

# Isaiah 1:2–3 and Isaiah 6: Isaiah ‘a prophet like Moses’ (Dt 18:18)

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The book of Isaiah is complex when one considers the reconstruction of the processes of its formation and transmission. If these complexities are examined more closely, it is apparent that there is a multiplicity of dimensions to the book. In order to discover the distinctive and unique characteristics of the book of Isaiah, we are forced to see the book within the wider context of other Hebrew literature. In this article, I examine one specific aspect of this book, namely some of the parallels that exist between the figure of Moses and its eponymous prophet. The deuteronomic depiction of Moses as the first prophet amidst the wilderness generation provided a major thematic force inspiring the redactors of the Book of Isaiah in their presentation of the prophet Isaiah. We get to know Isaiah as a prophet who, in his own historical context, continues the teachings of Moses, which enhances his authority. His words (Is 1:2–3) contain references to words spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt 32), and his call (Is 6) echoes that of Moses. The Torah of Moses is thus continued in the words and teaching of Isaiah.

## Introduction

The Hebrew Bible (HB) is a product of the Judean scribes and a monument to ancient Judah’s scribal culture. For the exegete to become acquainted with the work of these scribes – that is to say, their working methods, their principles and their thought patterns – he or she has to study the texts they produced (Van der Toorn 2007:143). According to Ben Zvi (2009a), one of the best ways to enhance the:

critical debate on the production and the reception of authoritative books in the Persian and Hellenistic periods is to parcel it out in scholarly conversations focused on particular, more manageable subsets that relate directly to the general issue. (p. 1)

This article focuses on the construction of a prophetic text(s) in order to identify the viewpoint(s) of the group(s) whose perspectives are reflected in this text – and for that matter on prophets during the Persian period.

The book of Isaiah will serve as a means of entry into Hebrew scribal culture. This article wants to advance knowledge about the processes that led to the production of the book of Isaiah and will contribute to the debate on the production and reception of authoritative books in Israel during the Persian and Hellenistic periods (Ben Zvi 2009a:2). The book of Isaiah is a complex one, and therefore, the reconstruction of its formation and transmission is problematic. The more one examines the complexities of this book, the more evident the multiplicity of dimensions become. In this article, I shall focus on one specific feature of this book, namely, the parallels which exist between the figure of Moses and its eponymous prophet.<sup>1</sup> I am of the opinion that this feature is more significant than has so far been recognised. However, before paying attention to the book of Isaiah, it is necessary to refer to the book of Deuteronomy that presents Moses as the arch-prophet and the model of every future prophet (Dt 18:9–22). The assumption is that Deuteronomy is a product of the ‘pen of the scribes’ and can be read as a mirror which reflects scribal culture (Van der Toorn 2007:143).

## The discussion of revelation in Deuteronomy: Moses as the arch-prophet

The book of Deuteronomy illustrates the methods, mind-set and ideas of different generations of Hebrew scribes who can justly be regarded as intellectuals and scholars of Scripture. The scribes of Deuteronomy say something about themselves through their portrayal of Moses: At several places in Deuteronomy it becomes evident that the scribes regard themselves as the heirs and successors of Moses (Van der Toorn 2007:166–167). Deuteronomy 31 (vv. 9, 25–26) – the chapter devoted to the succession of Moses – designates the priests as the protectors and the trustees of

1. See McKeating (1994:97).

the Torah he had written. As Moses passed on his instruction to the Israelites in his days, so the priests should deliver his Torah to their own generation (Dt 31:10–13).<sup>2</sup> The priests are thus the only ones who have access to the Torah, and even the king has to turn to them for a copy (Dt 17:18–19). These priests are consistently qualified as 'Levitical'. Apparently they are professionals of writing, since they keep (31:25–26), copy (17:18) and read from the Torah (31:11). It seems viable to believe that these descriptions are all self-references of the scribes given the fact that they claim the legacy of Moses (Van der Toorn 2007:167).

If Moses has a title in Deuteronomy, it is that of prophet (Seitz 1989:5). However, when we think of Moses, this office is not the first qualification that comes to one's mind: Moses is more commonly perceived as a priest, a lawgiver and a judicial leader. Elijah was a prophet, as were Amos and Isaiah (Van der Toorn 2007:168). This title was introduced in Deuteronomy at a later stage in the development of the book (Dt 18:18).<sup>3</sup> Here Moses is presented as the first and incomparable prophet and the model for every future prophecy. In the 'law of the prophet' (Dt 18:9–22), he is presented as the arch-prophet and the model of every future prophet (Nihan 2010:21–22).<sup>4</sup> By presenting Moses as a prophet, the scribes totally transformed this concept: '[A] prophet is not an ecstatic or a diviner but someone who gives Torah and communicates God's Law. The Deuteronomic prophet, in other words, acts as a Torah scribe' (Van der Toorn 2007:169).

In the passage where we encounter the reference to Moses as a prophet, this title is linked to his role as intermediary at Mount Horeb.<sup>5</sup> Here Moses received the oral Torah as prophetic revelation which was written down not long before his death and subsequently was entrusted to the priests. Of major importance is the fact that, along with the written Torah, the priests inherited the Mosaic office. Although it might seem strange for the priestly scribes to regard themselves as prophets, other parts of the book of Deuteronomy confirm the fact that they claimed this title for themselves. Although the promise about a prophet like Moses (Dt 18:18) might be interpreted as a prediction of the coming of one particular prophet, it is a legitimisation of the priestly scribes who were sitting on 'the seat of Moses'.<sup>6</sup> The authors (scribes) of these

2. See also Finsterbusch (2012:184–185).

3. See in this regard also Achenbach (2011:440–444).

4. Achenbach (2011:442) argues that '[7]he new, prophetic text of Deut 18:15–22 puts Moses himself in to the role of a prophet having received a prophetic message from Mount Horeb and announcing the measures of true and false prophecy for Israel's future'.

5. According to Nihan (2010:27–33), Deuteronomy 18:9–22 is a creative *Fortschreibung* of the episode at Horeb (Dt 5), where the notion of prophetic succession is assigned to Yahweh himself. The text of Deuteronomy 5 can be dated in the context of a first return from the Babylonian exile in the early Persian period, which means that Deuteronomy 18 fits later in the Persian period. (For the post-exilic composition of Dt 5, see also Otto [2012:674–678]). The composition of Deuteronomy 18:9–22 presupposes the account of the theophany at Mount Horeb (Dt 5) in order to introduce the establishment of the prophetic office after Moses (18:16–18). Prophecy is thus presented as being as ancient as the Horeb covenant: '[A]s a result, covenant, law, and prophecy are intrinsically connected and have become inseparable' (Nihan 2010:3). This furthermore implies that Yahwistic prophecy is *de facto* subordinated to the revelation Moses received at mount Horeb; this revelation is the Torah as is written down in the book of Deuteronomy.

6. Cf also Ben Zvi (2009b:19): 'As mediators of YHWH's written word, the literati construed themselves as fulfilling a social function similar to Moses, who was made the first mediator of the divine message to Israel.'

layers (Dt 18:9–22) regarded themselves as the heirs to the Mosaic prophetic office, which gave them the authority to be teachers and exegetes of the Torah and to interpret and update traditional law according to the insights revealed to them. Like Moses, they were mediators between God and the nation (Van der Toorn 2007:169).

Revelation was profoundly under discussion in the late layers of the Pentateuch, and according to the post-exilic Pentateuch's theory of covenant and revelation, God's revelation had come to an end with Moses' death (Dt 34:10–12). There could thus be no other access to God's Torah than by the interpretation of his Torah (Otto 2006a:939). According to the book of Deuteronomy, the Torah, as written down by Moses in the land of Moab (Dt 1:1–5; 31:9–13), is the guide to Israel's life in the promised land. For the authors of the post-exilic Pentateuch, Moses was not only the last prophet<sup>7</sup> of Yahweh's direct revelation but also the first scribe writing down the Torah as well as the first exegete of the Torah which accompanied the people of Israel on their way into the promised land after Moses' death. For the priestly authors of the post-exilic Pentateuch, the written Torah represented a resurgence of Moses' prophetic commission (Otto 2006b:21). Deuteronomy 34:10–12 represents the interests of a new group of priestly scribes who eventually wanted to change the concept of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18. For them, the authority of the Torah surpasses all alternative traditions, thus also the scribal prophetic traditions (Achenbach 2011:453–454).

## The scribalisation of prophecy

One can only lament the fact that it has often been the tendency in Old Testament scholarship to focus only on one particular book or set of books as if they are totally separate worlds. The implication of this statement would be that each of these books evolved within social groups that functioned in total isolation from one another (Ben Zvi 2009b:16). It seems unlikely that groups of scribes in post-exilic Judah worked in compartments. As there were only a few highly educated scribes, they would have shared, despite their differences, a social discourse reflected in the various products they created. This assumption is not meant at all to smooth the differences amongst or even within the different books. On the contrary, these literary works reflect the robust discourses of the different groups in different periods and therefore contain a multiplicity of ideological viewpoints and voices (Ben Zvi 2009b:18–19).<sup>8</sup>

The Neviim are the product of the scribes who composed these books by using written records based on the recollections of followers of the prophets. Prophetic material was not merely copied by the scribes, but they expanded it through a process of reinterpretation, creative citation, *Fortschreibung* and the adoption of written oracles from other anonymous

7. It is important to note that the theory of the prophetic revelation of the post-exilic (i.e. post-Deuteronomistic) Pentateuch in Deuteronomy 34:10–12 differs fundamentally from the theory of the exilic-Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy in Deuteronomy 18:18 (Otto 2006a:939). See also Finsterbusch (2012:195).

8. Gerstenberger (2009:125) remarks as follows: 'This common, artificial schema suggests that the Pentateuch and the prophetic canon were composed in close interrelation from the beginning.'

prophets (Van der Toorn 2007:203).<sup>9</sup> They were thus not only guarding the tradition, but they were also actively revising and expanding it, which made them 'as involved in the production of works as in preserving them' (Troxel 2012:11).

By the early exilic period, the authority of the prophets had become a scriptural authority. The formation of written oracle collections led to what can be called the scribalisation of prophecy. These anonymous individuals became prophets of a different type: They used writing in order to convey their ideas. This signifies a process which transformed the prophets into writers and gave rise to a new paradigm of revelation (Van der Toorn 2007:203). The term 'vision' (*hāzôn*), which occurs in the superscriptions of some of the prophetic books (Is 1:1; 2:1; Am 1:1; Hab 1:1; Ob 1; Nah 1:1; cf. 2 Chr 32:32), is the technical term used to indicate prophetic revelation. The prophetic scrolls often contain prophetic communication with God related to visionary experiences (Is 6). For the scribes, prophetic experience became a kind of dogma of prophetic revelation. The call-narratives legitimise the prophetic experience and provide proof of the prophet's credentials. There should be no mistake about the fact that the idea of prophecy as a revelation is found in its reference to written texts. The idea of the prophet as a scribe legitimises the fact that the prophets are books. The scribes now stand in the place of the prophets who are men of the past. God can now only speak to human beings through the written text (Van der Toorn 2007:231).

The function of the theory of revelation within the post-exilic circles of prophetic literature differed from that in the priestly circles (Otto 2006a:939–940). These scribes were of the opinion that they had also received God's revelation and that this revelation had been continuing until their time. They used the same scribal exegetical techniques as the priests but mainly of prophetic words. There were different prophetic schools of post-exilic prophetic tradents,<sup>10</sup> who followed the tradition of the different prophetic figures or discourse founders like Isaiah, Ezekiel or Jeremiah (Otto 2007a:261, 2007b:134).

Each of these schools reacted in one way or another to the priestly theories of revelation in the Pentateuch (Otto 2006a:940).<sup>11</sup> The formation of the Torah and the prophetic books took place within different discourse groups in post-exilic Jerusalem in which each one considered the position of the other. The model of the discourse founder is particularly appropriate in the case of Isaiah ben Amoz, as the literary drama of new beginnings in the post-exilic era is based upon his visionary power (Berges 2010a:567–568). Within this perspective, Isaiah is seen as a prophet in the line of succession of Moses, whose main task it is to speak the word of Yahweh as Deuteronomy 18:18 makes clear:

9. See also Meade (1986:22–26).

10. With regard to the concept 'tradent prophecy' see Steck (1985:81–99, 1991:61–63, 167–170).

11. See also Sommer (1998:140–151).

I will raise up for them a prophet like you ... I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.

Isaiah thus becomes the prophet who continues the teachings of Moses, a continuity which enhances his authority (O'Kane 1996:48). In this regard, Chapman (2000) states that:

the work of the prophets stands behind the image of Moses in the Torah itself and the traditions in the prophetic corpus have been shaped along the lines of the mosaic portrait. (p. 127)

## Isaiah 1:2–3 and Deuteronomy 32<sup>12</sup>

The book of Isaiah is an example of a biblical book that is attributed to a pre-exilic prophet who wrote neither this book nor the oracles it contains (Stromberg 2011:2). The name 'Isaiah' mentioned in the superscriptions (1:1, 2:1 and 13:1) is not an indication of the author of the book but of the fact that Isaiah of Jerusalem of the 8th century BCE is the authority behind the book.<sup>13</sup> The opening words of the book of Isaiah (1:2–3) is a witness against the people just as Moses' words were, and these opening words bring to mind exact phrases spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy. In other words, the teachings and words of Isaiah are a continuation of the Torah which was initially spoken through Moses (O'Kane 1996:48). The compilers of the book of Isaiah thus wished to represent Isaiah as someone who repeats and interprets Moses' words in a new setting.

The opening verse of Isaiah, which appeals to the heavens and earth to bear testimony to God's accusations against Israel, calls the 'Song of Moses' to mind as it has its closest parallel in Deuteronomy 32:1 (Sanders 1996:355).<sup>14</sup> The context makes it clear that the Song is meant as a witness to and for Yahweh (Dt 31:19–21; Keiser 2005:486). The Song is profiled by a narrative framework which interprets the call to heaven and earth to witness against Israel (Dt 31:28). In Deuteronomy 4:26, we have already seen that God calls heaven and earth in direct speech to give evidence against Israel, and chapter 31 expands the theme of Israel's coming apostasy. The opening verses call upon the heaven and the earth to proclaim God's faithfulness and lament Israel's corruption (cf. 32:1, 4b–5; Childs 2001:17–18).<sup>15</sup>

The Song of Moses (or the so-called 'last words of Moses') is extremely beautiful, even in translation, and touches on a

12. The opening verses of the book of Isaiah (1:2–3) have already been discussed extensively in another publication (Groenewald 2011).

13. In this regard, Seitz (1993:24) infers as follows: 'What 1:1 states, however, is less a matter of authorship or proprietary claims made on behalf of Isaiah than it is a statement of belief, made on the part of those who shaped the Isaiah traditions, that which followed was a faithful rendering of the essence of Isaiah's preaching as vouchsafed to him by God.'

14. Song of Moses = Deuteronomy 32:1–43. Christensen (2002:785) states that no other text within the book of Deuteronomy has received so much attention through the centuries than this Song: Ancient scribes copied it and modern critical scholars unravel its structure and significance. According to Braulik (1992:226) 'dieses dichterisch anspruchsvolle »Vermächtnis« des Mittleres der Tora, hat einen eigengeprägten Wortschatz ... gerade darin liegt sein unvergleichlicher Reiz. Da es Hymnisches, Weisheitliches, Lehrhaftes, Prophetisches und Geschichtliches in sich vereinigt, sind seine literarische Einheit und seine Gattung diskutiert'. Otto (2009:641–650) provides an extensive overview of the history of research of the Song of Moses.

15. Cf. also Biddle (2003:472).

myriad of well-known themes which occur in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (Christensen 2002:785). The Song of Moses, by far the most enigmatic part of Deuteronomy 32, had existed and gone through a process of transformation and growth for a long period prior to its inclusion in the book of Deuteronomy. Whatever this may be, the Song in its present form reflects the Deuteronomistic theology of the frame of the book of Deuteronomy (Biddle 2003:469–470).

The appeal to heaven and earth in 32:1 introduces the Song. They are thus the testimony in Yahweh's case against Israel. Covenants in the Ancient Near East often invoked divine witness as the guarantors of the terms and conditions contained in these covenants.<sup>16</sup> In Israel, of course, the invocation of other deities was not allowed, and therefore in the Hebrew Bible, the heavens and earth<sup>17</sup> or the entire created universe is often invoked to confirm the truth of a divine accusation (cf. *inter alia* Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1f; Is 1:2–3; 13:13; 49:13; Jr 2:12; Mi 6:1–3; Ps 50:4–6). Long after the death of Moses, the whole of the universe will act as a witness that Moses has taught Israel about Yahweh's reliability and generosity (Biddle 2003:472). Since this Song has been taught to the people by Moses (31:22), it will be a witness against them in the future (31:19, 21). The Song will be a judgement against them when the predicted evils take place. The words of the Song have thus become synonymous with the words of the Torah (31:22, 24; O'Kane 1996:39).

In Isaiah's prologue, as in the Song of Moses (Dt 32:28–29), Yahweh laments Israel's lack of insight. The authors of these introductory verses of Isaiah (1:2–3) did not want to threaten their audience with the punishment which is formulated in the book of Deuteronomy since a terrible fate had already struck both the land as well as its inhabitants. These authors wanted to emphasise the reality of the divine word: however, it was not only meant for the prologue of the book of Isaiah but formulated as a motto in view of the rest of the book of Isaiah. A collapse in the covenantal relationship because of disobedience will once again activate the curses which are formulated at the end of the Mosaic Torah. This seems to be the present situation here in Isaiah (Berges 1998:60).<sup>18</sup>

Isaiah's prologue presupposes Israel's presence in the land and points to the prophet Isaiah in Moses' coat. One can even say that Isaiah becomes a prophet in the footsteps of Moses (Baumgart 2004:13). In linking Isaiah to the curses and blessings of Deuteronomy, for whose dating along the post-exilic period is a possibility, the writers make Isaiah son of Amoz a current actualiser of the Mosaic Torah (Berges 1998:60). In this regard, Lohfink (1994:46) states as follows:

16.Cf. also Beuken (2003:70); Blenkinsopp (2000:182); Brueggemann (2001:277); Christensen (2002:794) and Kaiser (1983:11–12).

17.See also Brueggemann (1998:13): 'Because Yahwism is monotheistic, Yahweh cannot summon other gods to observe, and so instead summons the most formidable of creatures, heaven and earth. Israel's failure in its response to Yahweh is a matter of cosmic concern, now made evident to the whole known world.'

18.According to Schwab (2009:3), this fact was already noted in the Middle Ages: 'Ibn Ezra sees this as Yeshayahu's statement that the time was at hand for the practical realization of Moshe Rabbeinu's warning, with heaven and earth as witnesses, that if the Jewish people did not live according to the Torah in their land, they would be destroyed.'

'A new Torah proceeds therefore from the prophet's mouth, yet it is only the actualization of the Torah of Israel.'<sup>19</sup>

The authors of this Isaianic text transformed Isaiah ben Amoz (1:1) to a figure that is actualising the Mosaic Torah. For O'Kane (1996:32–33), the suitable starting point for a comparison between Moses and Isaiah would be the 'last words of Moses' in Deuteronomy. This seems appropriate as the last words of biblical personages, whether they are a Moses, David or Jesus, summarise their life and often contain a historical résumé which is full of theological significance.<sup>20</sup> These last words normally refer to both the past and the future and formulate how this character wishes his or her life's work to be continued after death. Moses' last words, for example, are emphasised through their present canonical position at the end of the Pentateuch and before the so-called Deuteronomistic History (Jos – 2 Ki). Moses' death in Deuteronomy 34 forms a transition from the Exodus and desert experience, and simultaneously, Moses is presented as the arch-prophet. Therefore, his last words and death act as a bridge to introduce Joshua – 2 Kings where we shall meet his successors who will continue his life's work in different historical situations.

If this dependence between Deuteronomy and Isaiah holds, Isaiah probably has to be dated later. Sanders (1996:354–355) argues that the correspondence with Deuteronomy 32:1 is conspicuous: Both heaven and earth are addressed, and the same verbs are used. The verbal forms, however, occur in reverse order. Kamphausen, as quoted in Sanders (1996:355), argues that Isaiah 1:2 cannot have been the example for Deuteronomy 32:1: 'If the passages are interdependent, the smoothness of Isa. 1:2 would demonstrate the priority of Deut. 32:1.' Williamson (2006:31–32) also supports this conclusion and concludes that there may have been several possible sources of influence, both from within the book of Isaiah and beyond, which contributed to this formulation.<sup>21</sup>

## The call of Isaiah in chapter 6

Isaiah 6:1–13 is one of the best-known passages in the book of Isaiah and is to be understood as a call report.<sup>22</sup> The vision is dated to the year of Uzziah's death.<sup>23</sup> Conspicuous is the fact

19.Fischer (1995:119) states in this regard: 'Das Buch Deuteronomium, das als Vermächtnis des Mose gestaltet ist, liest sich in der kanonischen Leseführung des Pentateuch bereits als in Moab aktualisierte Sinai-Tora. Mit dem Deuteronomium wird nach diesem Verständnis der Tora-Mittler Mose zum 'Propheten'. In seine Nachfolge tritt in kanonischer Lektüre – nach vielen anderen Propheten und Prophetinnen – auch der 'Schriftprophet' Jesaja ein ... Prophetisches Wort ist also insofern 'Tora', als es die Tora des Mose aktualisiert.'

20.Cf. also Sheppard (1980:144–158).

21.It is not clear why Childs (2001:18) argues that such a conclusion is incompatible with the canonical consideration that 'the intertextuality has arisen because finally the collections of the law and the prophets have been united within the body of Israel's scripture ... even though there is no hard evidence that an original intertextual connection was intended. Thus, while it is exegetically correct to stress the diversity between the law and prophets at an earlier time, it is equally important to recognize the coercion of the united biblical text toward revealing the coherence of the selfsame subject matter'.

22.According to Sweeney (1996:134–135), '[7]he genre of this passage has provoked considerable disagreement among scholars. It is often understood as the call narrative ... But there are problems with the identification of ch. 6 as a typical call narrative'. This problem will however not be discussed in this article, as it suffices just to mention it.

23.According to Irvine (1990:73–74), Uzziah became king in the year 785, abdicated in 760/759, perhaps because of his sickness (2 Kgs 15:5), and died in September/October 734.

that nothing is said about the succession of his son Jotham,<sup>24</sup> who had already long ago taken over his father's official duties due to the latter's skin disease (maybe leprosy?) (Berges 1998:94–95).<sup>25</sup> Isaiah's call and the description of his commission are normally connected to the prophet's mission to king Ahaz of which we read in chapters 7–8 (O'Kane 1996:42). Chapter 6 is in the form of a first-person account of the prophet Isaiah's encounter with God in his throne room. Chapter 7 describes the prophet's encounter with king Ahaz in the third-person narrative style, and chapter 8 resumes the first-person narrative style up till the fourth verse. The style then changes to a series of quite cryptic prophecies (Tull 2010:137).

In terms of its tradition history, it seems that Isaiah 6 stems from a tradition that has as its prototype Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kings 22:19–22 (Berges 1998:95).<sup>26</sup> Habel (1965:297–323) has argued that the call traditions, as reflected in the structure of the calls of Moses and Gideon, are appropriated in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It seems that there are similarities between the call of Isaiah and that of Moses in the book of Exodus. Isaiah's call is based on Moses' call but was altered in the light of Micaiah. The fact that the date of the call is mentioned in 6:1 situates Isaiah in a historical context as Micaiah was also put in a historical context in 1 Kings 22 (O'Kane 1996:42).

In order to understand the sentence 'I saw the Lord' (Is 6:1), we have to understand what it means when it is written in the HB 'to see God'. According to the tradition, it has always been impossible or could even have deadly consequences 'to see God'. Exodus 33:20 echoes this tradition when God says to Moses: 'You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.' However, it may be that this statement in Isaiah embodies another oral tradition as seen in the words of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:19: 'I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him, on his right hand and on his left.' We can also think of Jacob's words: 'I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved' (Gn 32:30; MT 32:31). The matter is similar with Gideon (Jdg 6:22–23)<sup>27</sup> and Manoah (Jdg 13:22–23).<sup>28</sup> From the above, we can construe that Isaiah's statement 'I saw the Lord' is based on the tradition that only a few in Israel were allowed to see God. He thus belongs to the exclusive circle of privileged men who can claim that they have seen God and lived (Knierim 1968:50). It is important to underline that Isaiah saw God, which brings him in close connection to Moses as nobody else has known God face to face like him (Dt 34:10; Ex 33:11).

24. Tull (2010:138) states the possibility that 'according to some recent reconstructions of the chronologies of the kings, Uzziah may have actually outlived his son and died during the reign of his grandson Ahaz, shortly before the crisis depicted in the following chapter. If this was so, it may explain the absence of any reference to Jotham's reign outside of the book's superscription'.

25. See also Berges (2010b:64) and Tull (2010:138).

26. Cf. also Habel (1965:309–310); Knierim (1968:50–51); O'Kane (1996:42); Seitz (1993:54); Sweeney (1996:134–135); Wagner (2006:115–116); Watts (2005:104); Williamson (2002:38).

27. '... and Gideon said, "Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die."'

28. Manoah says to his wife: 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God.'

Isaiah 6 describes a vision in which Isaiah sees the Lord in His majesty sitting on a throne, surrounded by seraphs who proclaim His holiness (Gleicher 2010:213):

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw my Lord seated on a high and lofty throne ... Seraphs stood in attendance on Him ... And one would call to the other, 'Holy, holy, holy! The Lord of Hosts! His presence (glory) fills all the earth!' (Is 6:1–3)

This teophany calls to mind the revelation that Moses received on Mount Sinai.<sup>29</sup> The author of the book of Isaiah reports of the seraphim and of the temple where Isaiah's vision took place: 'The doorposts would shake at the sound of the one who called, and the house kept filling with smoke' (Is 6:4). This scene recalls the scene in Exodus 19:18 (Gleicher 2010):

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln (oven), and the whole mountain trembled violently. (pp. 213–214)<sup>30</sup>

The event on Mount Sinai causes fear, and at the same time, it exercises an eerie appeal (Levenson 1985:15). What we see in the Isaianic text is that the Sinaitic experience is re-enacted in the Temple at Jerusalem (Levenson 1985:122–124).

Isaiah is clearly terrified, as we can see from the description in verse 5:

I cried, 'Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips And I live among a people Of unclean lips; Yet my eyes have seen The King Yahweh of hosts!' (Is 6:5)

The fact that Isaiah regards his lips as 'unclean' causes anxiety. This description brings to our mind Exodus 4:10 where God for the first time reveals to Moses his mission of liberation. Moses laments and protests: 'I have never been a man of words ...; I am slow of speech, and slow of tongue' (Gleicher 2010:214). Divine instructions prepared both Moses and Isaiah to receive the call. Moses was ordered to take off his shoes, as it was a holy place (Ex 3:5), and Isaiah's lips were cleansed before the Holy One (Is 6:6–7) (Habel 1965:311).

We also find allusions to Isaiah's specific task throughout the book and elsewhere in the Old Testament.<sup>31</sup> Isaiah's task is formulated as follows:

Go and say to this people: 'Hear and hear, but do not understand; See and see, but do not grasp.' Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. (Is 6:9–10)

The text most similar to the Isaiah text is Deuteronomy 29:1–4 (MT 28:69–29:3) where Moses begins his covenantal speech (O'Kane 1996:43; Tull 2010:146):

These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the people ... Moses summoned all Israel and said to them 'You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and those great wonders, but to this day Yahweh has not given you a mind to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear'.

29. See also Tull (2010:139).

30. See also Childs (1974:369); Dohmen (2004:69) and Hartenstein (1997:137).

31. O'Kane (1996:43) lists these similarities.

In both texts, Yahweh is the one who prevents the people from seeing, hearing, knowing and understanding. Yahweh speaks through Moses in Deuteronomy, and He speaks through Isaiah in the Isaianic text. Deuteronomy 29:4 states that the people could not interpret and understand the significance of the deeds performed by Yahweh in Egypt and in the desert (vv. 2, 5). Isaiah 6:9–10 states that, as a consequence of the fact that the people did not understand, they were led into exile (vv. 11–12). We hear an echo of Yahweh's words to Moses in his instructions to Isaiah: The first mentioned given in the solemn context of the covenant speech (Dt 29) and the second in the equally solemn context of the prophetic call (Is 6; O'Kane 1996:44). According to Brueggemann (1998:58), the authorisation of the prophetic person has a tremendous impact upon the prophetic book. This narrative account thus claims that the prophetic book can claim a continuing prophetic authority as Isaiah follows in the footsteps of Moses. The authorisation of the book follows the authorisation of the prophet, and therefore, the book continues to speak authoritatively to the faithful.

## Conclusion

The book of Isaiah is complex, and it is problematic to reconstruct the processes of its formation and transmission. If the texts in this book are examined more closely, a multiplicity of dimensions comes to the fore. If we want to discover the distinctive and unique characteristics of the book of Isaiah, we cannot anymore afford the exegetical luxury not to see the book of Isaiah within the wider context of other Hebrew literature, specifically the inner-textual debate with other texts within the Torah. It is an imperative to explore similarities between this book and other biblical traditions. One example would be to establish literary parallels between Moses and Isaiah (cf. O'Kane 1996:50).

In this article, I examined one specific aspect of this book, namely the parallels that exist between its eponymous prophet and the figure of Moses. The deuteronomic depiction of Moses as the first prophet amidst the wilderness generation provides the major thematic force at work during different redactional phases of the book of Isaiah. In these layers, we get to know Isaiah as the prophet who continues the teachings of Moses in his own historical context – hereby enhancing his authority (cf. O'Kane 1996:48). His words contain references to words spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt 32) and even his call (Is 6) echoes that of Moses. The Torah of Moses is thus continued in the words and teaching of Isaiah.

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