

**Propheten der Epochen**  
**Prophets during the Epochs**

Festschrift für István Karasszon  
zum 60. Geburtstag  
Studies in Honour of István Karasszon  
for his 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Edited by  
Viktor Kókai Nagy and László Sándor Egeresi

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# **The Story of Isaiah with his King**

## **The Role of the Hezekiah Narratives in 1–2 Kings and in Isaiah**

*Zoltán Kustár*

### **I.**

In recent decades Old Testament research went through an important paradigm shift. The literary-critical investigations of former times held as their utmost task to distinguish the inclusions in the Old Testament texts of extraneous material, and to reconstruct the possibly oldest form of the given prophecies, psalms and narratives. Recognized as inclusions, these parts were held mostly as corruptions of the original, clear message, and as a result of this view the editorial work of the redactors was classified as merely a mechanical task. The situation has changed greatly, since the investigations of Rad and Noth convincingly showed that the redactors were not simply more or less skillful collectors and scribes, but constructive theologians with creative power, who placed the collected or readily found material in the order of their profound theological concepts – of theological concepts which in originality and thoughtfulness often surpassed the theological range of the revised materials' ideas.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, a pure literary-critical interest was replaced by redaction criticism that applied the results of the literary-critical method. This tendency also determined the Isaiah research from the 1970s up to the present, and became the dominate working method for today.<sup>2</sup>

The Book of Isaiah similarly to 1–2 Kings reached its present canonical form through the subsequent work of different redactors. It is a highly remarkable aspect of both Biblical scripts' redaction-history that they included the same narrative circle in their composition, namely, the stories of Hezekiah. This section is found in 2 Kgs 18:17–20:19, and in Isa 36–39. It is evident that the edi-

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<sup>1</sup> M. Noth (Studien 1952) describes the theological profile of the redactor of the Deuteronomistic historical work, G. von Rad (Hexateuch 1938) examines the work of the Jahwist. For a short research-historical overview about their role in the paradigm shift, see M. A. Sweeny, *Isaiah* 1988, 2.

<sup>2</sup> For the question in general and the development of the Isaiah-research in respect to this context, see Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 14–27.

tors of both books have made certain changes in the stories themselves in order to incorporate them into their work as a whole. In the Isaiah version, this is all the more apparent. It would be the primary task of a profound redaction-historical study to compare the two texts. However, the required examination in itself would deserve an independent study, and would go beyond the scope of the present inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in this analysis I will not take into account these differences but focus on the narratives in their different contexts and on their relation to their distinct environment. Along these lines my aim is to demonstrate on what reason was it founded and was purpose did it serve to incorporate the same narrative collection into the two books.

For this, however, I have to indicate two statements as a point of departure, regarding which there is fundamentally a consensus in Old Testament research, therefore I will not set out to further explore them in detail. Despite certain critical voices it is not disputable that the collection was first included in the Book of Kings, and only as a later step did the insertion into the end of the still independent Proto-Isaiah book take place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It is still a matter of debate with version preserved the older form of the text. H. Wildberger (Prophet 1982, 1446) considers the shorter text of Isa 38 to be original and suggests that the extension of the text in the Book of Kings serves as an additional intensification of the miracle. Contrary to this, M. A. Sweeny (Isaiah 1988, 14) sees the extended version of the Book of Kings to be original, which was shortened by the Isaiah editor due to theological considerations. Likewise e.g. P. R. Ackroyd, *Babylonian Exile* 1974, 343. n. 3; G. Fohrer, *Jesaja* 1991; O. Kaiser, *Jesaja* 1981; R. Kilian, *Jesaja* 1994; E. Würthwein, *Könige* 1984, for the relevant chapter. It would be also important to explore whether those inclusions in the Hezekiah narrative which have a Deuteronomistic tone are from one of the redactors of the Book of Kings, as surmised by L. Camp, *Hiskija* 1990, or these inclusions predate the Deuteronomistic historical work, as recently emphasized by Würthwein.

<sup>4</sup> A. Jepsen, *Quellen* 1956, 77, and more recently C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah* 1993, *passim*, argue in favor of the statement that the stories were originally compiled for the Book of Isaiah, and from there were they transferred into the Book of Kings. Contrary to this is the argument that 2 Kgs 18:13 originally could have belonged to the account of 2 Kgs 18:14–16. Since 2 Kgs 18:14–16, that depicts Hezekiah in a negative tone, was not included in the Book of Isaiah, 2 Kgs 18:13 (par. Isa 36:1) directly precedes 2 Kgs 18:17 (par Isa 36:2) in the Book of Isaiah. Certain common additions of both variations of the narratives could only have been created after the exile (2 Kgs 19:4b.21b–28.29–31). Therefore their transposition also had to take place after the exile. Since, for various reasons the Book of Kings must have contained the Hezekiah narratives already in the exile, the recipient work could only have been the Book of Isaiah. Likewise B. Duhm, *Jesaja* 1968, and similarly Wildberger, Kaiser, and Würthwein for relevant passages. According to O. Kaiser (*Jesaja* 1983, 292), these narratives might have been transferred so late into the Book of Isaiah that it was placed into Isa 1–55 that was already complet-



It is questionable though whether the Hezekiah narratives had originally formed an independent collection before they were inserted into the Book of Kings. The narrative circle can be sufficiently understood in themselves; the conceptual unity and clear composition of the collection attest to a great degree of independence.<sup>5</sup> As an independent literary work of art it expresses the hope of restoration for the community in the exilic period: the hope that if a generation believes in God like Hezekiah, if it lives before God faithfully and with a pure heart as did Hezekiah (cf. Isa 38:3), God will annul even the judgment of death.<sup>6</sup> Other factors also indicate that the narratives originally could have formed an independent collection.<sup>7</sup>

However, the possibility that the collection was compiled by one of the redactors of the Book of Kings, created especially for his own work, cannot be excluded either.<sup>8</sup> In the depiction of king Hezekiah the point of departure for the Deuteronomist redactors was the king's act of cleansing the temple of Jerusalem by breaking into pieces the bronze serpent (2 Kgs 18:4),<sup>9</sup> and that he reigned for a lengthy period of 29 years (cf. 2 Kgs 18:2). Evidently, the purification of the temple was positively judged by the Deuteronomists. Also, on the basis of the blessing-curse formula of Deuteronomy the long reign of Hezekiah was only possible if the king lived his entire life according to the will of God. Therefore

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ed with the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah. Since the collection as such could have been compiled before the post-exilic insertions, and because the considerably late psalm of Hezekiah (Isa 38:9–20) could hardly originate from the same redactor that transferred the stories into the Book of Isaiah, it is unnecessary to date the transposition to late post-exilic period. For the composition of a work such as Isa 1–12; 13–33 (and 34–35) + 36–39, the Septuagint version of the Book of Jeremiah provides a sufficient analogy, see for this recently O. H. Steck, *Tritojesaja* 1989, 381ff.

<sup>5</sup> For the inner composition of the narrative circle see B. Duhm, *Jesaja* 1968, 258; H. Wildberger, *Prophet* 1982, 1373–1377; P. R. Ackroyd, *Babylonian Exile* 1974, 344–346; E. Ruprecht, *Komposition* 1990, 33–66, and at the level of parallelism V. Hoffer, *Exegetis* 1992, 76–77.

<sup>6</sup> Similarly for the role of the circle in the Book of Isaiah cf. B. S. Childs, *Introduction* 1980, 333.

<sup>7</sup> The original independence of the collections is assumed by e.g. G. Fohrer, *Jesaja* 1991, 157; H. Wildberger, *Prophet* 1982, 1374; W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* 1972, 138–139. At the same time, R. E. Clements, *Isaiah* 1980, 279–280, does not refuse the possibility either.

<sup>8</sup> See Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 142–143.

<sup>9</sup> Whether this verse has a pre-deuteronomical base layer is a question under debate. L. Camp however, recently convincingly argues again in favor of the historical credibility of the story about the destruction of the bronze serpent (Hiskija 1990, 74–81. 274–287).

the collection of the positive traditions about Hezekiah in order to demonstrate his faith must also have been the interest of the redactors of the Book of Kings. Moreover, these narratives in their substance also fit into the theological concept of the Book of Kings. The Hezekiah narratives also express the belief that solely the king's faith or the lack of it determines the fate of the whole nation (i.e. 2 Kgs 20:6). The fact that in a crucial moment a prophet in this case Isaiah, steps on the scene and through him God announces and explains in advance the coming events is a distinctive mark of the Deuteronomical historiography.

## II.

One way or another, one of the redactors of the Book of Kings transferred the Hezekiah narratives into his own work, found now in 2 Kgs 18:17–20:19.

### 1.

In the Book of Kings, these accounts are preceded immediately by 2 Kgs 17 and 18:1–12. Most probably the Deuteronomist base layer in chapter 17 consisted of 17:1–6.21–23a.<sup>10</sup> This text reports the fall of the Northern Kingdom and the deportation of her inhabitants: after King Hoshea's rebellion against Assyria, the Assyrian king came up to attack him. Following the invasion of the country he marched against the capital Samaria, besieged and captured it and sent the people of the land into exile.

The coincidence of this account and the Hezekiah narratives is apparent. 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37 also reports that Judah, the vassal of Assyria rebelled against Assyria, and consequently Sennacherib, king of Assyria invaded the whole land and afterwards besieged the capital city. Only the closure of the two accounts differ, the more sharply though. Contrary to the case of Hoshea, in a miraculous way God delivered the devoted Hezekiah: the Assyrian troops left Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom was saved from complete destruction.

The nomist redactors of the Deuteronomistic historical work<sup>11</sup> apparently noticed the parallel between the two narratives, and the contrast between their endings. Most likely they were those who inserted the Hezekiah narratives into

<sup>10</sup> Similarly E. Würthwein, *Könige* 1984, 413; following M. Noth, *Studien* 1952, 127. n. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Contrary to the classic model of Noth, it seems probable that the Deuteronomistic historical work was not produced by one redactional step, rather a historical (DtrH), a nomist (DtrN) and between the two probably a layer with prophetic orientation (DtrP) can be distinguished. For the present stage of research see L. Camp, *Hiskija* 1990, 11–37; G. Braulik, *Theorien* 2006, 191–202.

their book to demonstrate the difference between the fate of the two parts of the kingdom, to sharpen this dissimilarity by the profound resetting of 2 Kgs 17 and 18:1–6, and at the same time explain it theologically.<sup>12</sup>

The insertion of vv. 7–12.18 and 3–17.20 in 2 Kgs 17 is the result of the work of these redactors. Probably in 2 Kgs 18:1–8 the insertion of vv. 3b.4.5–7a is also the work of the same redactors.<sup>13</sup>

According to these additions, Israel's demise came about because the people have done "evil in the sight of the Lord" (17:17), they have forsaken "all the commandments" (17:16) of the Lord their God, built "high places" in all their cities, set up "pillars and sacred poles" on every high hill and under every green tree, and there, similarly to the pagans, served other gods (17:9–12). However, in the description of the Nomists, Hezekiah was the exact opposite of the people and king of Israel: he did "what was right in the sight of the Lord" (18:3), removed the "places", "broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole" (18:4). He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, he held fast to Him and kept all "the commandments" (18:5–6). In the almost analogous historical situation the fate of Israel and Judah differed essentially – as suggested by the redactors – because the people of Israel had turned away from God, but the king of Judah has kept the commandments of the law.

For the sake of those, however, for whom the contrast was not evident, the same redactors inserted vv. 5–6 from 2 Kgs 17 into chapter 18. This way, the characterization of Hezekiah was completed in 18:9–12 also with a short outline of the fate of Samaria. By doing this they left nothing to chance. Every reader must have noticed the parallel between the events that happened in Israel in 722 BCE and in Judea in 701 BCE. They had to realize the explanation for the very different outcome of the events: faithless and idol worshipper Israel was bound to fall while God-fearing and faithful Judah was delivered (see especially 18:6

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<sup>12</sup> According to E. Würthwein (Könige 1984, 406), the narratives were interlaced into the Book of Kings by the DtrP, and the DtrN redactions have found them already in the book. But the DtrP made no changes to the accounts themselves, and does not refer to the presence of the new material in other parts of the book either. DtrN is the first layer that, in terms of literary work, has integrated the narratives into the book – it is likely that their insertion is also due to his work. The same conclusions are reached by Camp, although, his model is disputable in many of its details.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning the passage's literary-critical interpretation and redactional-historical classification see Würthwein for relevant locations.

and 18:12) – exactly as God in His covenant had promised for those who forsake Him and for those who love Him (see Deut 28–30).<sup>14</sup>

2.

The base layer of the Deuteronomist work in 2 Kgs 18:13–16 however already contained a short report of the events in 701 BCE. This portion of the annals is much more realistic than the legend-like narratives about Hezekiah and depicts him in a more negative tone. We do not read about the exemplary faith of the king, all the more, this narrative can be understood in a way that the king sought refuge not in God but rather in his wealth and in this he did not even shrink from robbing the temple.

Through placing the Hezekiah narratives directly after this unflattering portrait, the nomist redactors have managed to turn down its poignancy against Hezekiah. The present order of the narratives suggest that Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (18:17) only after Hezekiah had surrounded and had already inquired about the conditions of conciliation, and paid the price agreed upon as a condition of withdrawal of the troops (18:14). However, instead of retreating to Nineveh,<sup>15</sup> Sennacherib has turned against Jerusalem to besiege it. Thus the rebellious Hezekiah, responsible for plundering the capital city, became a ruler struggling to the end in order to save his people from the worst. In this new context for the siege of Jerusalem he is not responsible, only Sennacherib, who has unfaithfully broken the peace treaty.<sup>16</sup>

3.

As we read in 2 Kgs 20:1–19, in the last story about Hezekiah, envoys arrive to the king from Babylon. The king shows them everything he has. Yet Isaiah announces the judgment of God to the king: everything the Babylonians have seen, in the time of the king's descendants will be carried into Babylon. Because of historical reasons the visitation of the Babylonians must have occurred years

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<sup>14</sup> E. Würthwein, *Könige* 1984, 410; C. Hardmeier, *Polemik* 1990, 99–115; L. Camp, *Hiskija* 1990, 92–95.

<sup>15</sup> For such an expected possible outcome of the story see the parallel accounts in 2 Kgs 12:18–19 and 15:19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Isa 33:8. For the issue similarly C. Hardmeier, *Polemik* 1990, 139ff. We have no reason, however, to assume, following Hardmeier that the Hezekiah narratives were combined with the account of 2 Kgs 18:13–16 before their insertion into the Book of Kings.

before 701.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, chronologically this narrative should stand before 2 Kgs 18:13–19:37.

In its present location it has an important role not only in the inner structure of the Hezekiah accounts,<sup>18</sup> but in the frame of the Book of Kings. Namely, this story announces the Babylonian exile and thus leads from the incidents of the Assyrian period to the Babylonian events contained in 2 Kgs 24–25, only a few chapters later. 2 Kgs 24:13–17 will report of the Babylonians plundering the palace and deporting the royal house in 596 BCE. The direct reflection in 2 Kgs 24:13 on the message of the prophet Isaiah (2 Kgs 20:17) describes the theft of the royal treasures as the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Hezekiah narrative.<sup>19</sup>

### III.

Shortly after the return from the exile<sup>20</sup> the Hezekiah narratives were transferred from the Book of Kings to the Book of Isaiah. The Book of Proto-Isaiah, completed with the narratives, probably did not originally contain the material of Isa 34–35, and Isa 33 was compiled as a redactional link between the prophetic collection and the attached prosaic accounts.<sup>21</sup> What could have been the func-

<sup>17</sup> Merodach-baladan (2 Kgs 20:12) was able to capture the Babylonian throne from the Assyrians twice. Firstly during the reign of Sargon II between 721 and 710 BCE and secondly in 703 BCE for the short period of nine months. It is possible that in an attempt to seek western allies for his counter-Assyrian politics he has sent envoys to Judea. The second period, despite its short duration, is more plausible in our case, as Hezekiah personally lead a considerable counter-Assyrian coalition in the Syro-Palestinian region.

<sup>18</sup> The 2 Kgs 20:6b explicitly connects the deliverance of the sick Hezekiah with the deliverance of the besieged city. The recovery of the king brings healing for Jerusalem that was threatened with mortal disaster. In 2 Kgs 20:6a, in his promise given to Hezekiah, God also promises to prolong the king's life by 15 years. In its present position 2 Kgs 20:12–19 expresses that the prolonging of the king's personal life symbolized the fate of Judah. With the promise of a long life for Hezekiah God promised for both Jerusalem and Judah a longer period of peace and security. Announcing the Babylonian deportation is considered by 2 Kgs 20:19b as a promise for Hezekiah and his generation: in the Assyrian period the temple of Jerusalem will not be plundered, its treasures will not be carried away; the king will not be deported and will not be made a eunuch. All these will only happen in his descendants' ('sons') time. For the motif of the delayed punishment cf. 2 Kgs 22:15–20. For the issue, see Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 129–135.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. B. Duhm, *Jesaja* 1968, for relevant passage.

<sup>20</sup> For this, see B. Duhm, *Jesaja* 1968, 2, n. 4.

<sup>21</sup> O. H. Steck (*Heimkehr* 1985, 56–59) has convincingly shown that Isa 33 was composed in view of the Hezekiah narratives, and a number of details of the chapter served to create deliberate associations between the events of 701 BCE and the events and promises of its own time. Steck, however, considers Isa 33–34 originally forming one unit (see op. cit., 55–56), but failed to convincingly demonstrate his statement. Contrary

tion of these narratives as a closure to a prophetic compilation? To answer this question I would like to emphasize three things.

1.

Isa 36–37 speaks about an Assyrian attack, the destruction of the Assyrian troops and the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem. Isa 1–33, however, contains many prophecies that predict the fall of Assyria and the liberation of Jerusalem. These prophecies in many cases show close resemblance with the oracles found in the accounts.

In Isa 8:6–8, for example, we read the following:

Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently..., therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.<sup>22</sup>

Isa 36:1 describes exactly the same situation: the Assyrian armies flooded the country, only Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Judeans. The following part of the story explains how God really was with Jerusalem in the worst calamity. Isa 10:5–19 depict Assyria as the instrument of God's judgment. In Isa 36:10 the Assyrian king poses as God's messenger to force the inhabitants of Jerusalem to surrender. However, according to Isa 5:10–19 Assyria is haughty; therefore God casts him away and hands him over to judgment. As indicated by Isa 14:24–27, the devastating judgment should take place in Judah:

The LORD of hosts has sworn: As I have designed, so shall it be; and as I have planned, so shall it come to pass: I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him under foot...; For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who will annul it?

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to him C. R. Mathews (*Defending Zion* 1995) argues again, that Isa 34 with Isa 35 constitutes one redactional unit. That Isa 35 presupposes the existence of such an Isaiah book that already contains the collection of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 1–55+60–62) is demonstrated by Steck himself in his cited work. For Isa. 33 as a redactional link, see Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 147–148; for the literary critical analysis of the passage see recently Cs. Balogh, *He filled Zion* 2008, 477–504; for its role as an epilogue at the end of Proto-Isaiah, see E.-J. Waschke, *Jesaja* 2004, 517–532.

<sup>22</sup> The translation of biblical passages is based on *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, Oxford University Press, Oxford / New York, 2001. At times it departs from the NRSV text to provide a more literal translation based on the original text.

According to Isa 17:12–14 the nations roar against Judah, but when rebuked by the Lord, they flee far away:

At evening time, lo, terror! Before morning, they are no more. This is the fate of those who despoil us, and the lot of those who plunder us. (17:14)

Here we are reminded of the Hezekiah narratives in Isa 37:36:

... army during the night, so when waking in the morning, the people found only dead bodies under the city walls.

Isa 29:1–4 announces the siege of Jerusalem, and the subsequent unit (29:5–8) promises the sudden and disgraceful destruction of those who besieged the city. Isa 30:27–33, and the above mentioned Isa 33 also speaks in detail about the destruction of Assyria and of “the people of an obscure speech”, about the deliverance of Jerusalem and about the ensuing joy.

Placed at the end of the book, the Hezekiah accounts serve as a kind of epilogue: the prophecies it contains summarize these prophecies of the book against Assyria, and illustrate the fulfillment of these prophecies with a ‘historical document’. What God, through Isaiah, had promised to this nation, according to the testimony of the Hezekiah narratives was indeed fulfilled.<sup>23</sup>

Naturally it would be interesting to clarify the correlation between the prophecies and the narratives from a literary-critical perspective. Scholars consider the relevant passages as genuine words of Isaiah, but even more so as the work of Assyrian redaction from the time of Josiah.<sup>24</sup>

A post-Isaianic, counter-Assyrian redaction is hardly a deniable fact any more. It is however a matter of debate whether the numerous passages considered as part of this redaction have originated from the same authorial circle. A number of observations indicate the opposite, suggesting, that Isa 29:5–8 and 30:27–33 should be separated from the other so-called ‘Assyrian-texts’ and connected with Isa 33. It is highly probably that all three texts were compiled

<sup>23</sup> Jer 52 has the same function at the end of the Book of Jeremiah: the historical account from the Book of Kings serves here to demonstrate the fulfillment of the prophecies at the end of this collection as well. However, they have a contrast: we read about the fulfillment of salvation prophecies in Isa 36–39 and of judgment prophecies in Jer 52.

<sup>24</sup> The theory of Assyrian redaction can be contributed to the work of H. Barth, *Jesaja-Worte* 1977, who followed Mowinckel’s observations. Of all the cited passages he considers Isa 8:9–10; 10:16–19; 14:24–27; 30:37–33 to be the result of this redaction. In his commentary, Clements, 6, applies Barth’s theory and includes 29:5–8 also to this same stage. O. Kaiser tentatively dates the redaction to post-exilic times and includes Isa 10:5–15 and 17:12–14 among the passages that are results of the Assyrian redaction (Jesaja 1981, 22–23).

after the exile.<sup>25</sup> Apart from Isa 30:31–32, where the redactors quote Isa 10:5, none of these texts use the name ‘Assyria’, but rather speak in general terms about ‘nations’. The main concept of the three texts is also the same. The cry of Isa 33:7–9 describes the consequences of the military invasion that has threatened Jerusalem according to 29:1–4 and 30:15–17. However, Isa 33:10–12, together with 29:5–8 and 30:27–33 contains the promise that God will deliver the city from the siege of the nations. According to all three texts this salvation is brought about by the theophany of God who appears and with fire destroys the nations that oppress Israel. In contrast with the other ‘Assyrian-texts’, similarly to Isa 33, the texts 29:5–8 and 30:27–33 also address their reader, the congregation, directly. The fact that their vocabulary agrees at a number of points also suggests the connection between the three texts.<sup>26</sup>

It is possible that those texts within the Book of Isaiah that have a polemic directed against Assyria were compiled prior to the Hezekiah narratives and no later than the time of Josiah. Their promises for salvation might have served as a basis for the characterization of Isaiah found in the Hezekiah narratives. But Isa 29:5–8; 30:27–33 and Isa 33 were originated from post-exilic times and their

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<sup>25</sup> Isa 29:5–8 is a posterior supplement to 29:1–4 that originates from Isaiah, and turns the prophecies of judgment into salvation oracle, see Kaiser, Clements and Kilian for the relevant passage. For the dating of 30:27–33 see H. Barth, *Jesaja–Worte* 1977, 102–103, against its originality cf. K. Marti, *Jesaja* 1900; Kaiser, Clements and Kilian for the relevant passage. That Isa 33 could not have originated in the time before exile is hardly disputable for recent research. However, opinions differ concerning the age reflected by the chapter: whether it is the Babylonian (Barth, Clements, Steck, Heimkehr 1985), Persian (Wildberger), Greek (Kaiser, Kilian) or even Seleucid period (Duhm, Marti). Since the chapter mainly consists of the citation and the redaction of the already completed material, a statistic of vocabulary would hardly help us further. On the basis of the circumstances this chapter describes, its cultic and liturgical character, the collective cry and the promise of salvation as a response, all point to late exilic or early post-exilic time.

<sup>26</sup> The expression ‘devouring fire’ from 33:14 occurs elsewhere in the Book of Isaiah only in 29:6 and 30:27.30, where, contrary to the occurrences in the Pentateuch, is always found in the context of the theophany of God, as the instrument of the destruction of the nations. Apart from 33:7 the ceremonial designation of Jerusalem as ‘Ariel’ can be found in 29:7; the author has probably chosen this name under the influence of 29:1–2. These are the only occurrences of this name in the Book of Isaiah. Also see: ‘tumult’ in 29:5; 33:3; the metaphor of chaff in 29:5 and 33:11–12; the ‘voice of the Lord’ in 29:6 and 33:3; the ‘hand of the Lord’ in 33:2 and in 30:30; the ‘fortress’ in 29:7 and 33:16; to ‘see visions’ in 29:7 and 33:17 (the horrendous night vision of the siege of the nations disappears and the people see their glorious king in the country that is saved.) For the similarities between Isa 33; 29:5–8 and 30:27–33 in terms of vocabulary and subject see W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja* 1991, 5–35; A. Laato, *Zion* 1998, 110ff.



author was already familiar with the Hezekiah narratives which he has attached to the prophetic collection using the three abovementioned passages.<sup>27</sup> This theory is further supported by the fact that alongside Isa 33 these texts also allude directly to the Hezekiah narratives, see 29:5b.7 and 37:36, as well as 30:28 and 37:7.29.

2.

Fohrer has already emphasized in his commentary that the portrait of Hezekiah forms a conscious contrast with the portrait of king Ahaz found in Isa 7.<sup>28</sup> His observations were applied, and further developed by Ackroyd and Conrad.<sup>29</sup> Both texts are narrative units in a prophetic and poetic collection. Both narratives speak about the military threat against Judah: in Isa 36–37 the Assyrians attack the Southern Kingdom, while in Isa 7 the Syro-Ephraimite coalition does the same. Both narratives emphasize the defenselessness and helplessness of the Judean king (7:2 and 36:22–37:1) before the overpowering enemy. Both narratives, at least one of their main episodes, take place on the same location near Jerusalem, at “the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field” (7:3 and 36:2). In both cases, the same prophet, Isaiah is sent by God and is given the duty to convey the promise of the city’s survival to the king (7:3–9 and 37:5–7; 37:21–29). This promise is introduced in both cases with a ‘Do not fear!’ oracle (7:4 and 37:6). In both narratives, this promise is affirmed by a song given by the LORD (7:10–16 and 37:30–32, cf. also 38:7.22). Yet God’s promise is limited in time in both narratives and it leads to the announcement of a serious catastrophe highly exceeding the former one at least according to the present form and context of the texts (see Isa 7:17 and Isa 39).

Accordingly, by substance the structure of both narratives is identical. This striking similarity, however, serves to emphasize even more characteristically to emphasize the essential difference between the character and the faith of the two kings. Ahaz did not even need to send for a prophet since God with the promise of salvation has preceded human request. It was, again, God himself who offered Ahaz a sign in order to affirm His promise and demonstrate the power

<sup>27</sup> See Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 82–105. 148, for Isa 33 again O. H. Steck, *Heimkehr* 1985, 56ff; E. Bosshard-Nepustil, *Rezeption von Jesaja* 1997, 187–189; A. Laato, *Zion* 1998, 110ff.

<sup>28</sup> G. Fohrer, *Jesaja* 1991, 167. 194.

<sup>29</sup> See P. R. Ackroyd, *Babylonian Exile* 1974, 316ff; E. W. Conrad, *The Royal Narratives* 1988, 68–75; id., *Reading Isaiah* 1991, 34–51.

necessary to fulfill it. Yet, Ahaz with a hypocritical excuse refused the sign (see Deut 6:16) – an act that was clearly considered unfaithfulness by the narrator (see 7:13). Hezekiah acts much differently: here the king himself asks Isaiah to pray to God for the remnants of the people. The sign that is offered is not refused by Hezekiah, moreover, according to 38:22 he himself asks for a sign that would affirm the fulfillment of God’s promise.

Here also, the contrast seems obvious: contrary to the doubting Ahaz, who, by inspecting the conduit prepares for war and refuses God’s help is contrasted with faithful Hezekiah who turns to God in the time of adversity and awaits help from Him only. “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all” – this is the alternative given to Ahaz in Isa 7:9. Apparently, Ahaz has missed this alternative in contrast with Hezekiah who, according to 38:3 walked in his whole life “in faithfulness”.

Naturally, the literary parallelism entails the question of literary dependence and priority: which story was the model for the other? According to the previous consensus Isa 7 contains a historically authentic account, and the narrative must have originated from before 700 BCE.<sup>30</sup> In this case, only the authors of the Hezekiah narratives could have used the story of Ahaz as a model.<sup>31</sup> According to Kaiser, however, Isa 7 was written in the 5th century BCE by an author under Deuteronomistic influence, who used the Hezekiah narratives in the account.<sup>32</sup> In the present work we cannot provide a detailed analysis of Isa 7:1–17. However, it seems certain the literary form of the chapter is the result of two steps (vv. 1–9 and 10–17) and the text in its present form originates from after the exile<sup>33</sup> – consequently there is no chronological obstacle to the assumption of a reversed dependence. In addition, it is more plausible to assume that Isa 7 reaches back to a unified chapter created from Ch 36 to 39, than to suppose that the authors of two originally independent narratives would link with the same Isa 7. Such a significant literary parallelism is also more meaningful and probable in the same

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<sup>30</sup> Most scholars consider one of Isaiah’s disciples to be the author of Isa 7:1–17 and suggests the prophet himself to be the redactor of Isa 6:1–8:18, see e.g. H. Barth, *Jesaja-Worte* 1977, 279; G. Fohrer, *Jesaja* 1991, 194; H. Wildberger, *Prophet* 1982, 273ff.

<sup>31</sup> In addition to the works cited in the previous footnote, see R. E. Clements, *Isaiah* 1980, 57; K. A. D. Smelik, *King Hezekiah* 1986, 70–97. 121; U. Berges, *Jesaja* 1998, 290; J. Barthel, *Prophetenwort* 1997, 63. 108. 135. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Kaiser, *Jesaja* 1981, 135ff.

<sup>33</sup> For the details, see Kaiser, Kilian for the relevant passage, and W. Werner, *Prophetenwort* 1985, 1–30.

book, since the reader should remember the contrast-narrative and should be able to compare it with its parallel.

Isa 7 supposedly reached its present form only after the Hezekiah narratives were transferred to the end of Proto-Isaiah, and some of the editors of Isa 7 had already consciously copied the Isa 36–39, held as a literary model.

3.

Isa 38 tells the story of the ill king's recovery. King Hezekiah becomes mortally ill, and the prophet Isaiah delivers him God's message: "Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." (38:2) As a consequence the king sweeps bitterly and reminds God in prayer that he has lived faithfully and with sincerity of heart before God (38:2–3). God hears the king's prayer and sends him the prophet again, this time with a message concerning God's mercy: the king will live and his life will be prolonged by 15 years (38:4–6). In its significance the recovery of the king exceeds his personal fate, since Isa 38:6 expressly identifies his recovery with the 'healing' of the people in Judah and with the deliverance from Sennacherib.

The theme of healing links the Hezekiah account to the introduction and the epilogue of Proto-Isaiah. The Book of Isaiah that was completed with Isa 36–39 in post-exilic times,<sup>34</sup> had already contained the message of the 'illness' and 'recovery' of the people of Israel: in Isa 1:4–9 as a prophetic exhortation and in 33:24 as a promise for the future.

As the verses Isa 38:1; 39:1 and 38:6 clearly indicates, according to the redactors of Isa 36–39, the illness of Hezekiah – similarly to Isa 36–37 – take place in 701 BCE, during the time of the invasion of Sennacherib.

The prophecy of Isa 1:4–9 also originates from the same period.<sup>35</sup> As Isaiah here depicts, the Assyrians have captured the whole land leaving only Jerusalem in the hands of Hezekiah. This helpless military situation is painted by the meta-

<sup>34</sup> The original prologue of Isaiah (Isa 1:2–20) was most probably compiled from the words of the prophet and placed at the beginning of the collection during the exile: Further, see H. Barth, *Jesaja-Worte* 1977, 217ff. 286f., followed by Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 42–53.

<sup>35</sup> For the dating of the prophecy to 701 BCE see e.g. Duhm; Marti; W. Eichrodt, *Heilige* 1967; Fohrer, Wildberger and Clements for the relevant passage, M. A. Sweeny, *Isaiah* 1988, 126ff. The Isaianic-authorship of the prophecy is disputed by B. Zvi, *Isaiah* 1991, 95–111, who considers it to be from the time of Jeremiah. For their critique see A. J. Bjørndalen, *Echtheit* 1982, 90–93. According to O. Kaiser (*Jesaja* 1981, 33–38), Isa 1:4–9 was written after 587 BCE, but his argument is based on disputable literary-critical operations.

phor of the condition of a man who is sick as the result of beating, and who is threatened by a final, mortal affliction. For the man who symbolizes the people there is neither refuge nor recovery unless he ceases to be unfaithful and turns from his evil way.

Isa 33:1–24 closes the book of Proto-Isaiah with the prophetic promise that the nation will soon be liberated from the rule of the people of an obscure speech because, according to the closing verse there is healing for the people since there is forgiveness for the inhabitants of Zion.<sup>36</sup>

With the picture of Israel's illness these two texts frame and unify the book of Proto-Isaiah. Through the Hezekiah narratives, placed at the end of this collection, the possibility and the way of recovery becomes manifest for the people who were under mortal threat of destruction and carried off to exile. As a closure of Isa 1–33, this account with its 'historical' parable of the miraculous recovery of Hezekiah and his people symbolizes the healing of the nation, which is still to come according to 1:5–6, but which is promised in 33:24.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV.

As we have seen, the redactors of two different books have used the same narrative to deliver their message. In the Book of Kings, the Hezekiah narratives serve as a contrast to the account that tells the fate of Samaria, explaining why Samaria perished, and why Judah did not perish with her. What was the reason that made God decide to delay of the southern Jewish state's doom? According to the redactors, the answer is the faith of Hezekiah and his truthfulness to God. Thus by inserting the narratives into the Book of Kings in order to emphasize this, they themselves reinforced the positive assessment of the king. At the same time, with the insertion of the narratives, an apt literary channel was created between the events of the Assyrian period and between the events of the Babylonian age found in the following chapters.

In the Book of Isaiah the same narratives intend to demonstrate the trustworthiness of God's promises. What God has declared concerning the Assyrians has indeed become reality according to the testimony of these accounts. The promises that did not come true yet or the ones which were newly given to the congregation of Jerusalem must also be fulfilled. Be the nation that is threatened with exile ill and close to death: the healing promised to her will not fail. In the con-

<sup>36</sup> The healing of the people is also promised in Isa 30:26b. It is probable, however, that Isa 30:18–16 is more recent than Isa 33, see O. H. Steck, *Heimkehr* 1985, 32.

<sup>37</sup> See Z. Kustár, *Durch seine Wunden* 2002, 157–160.

trast with Ahaz the promises have certain conditions: God's work of redemption and His promises are only for those who walk before him faithfully and in righteousness, as did the pious Hezekiah.

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