesus' conception and birth, and therefore had no relation to the historical circumstances in which it was uttered. Simply put, Trypho could not see how Isaiah 7:14 could be about Jesus because it was, in his mind, clearly about Hezekiah; yet Justin Martyr could not see how Isaiah 7:14 could have been about Hezekiah because Matthew had related Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus.

On historical and literary grounds, this thesis has essentially sided with Trypho. Isaiah 7:14 is clearly about Hezekiah, and the events prophesied in Isaiah 7-12 are to be seen as reaching their immediate fulfillment during the reign of Hezekiah, as recorded in Isaiah 36-39. Any Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14 must begin here, with the recognition of its immediate interpretation within its original context. On this point Christians and Jews can agree. The point at which Christians and Jews must simply agree to disagree regarding Isaiah 7:14, though, is obviously over how the verse relates to Jesus. The fundamental problem with Justin Martyr's argument (and the subsequent traditional Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14) was *not* in his insistence that Isaiah 7:14 related to Jesus' conception and birth, but rather was his misunderstanding as to *how Matthew was relating Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus*. Simply put, we must see that when Matthew said Isaiah 7:14 was "fulfilled" in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, he was *not*

saying that Isaiah 7:14 was an a-historical prediction that only “came true” 740 years after Isaiah issued the prophecy.

It must be stated though, that a re-interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 that differs from the traditional interpretation as set forth by the Church Fathers and held throughout most of Church history impels us to re-evaluate a number of issues, for the traditional Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14 has had considerable influence on how Christians have viewed a host of other issues. These issues include: (a) the meaning of “fulfilled prophecy,” (b) the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, (c) the nature of the divinity of Christ (i.e. what made Christ divine?), (d) the theological importance and meaning of the infancy narratives, (e) the doctrine of original sin, (f) the traditional view that sees virginity as a more holy state than even marriage, because sex is seen as base and sinful in and of itself, and (g) the general way in which, at least on the popular level, Christmas is a more celebrated holiday than Easter, thus betraying a popular bias that sees the virginal conception as more important than the resurrection. All of these issues are intimately connected to the way in which the Church has traditionally interpreted Isaiah 7:14. Therefore, if the findings of this thesis are convincing, these issues will need to be re-evaluated and discussed.