

Abraham (Does not) Know(s) Us: An Intertextual Dialogue in the Book of Isaiah

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ABSTRACT

The stance towards Abraham in Isaiah 63:16 seems to be at odds with the high esteem in which Abraham is held in the other texts in the book of Isaiah which explicitly mention him, and other exilic and post-exilic texts. This state of affairs points to an intertextual dialogue between the Abraham texts in the book of Isaiah. The proper name Abraham acts as a signal which alerts a reader to the intertextual relationship. Isaiah 63:16 displaces 29:22, 41:8 and 51:2 from their positions of authority. Trust in Yahweh himself was the only option for the people.

A INTRODUCTION

Abraham was particularly held in high esteem in exilic and early post-exilic times.¹ The people's assertion in Isaiah 63:16a that Abraham does not know them and that Israel does not acknowledge them, is therefore astonishing. The prophet Ezekiel criticises the people remaining in the land after the deportation in 597 B.C.E. for substantiating their claim to the land through a typological alignment with Abraham.² Since Abraham was only one man when the land was given to him, the people remaining in the land believed that, although they were few, they could lay claim to the land.³ The post-exilic prayer in Nehemiah 9⁴ regards God's promise to Abraham as foundational for hope for salvation in

¹ The seven explicit allusions to Abraham in the prophetic corpus all occur in exilic or post-exilic texts, namely Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Jer 33:26; Ezek 33:24; Mic 7:20.

² See Meira Polliack, "Deutero-Isaiah's Typological Use of Jacob in the Portrayal of Israel's National Renewal," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (eds. Henning G. Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 76; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Abraham – a Judahite Prerogative," *ZAW* 120/1 (2008): 51.

³ See Ezek 33:24.

⁴ It is remarkable that the review of Israel's history in Neh 9 does not only begin with Abraham, but that the other patriarchs are not even mentioned. Williamson attributes Neh 9 to the community which remained in Palestine during the exile. Rendsburg traces Neh 9 to an Israelite community that continued uninterrupted in the regions of Samaria and Galilee, regardless of the occupation of their land by the Assyrians and Babylonians and of the deportations of 733, 721, 597 and 586 B.C.E. See Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 63,7 - 64,11. Exilic Lament or Post-exilic Protest?" *ZAW* 102/1 (1990): 56; Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Northern Origin of Nehemiah 9," *Bib* 72/3 (1991): 366. Boda believes that Neh 9 was composed in the earliest part

the present.⁵ With the exception of Isaiah 63:16 the eternal nature of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham was not called into question in Second Temple Jewish literature.⁶ On the contrary, while the people hoped to merit divine approval by repenting and keeping to the terms of the Sinaitic covenant, their positive hope was based on their trust that God would keep the covenant of divine commitment to Abraham.⁷

The stance towards Abraham in Isaiah 63:16 also seems to be at odds with the high esteem in which Abraham is held in the other texts in the book of Isaiah which explicitly mention him.⁸ In 29:22 Yahweh is depicted as the one who redeemed Abraham. Likewise he will redeem Israel. In 41:8 the guarantee is given through the reference to Abraham that the relationship with Yahweh, which was rooted in love, endured despite the exiles' state of distress.⁹ In 51:2

of the restoration period before the appearance of Zerubbabel and Jeshua from the Mesopotamian communities. See Mark J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition. The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9* (Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 1999), 193. On the other hand Oeming regards Neh 9 as an integral part of the Ezra-Nehemiah composition which he dates ca. 450 B.C.E.. See Manfred Oeming, "'See We are Serving Today' (Nehemiah 9:36): Nehemiah 9 as a Theological Interpretation of the Persian Period," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming: Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 582.

⁵ See Mark J. Boda, "Confession as Theological Expression: Ideological Origins of Penitential Prayer," in *Seeking the Favour of God. Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline: Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 40. The story from Abraham to the conquest, when the Abrahamic promise was fulfilled, is told in Neh 9:7-25. Blenkinsopp believes that the story of Abraham, as an important segment of the Priestly History in the Hexateuch, was composed with the purpose of providing those who had survived the disaster of 586 B.C.E. with a religious basis on which they could rebuilt their lives. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History of Genesis," *JBL* 128/2 (2009): 225-241.

⁶ David N. Freedman & David Miano, "People of the new covenant," in *The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. De Roo: Leiden: Brill, 2003), 10-12.

⁷ Israel frequently appeals to Yahweh's faithfulness to the covenant by referring to the fathers, although the fathers are in some texts the generation which experienced the exodus (See Deut 9:27; 1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chr 29:18; Mic 7:20). God warrants his intention to save with the affirmation that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (See Exod 3:6; 6:3; Lev 26:42; Deut 1:8). See also Irmtraud Fischer, *Wo ist Jahwe? Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11 als Ausdruck des Ringens um eine gebrochene Beziehung* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 116.

⁸ Implicit references to Abraham have been identified by various scholars. Echoes of the promise to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3, for example, are frequently identified in the book of Isaiah. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah: Prophet of Universalism," *JSOT* 41 (1988): 86 mentions Isa 44:3-5 in this regard.

⁹ See Jerome T. Walsh, "Summons to Judgment: A Close Reading of Isaiah XLI 1-20," *VT* 43/3 (1993): 363.

the example of Abraham and Sarah is used to demonstrate that God will transform Zion from a wilderness to a garden of Yahweh.¹⁰ If 63:16 reflects the people's disillusion with the promises made to Abraham, as is seemingly the case, it clearly contradicts the other texts in the book of Isaiah which explicitly mention Abraham.

While various themes that occur throughout the book of Isaiah have been identified, some scholars have called attention to the contrasts and even contradictions in the book. Quinn-Miscall notes that the same image is often employed with opposed themes and values.¹¹ Seitz calls Isaiah a book of paradoxical linkages.¹² The contrasting manner in which the patriarch Abraham is treated in Isaiah 63:16 as compared to the other texts in the book of Isaiah which explicitly mention the patriarch, seemingly exhibits one of these paradoxical linkages. One can agree with McCann that the contrasts and contradictions point toward the literary and historical conclusion that the book of Isaiah is a complex unity that developed through time.¹³ This does not mean that the book of Isaiah is a random collection of texts. The redactors shaped the book into a "unified" whole that can be understood in its final form.¹⁴ It will be demonstrated that it is highly probable that 63:16 antedates all the other texts which explicitly mention Abraham, but formed part of a communal lament which was only inserted into the book at a much later stage.

The concept of "intertextuality" provides a way in dealing with ambiguities in texts. Intertextuality refers to the understanding that texts are always related to other texts, deriving their meaning by reference to them. Intertextuality functions not only in the reading of texts but also in their production.¹⁵

¹⁰ See Antoon Schoors, *I am God your Saviour: A Form-critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL-LV* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 164; Roy F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 1976), 158.

¹¹ Peter D. Quinn-Miscall, *Reading Isaiah. Poetry and Vision* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 69.

¹² Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 17.

¹³ J. Clinton McCann, "The Book of Isaiah: Theses and Hypotheses," *BTB* 23 (2003): 90.

¹⁴ See Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets. Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 24-25.

¹⁵ Patricia T. Willey, "The Servant of YHWH and Daughter Zion: Alternating Visions of YHWH's Community," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr.: Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 273-274; Albert Kamp, *Inner worlds: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to the Book of Jonah* (Trans. David Orton; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 86. See also Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7-9. According to Sommer intertextuality is, however, only concerned with the reader or with the text as a thing independent of its author. Despite the fact that there may be advantages to an approach which ignores the author in favor of the reader or a larger system of signification, Sommer rather utilises the model of allusion and influence.

Since the chronology of the texts does not occupy the centre of attention in reader-orientated intertextuality, but the logical and analogical reasoning of the reader in interaction with the text,¹⁶ it seems that this view of intertextuality can be fruitfully applied to the texts in Isaiah which have the proper name Abraham in common. It is the contention of this article that the insertion of the communal lament currently found in 63:7-64:11, resulted in an intertextual dialogue between 63:16 and the other Abraham texts in the book of Isaiah.

Kamp asserts that intertextuality is the clearest in the case of a verbatim or explicit citation from another text. It also occurs when agreements are less clear. The presence of particular lexemes in the text works like a kind of lever that opens already existing cognitive domains. As a number of related textual signals from the text increases, the knowledge evoked from another text will have a growing influence of the ascription of meaning.¹⁷ In Isaiah 29:22, 41:8, 51:2 and 63:16 the proper name Abraham can be taken as a signal which would alert a reader to a possible intertextual relationship. Although ancient readers would rarely read a large book like Isaiah from beginning to end,¹⁸ it remains a possibility that cannot be ruled out.

It will be argued that an intertextual dialogue between Isaiah 63:16 and the other texts that use the proper name Abraham can be observed when the book of Isaiah is read from beginning to end. Since intertextuality also functions in the production of texts, this prospect will also be examined. Each of the focal texts therefore needs to be studied in the context in which it occurs. The assertion of a negative stance towards Abraham in 63:16 should, however, first be validated. It is possible that Blenkinsopp could be correct with his suggestion that the conjunction ׀ in 63:16a introduces a hypothetical condition: If Abraham would not acknowledge the people, Yahweh would?¹⁹ The analyses of the various Abraham texts therefore start with an analysis of 63:16 within its context.

¹⁶ Ellen van Wolde, "Trendy intertextuality?" *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings. Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (ed. Spike Draisma; Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), 43.

¹⁷ Kamp, *Inner worlds*, 86.

¹⁸ See David M. Carr, "Reading Isaiah from Beginning (Isaiah 1) to End (Isaiah 65-66): Multiple Modern Possibilities," in *New visions of Isaiah* (eds. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 214.

¹⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 263.

B ANALYSES OF THE ABRAHAM TEXTS

1 Isaiah 63:16 within its context

Isaiah 63:7-64:11²⁰ should be taken as an independent unit. God is the speaker both in 63:3-6 and 65:1-7. Isaiah 63:7-64:11, on the other hand, is spoken by the people.²¹ Isaiah 63:7-64:11 has no direct connection with the preceding poem in 63:1-6 about the divine anger and vengeance visited on Edom.²² Although 65:1-66:17 seems to be Yahweh's answer to the lament in 63:7-64:11, the main theme of 63:7-64:17, the withdrawal of Yahweh from his people because of their sin, is absent in 65:1-66:17.²³ In addition the term עבדים ("servants") alludes to the community as a whole in 63:17, in contrast to chapters 65-66 where עבדים relates to a group in the community.²⁴ The juxtaposition of 63:7-64:11 with chapter 65 is apparently part of the editorial arrangement of the material in chapters 65-66.²⁵

Isaiah 63:7-64:11 may be divided in the following sections: a historical section (63:7-14); a lament (63:15-19a); followed by an appeal for an epiphany (63:19b-64:4a); a confession of sin (64:4b-6); a final appeal (64:7-8); a second lament (64:9-10) and a conclusion (64:11).²⁶ The wealth of catchwords,²⁷ which characterises 63:7-64:11, points to the cohesion of the pericope.

²⁰ MT 63:19 is divided into two English verses. The Hebrew verse enumeration is used in this paper.

²¹ In Isa 63:7-15 Israel is speaking as "I" and then as "we" in 63:16-64:11. See Quinn-Miscall, *Reading Isaiah*, 156.

²² See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 257.

²³ See Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 81.

²⁴ Although Isa 63:17 and 65:8 are the only places in the Old Testament where the phrase לַמַּעַן עַבְדִּי is attested, they differ in an important aspect. עַבְדִּים has the same broad reference in 63:17 as it often has in chapters 40-48, namely the community as a whole. In 65:8, however, עַבְדִּים refers to a collectivity within the community which claims to be the nucleus of the true Israel. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The servant and the servants in Isaiah and the formation of the book," in *Writing and reading the scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an interpretive tradition. Volume 1* (eds. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 167-170.

²⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 257.

²⁶ See Richard J. Bautch, "Lament Regained in Trito-Isaiah's Penitential Prayer," in *Seeking the Favour of God. Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 86.

²⁷ For instance שם in Isa 63:12, 14, 16, 19; 64:1, 6; עולם in 63:11, 12, 16, 19; 64:3, 4; גאל in 63:9, 16 and אב in 63:16; 64:7.

Isaiah 63:7-64:11 is often compared to communal laments such as Psalms 44, 74, 79 and 89.²⁸ Isaiah 63:7-64:11 does, however, have special features of its own. It expands one part of the community lament: the survey of God's earlier saving acts, into what is almost an independent historical psalm (63:7-14).²⁹ In contrast to Psalm 44, where the people assert that despite great calamity they have not forgotten God or had been false to the covenant, Isaiah 63:10 depicts Israel as a rebel people.³⁰ Williamson³¹ believes that only Psalm 106 is worthy of closer comparison as far as the Psalms are concerned since it also combines a historical recital with a confession in the manner of Isaiah 63:7-64:11. When Nehemiah 9 and Isaiah 63:7-64:11 are set side by side, Williamson sees a number of similarities become apparent. It is, however, noteworthy that Nehemiah 9 lacks any reference to the ruins of Jerusalem.³² More important is the fact that the two laments, Isaiah 63:15-19a and 64:9-10, show vestiges of pre-exilic and exilic laments. The pivotal verb in 63:17, תעה in Hiphil, "you cause us to err," is typical of the prophets of the eighth century (Isa 3:12; 9:15; Hos 4:12; Amos 2:4; Mic 3:5).³³ Isaiah 63:7-64:11 is obviously closer to the exilic laments than to prayers of repentance such as Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9.³⁴

Isaiah 63:15-17 has a concentric structure (ABCCBA), which is defined by the imperatives in verses 15a and 17b (AA), the interrogatives in verses 15b and 17a (BB) and the nearly verbatim correspondence of verse 16a' and 16b' (CC).³⁵ As was mentioned previously, Blenkinsopp thinks that the conjunction ו introduces a hypothetical condition in Isaiah 63:16a.³⁶ However, ו rather refers back to verse 15b. The people's precarious situation is incomprehensible because Yahweh is their father.

²⁸ Aejmelaesus believes that the form and structure of Isa 63:7-64:11 as well as a large part of its language can be explained through parallels in the Psalms. See Anneli Aejmelaesus, "Der Prophet als Klagedliedsänger: Zur Funktion des Psalms Jes 63,7-64,11 in Tritojesaja," *ZAW* 107/1 (1995): 38. Bautch identifies at least seven lexical correspondences to the psalms of communal lament. See Bautch, "Lament regained in Trito-Isaiah's Penitential Prayer," 97.

²⁹ Claus Westermann, *Der Prophet Jesaja. Kapitel 40-66* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 306.

³⁰ See Bautch, "Lament regained in Trito-Isaiah's Penitential Prayer," 92.

³¹ Williamson, "Isaiah 63,7 - 64,11," 56-57.

³² See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 229. The manner in which the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham is described in Neh 9:7, is unique to the Old Testament, namely that Yahweh had chosen Abraham.

³³ Bautch, "Lament regained in Trito-Isaiah's Penitential Prayer," 88.

³⁴ See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 254.

³⁵ Willem A. M. Beuken, 'Abraham weet van Ons niet' (*Jesaja 63:16*) (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach, 1986), 13-14.

³⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 263.

Hanson relates the references to Abraham and Israel to a conflict within the exiled community. He identifies Abraham and Israel with the group that returned from exile under the leadership of the Zadokites. The group protesting in Isaiah 63:7-64:11 is the group that is being excluded from the cult by the normative, Zadokite community.³⁷ One can, however, agree with Williamson that "Israel" in 63:16 is most naturally understood as a reference to the patriarch Jacob, rather than to some contemporary group or party.³⁸ It is improbable that the group that Hanson thinks to be speaking in 63:7-64:11, would surrender the use of the name "Israel" to their opponents. In addition, the issue is not exclusion from the cult, but the destruction of the temple (64:10).³⁹ Böckler argues that the statements regarding Abraham and Israel do not refer to the present time, but to the past. Neither the descent from Abraham and Israel, nor the promises made to these patriarchs were of any benefit when the people were in bondage in Egypt. Yahweh had saved them.⁴⁰ Lau thinks that 63:16 implies that the patriarchs could not achieve anything for the people in the present.⁴¹

Puritsch believes that Isaiah 63:16b points to the cessation of the promises of blessing. The names of the receivers of the blessings, Abraham and Israel, remind of the promises which became fictitious.⁴² The supplicants' situation was proof that Abraham and Israel had ended their solidarity with their descendants.⁴³ Bautch also maintains that Isaiah 63:16 suggests that a covenantal relationship with God does not extend through Abraham to the people. Although the term ברית is absent in 63:7-64:11, Bautch deduces from the use of terms such as חסד and זכר that the text is covenantal. The father-son formula was frequently used when making covenants in the ancient Near East.

³⁷ Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic*, 92-95. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 333 thinks that the cry that Abraham does not know them should be attributed to the "people of the land" who were excluded from cooperation or marriage with the Israelites by Ezra and Nehemiah.

³⁸ Williamson, "Isaiah 63,7 - 64,11," 54.

³⁹ Brooks Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 153.

⁴⁰ Annette Böckler, *Gott als Vater im Alten Testament: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung eines Gottesbildes* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 287; Annette M. Böckler, "Unser Vater," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Pierre van Hecke; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 256.

⁴¹ Wolfgang Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 56-66: Eine Untersuchung zu den literarischen Bezügen in den letzten elf Kapiteln des Jesajabuches* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 297.

⁴² Karl Pauritsch, *Die neue Gemeinde: Gott sammelt Ausgestossene und Arme (Jesaja 56-66). Die Botschaft des Tritojesaja-Buches literar-, form-, gattungskritisch und redaktionsgeschichtlich untersucht* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 153.

⁴³ Pauritsch, *Die neue Gemeinde*, 164.

The repeated call on Yahweh as their father in 63:7-64:11 does, however, not necessarily point to a re-establishment of the Mosaic covenant.⁴⁴

In Deuteronomy 33:9 the verbs *ידע* and *הכר* indicate that Levi broke all relations with his brothers and children. From the use of the same verbs in Isaiah 63:16, Beuken deduces that the declaration that Abraham does not know the people and Israel does not acknowledge them, implies that the patriarchs have denounced their connection with their offspring.⁴⁵ He concludes that the reproach that Abraham does not know Israel, implies that the people had lost the basis for their election as people of God and the related claim to an existence in the land that is blessed by Yahweh. Israel did not turn their back on their ancestor, but their ancestor did no longer regard them as his offspring.⁴⁶

The second statement in Isaiah 63:16 that refers to Yahweh as Israel's father is followed by the testimony that Yahweh had been known from the beginning as their redeemer. Fatherhood normally excludes the need for a redeemer. The close association of the images of Yahweh as father and as redeemer is, however, probable due to the prominence that is given to the exodus tradition in Isaiah 63:7-64:11. In this regard it is noteworthy that 63:16 calls Yahweh: "our Redeemer of old." The time of the exodus was the remote time from which Yahweh is named the people's *גואל*.⁴⁷ Yahweh should take care of Israel because he had always been their father and saviour.⁴⁸ Aejmelaes suggests that the title "Father" could possibly have been taken up from Second Isaiah.⁴⁹ In Isaiah 40-55 Yahweh is frequently designated as Israel's redeemer, highlighting Israel's release from Babylonian slavery.⁵⁰ In the light of the occurrence of the verb *גאל* in Psalm 74, a communal lament, and in Lamentations 3:58 a dependence of Isaiah 63:16 on Second Isaiah's usage is, however, unnecessary.

Despite the fact that Isaiah 63:7-64:11 contains a recital of Yahweh's saving acts in the past (63:8-14), the supplicant has the impression that God is no longer concerned with his people. Their enemies have trampled down the

⁴⁴ Richard J. Bautch, "An Appraisal of Abraham's Role in Postexilic Covenants," *CBQ* 71/1 (2009): 45-47.

⁴⁵ Beuken, 'Abraham Weet van ons niet', 10.

⁴⁶ Beuken, 'Abraham Weet van ons niet', 23.

⁴⁷ The phrase *גאלנו מעולם שמך* alludes to the phrase *לעשות לו שם עולם* in Isa 63:12, which explicitly refers to the exodus event. See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 52. See also Exod 6:6; 15:13. *גאל* refers to the deliverance from the power of Babylon in Isa 43:1, 14; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:26; 51:10; 52:3. It also occurs in 62:12.

⁴⁸ See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 50.

⁴⁹ Aejmelaes, "Der Prophet als Klageliedsänger," 42.

⁵⁰ Dille has demonstrated that the entailment of the *גואל* as the levirate husband is downplayed in Isa 40-55. See Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 78-85.

temple (63:18)⁵¹ and the present situation shows no sign that Israel was the people of God (63:19).⁵² One can thus agree with Blenkinsopp that a sense of alienation from the traditional religious assurances inspired the author to address Yahweh as Father.⁵³ It also explains the absence of references to Yahweh's dealings with the patriarchs in the historical recital in 63:7-14.

It is noteworthy that the statements that Abraham does not know them and that Israel does not acknowledge them, are enclosed by the two statements that Yahweh is Israel's father.⁵⁴ Böckler has demonstrated that the metaphor of God as the father⁵⁵ of the people with the emphasis on God's faithfulness is characteristic of the time of the exile. From the time of the second temple the admonition to be obedient is connected to the use of the metaphor of God as father of the people.⁵⁶ In Isaiah 63:16 God's faithfulness is clearly invoked. In 63:16 the Father-image is not any father-image. It is that of the compassionate father, not the stern and angry father. It is a father-image qualified rather by the mother-image.⁵⁷ It focuses on the closeness of the relation, the bonds of love.⁵⁸

Steck regards the position of Isaiah 63:7-64:11 in chapters 55-66 as problematic. Texts such as 58:12 and chapters 60-62 already promise the reversal of conditions which are lamented by 63:7-64:11. As a result Steck believes

⁵¹ The text of first half of Isa 63:18 is unclear.

⁵² See Böckler, *Gott als Vater*, 278.

⁵³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 262. The mentioning of Israel (Jacob) in Isa 63:16 can be attributed to the fact that he was also a recipient of the divine promises.

⁵⁴ See Judith Gärtner, "...why do you let us stray from your paths..." (Isa 63:17): The Concept of Guilt in the Communal Lament Isa 63:7-64:11," in *Seeking the Favour of God. Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 147-148. Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja, Deel III B* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach, 1989), 20 has also drawn attention to the concentric structure of Isa 63:15-17.

⁵⁵ The metaphor of God as "father" occurs 17 times in the Old Testament. Three of these are in Isa 63:6-64:11. See Deut 32:6; 2 Sam 7:14; Isa 63:16 (x2); 64:7; Jer 3:4; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10; Ps 68:6; 89:27; 103:13; Prov 3:12; 1 Chron 17:13; 22:10; 28:6.

⁵⁶ Böckler, "Unser Vater," 255. In Jer 31:9, for example, the concept אב (*father*) is connected with the guarantee that Yahweh did not only act in Israel's past, but is also taking action in the present.

⁵⁷ Second Isaiah has many expressions of God's motherhood. Yahweh has birth pangs, 42:14; loves Zion as a mother nursing her child, 49:15. See Geir Hoas, "Passion and Compassion of God in the Old Testament. A Theological Survey of Hos 11,8-9; Jer 31,20, and Isa 63,9+15," *SJOT* 11 (1997): 156.

⁵⁸ Hoas, "Passion and compassion of God," 157. Beuken, *Abraham Weet van Ons niet*, 20 finds it remarkable that Israel calls themselves "servants" and not children as one should expect when they called Yahweh their father.

that 63:7-64:11 is concerned with an event from the time of the redaction.⁵⁹ He argues that 63:18 and 64:9-10 do not refer to the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.E., but to Ptolemy I's campaign in Palestine in 302/301 B.C.E.⁶⁰ Steck views 63:7-66:24 as a single composition, which was attached to an earlier edition of the book of Isaiah.⁶¹ Sweeney has, however, persuasively demonstrated that it is doubtful that chapters 65-66 in their entirety were composed as the conclusion of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah 66:5-25 appears to be an expansion of 65:1-66:4. Sweeney attributes 65:1-66:4, with the questions it raises about proper cultic action, to the late sixth century when the Second Temple was built.⁶²

Smith has pointed to the following apparent connections between Isaiah 60:1-63:6 and 63:7-64:11: תפארת with preceding construct forms as well as the verb פאר, are particularly common within chapters 60-62 and 63:4-64:11. Whereas the people complain of the state of Jerusalem in 64:9, 62:3 contains the assurance that it will be a "crown of glory" (עטרת תפארת). The desolation of the temple, the city of Jerusalem and the other "holy cities" dwelt upon in 64:9-10 finds an apparent echo at 61:4. Whereas the "holy cities" (ערי קדש) had become a wilderness, the "ruined cities" (ערי הרב) will now be repaired (61:4). In 63:18 the people bemoan the fact that their enemies have trampled down (בוס) the sanctuary. In 63:6, however, Yahweh tramples down (בוס) Israel's enemy. Smith thinks that it is likely that 63:7-64:11 was the particular lament which was the background of Trito-Isaiah's proclamation of salvation.⁶³ The supposed literary dependence can however be questioned. Literary dependence is only likely when a restricted context has three, at best usual, words in common. Common language, idiomatic expression and marked termini should not be confused with literary dependence.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Odil H. Steck, "Zu jüngsten Untersuchungen von Jes 56,1-8; 63,7-66,24," in *Studien zu Tritojesaja* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 231-233.

⁶⁰ See Steck, "Zu jüngsten Untersuchungen," 238.

⁶¹ Steck, "Zu jüngsten Untersuchungen," 233. Steck finds support for his view in the close correspondence Beuken recognizes between Isa 63:7-64:11 and chapter 59. See Beuken, 'Abraham weet van Ons niet', 9 with regard to the correspondence between 64:4b-6 and 59:9-15a. These correspondences do, however, not necessarily point to the dependence of 63:7-64:11 on chapter 59. Both community laments use vocabulary taken from the same tradition.

⁶² Marvin A. Sweeney, "Prophetic exegesis in Isaiah 65-66," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition. Volume 1* (eds. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 472-473. Sweeney argues that since Isaiah 66:5-25 points to instability and conflict in the eastern Mediterranean, it would appear that this text stems from some point in the 5th century when the Persian empire was severely challenged in this region.

⁶³ Paul A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and authorship of Isaiah 56-66* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 44-47.

⁶⁴ Aejmelaeus, "Der Prophet als Klagegedicht," 32.

The fact that important theological terms – covenant or law – are not explicitly mentioned, points to a relative early date of Isaiah 63:7-64:11.⁶⁵ As was already noted, there are substantial differences between 64:3-64:11 and the late prayers in the Old Testament: In the latter Moses is not associated with the Sea-tradition, but with the giving of the law at Sinai.⁶⁶ Isaiah 63:7-64:11 is close enough to Lamentations to eliminate a late date.⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that Isaiah 63:7-64:11 contains no direct quotation of any part of the book of Isaiah.⁶⁸ 63:18 and 64:9-10 most probably refer to the disaster of 586 B.C.E..⁶⁹ The ceremonies, which according to Zechariah 7:1-17 and 8:18-19, had been held during the exilic period, could have been the *Sitz im Leben* of Isaiah 63:7-64:11.⁷⁰ With the completion of the building of the second temple such liturgies were no longer necessary in their primary setting, but were taken up in the prophetic books and given a wider application.⁷¹ Although 63:7-64:11 cannot be dated with certainty, its final form is probably post-exilic.⁷² There is no compelling reason why 63:16 could not belong to the old, early exilic Psalm that was used in the composition of Isaiah 63:7-64:11.⁷³

Rom-Shiloni has rejected the customary explanation that the communal laments, being pre-exilic or exilic, precede penitential prayers, which are considered to be a later transformation of exilic and mainly postexilic lament literature. She believes that penitential prayers should be evaluated as contemporaneous polemical responses to communal laments. In contrast to the "nonor-

⁶⁵ See Aejmelaes, "Der Prophet als Klageliedsänger," 49.

⁶⁶ See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 253.

⁶⁷ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 265-266 for a discussion of their communalities.

⁶⁸ Aejmelaes, "Der Prophet als Klageliedsänger," 48.

⁶⁹ See John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 193.

⁷⁰ See Böckler, *Gott als Vater*, 279. Hanson, *The dawn of the apocalyptic*, 91 thinks that Isa 63:7-64:11 bears the closest affinities with compositions stemming from those who remained in Palestine.

⁷¹ See Williamson, "Isaiah 63,7 - 64,11," 57-58. Aejmelaes regards Isa 63:7-64:11 as a prophetic text that originated during the period 530-520 B.C.E. The contacts with the Deuteronomistic literature can be attributed to the fact that it originated in the same time and area. See Aejmelaes, "Der Prophet als Klageliedsänger," 49.

⁷² Richard J. Bautch, *Developments in Genre between Post-exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Lament* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 60-61 identifies three strata of Deuteronomistic terminology correlating roughly to the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods. Pauritsch, *Die neue Gemeinde*, 169-171 identifies four strata.

⁷³ See Aejmelaes, "Der Prophet als Klageliedsänger," 42. See also Klaus Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie im Tritojesajabuch. Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 158-159 who believes that Isa 63:7-64:11 was incorporated by a redactor of the book of Isaiah. Bautch, "Developments in genre," 58 attributes Isa 63:16, 17a to a selective hand which has brought the lament up to date with its contemporary, post-exilic milieu.

thodox" milieu of poetic communal laments, penitential prose prayers originated in Deuteronomistic, priestly, and prophetic circles of authors during the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods.⁷⁴ Narrative traditions about Abraham may have been circulating orally from an early time, comparable to the traditions about Jacob in Hosea 12:3-5, 13.⁷⁵ Ezekiel 33:24 does not merely attest to the existence of a pre-exilic tradition about the ancestor Abraham "inheriting" the land,⁷⁶ but suggests the importance of that tradition.⁷⁷ Isaiah 63:7-64:11, with its close bonds to the communal laments, indicates that the Abraham tradition was seemingly regarded as ineffective at least in certain cir-

⁷⁴ Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Socio-ideological Setting or Settings of Penitential Prayers?" in *Seeking the Favour of God. Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline: Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 64-65.

⁷⁵ See Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as paradigm," 23. Matthias Köckert, "Die Geschichte der Abrahamüberlieferung," in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. André Lemaire; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 120-121 recognises an Abraham-Lot narrative in Gen 13, 18, 19 which was located at Hebron. Köckert argues that the fact that Hebron did not belong to the province of Jehud during the Babylonian and Persian times, contradicts a late location of the story. The first part of the narrative, Gen 13, concerns the possession of the land, a theme taken up in Ezek 33:24.

⁷⁶ See John van Seters, "In the Babylonian Exile with J. Between Judgment in Ezekiel and Salvation in Second Isaiah," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-exilic Times* (eds. Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 80. Ezek 33:23-29 shows clear signs of redactional activity. Verses 25-26 are not present in the Septuagint and some witnesses of the *Vetus Latina*. Though *homoioteleuton* is often assumed here, it may be one of the instances where the Septuagint has preserved a shorter edition of Ezekiel (See Meindert Dijkstra, "The Valley of Dry Bones: Coping with the Reality of the Exile in the Book of Ezekiel," *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-exilic Times* (eds. Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 122. In any case, the introduction of verse 27, which presupposes the existence of the temple (See Köckert, "Abrahamüberlieferung," 104), looks like the beginning of the original oracle (Dijkstra, "The Valley of Dry Bones," 122-123). On the other hand it is scarcely feasible to call the population of the country "inhabitants of these ruins" prior to 586 B.C.E.. (See Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Translated by James D. Martin. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 195. The links between Ezek 33:23-24 and 11:14-21 are striking. While 11:15 designates the population left behind as "the inhabitants of Jerusalem", referring to those who had been spared the deportation of 597 B.C.E., 33:23-24 seemingly reflects the post 586-situation referring to those living in these ruins in the land of Israel (See Daniel I. Block, *The book of Ezekiel. Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 258. The insertion of Ezek 33:23-29 into its present position in the composition transferred the quotation to the time after 586 B.C.E. (see Köckert, "Abrahamüberlieferung," 105).

⁷⁷ See Batach, "An appraisal of Abraham's role," 52.

cles.⁷⁸ Isaiah 63:16 might be a polemical utterance directed against the practice of appealing to the patriarchs that seemed to exist in exilic and early post-exilic times. The seemingly "nonorthodox" view of Abraham reflected in Isaiah 63:7-64:14 might therefore point to nonorthodox circles as its origin. Although Second Isaiah refuted the pessimistic theology of Lamentations and other bitter complaints heard after the fall of Jerusalem,⁷⁹ that theology left its mark on the book of Isaiah through the insertion of the communal lament currently attested in Isaiah 63:7-64:11.

In its present setting in the book of Isaiah it is the purpose of Isaiah 63:7-64:11 to portray the people as appealing for mercy to Yahweh. He is described as the approaching divine warrior in 63:1-6.⁸⁰ Instead of appealing to the promises made to Abraham and Israel, the people base their argument on the fact that they know Yahweh as their compassionate father. One might see a "pun" on Isaiah 1:3, "Israel does not know me," in 63:16a.⁸¹ In 1:2 Yahweh is depicted as a parent.⁸² The children (63:8) who rebelled against Yahweh, once again call him "our father" (63:16).

2 Isaiah 29:22 within its context

Isaiah 29:22-24, which opens with a prophetic messenger formula, describes the consequences of Yahweh's intervention on behalf of the house of Jacob. These verses should not only be interpreted against the background of 29:17-21,⁸³ but also against the background of the woe in 29:15, one of six woes that

⁷⁸ See Fischer, *Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11*, 51. The speakers also regarded the Jacob tradition as ineffective since they complain that Israel does not acknowledge them.

⁷⁹ See Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Second Isaiah's coping with the religious crisis: reading Isaiah 40 and 55," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-exilic Times* (eds. Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 104. Blaženka Scheuer, *The return of YHWH: The Tension between Deliverance and Repentance in Isaiah 40-55* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 146 follows Linafelt in arguing that Isa 40-55 stands in dialogue with the exilic national liturgy: In Ps 44, 74, 77, 80, 89 as well as throughout the book of Lamentations, the people call upon Yahweh to respond, while in Isa 40-55 Yahweh answers and calls upon the people to respond.

⁸⁰ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 1988), 91.

⁸¹ See Anthony J. Tomasino, "Isaiah 1.1-2.4 and 63-66, and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 85. In contrast to Isa 1:2 Israel does, however, refer to the patriarch in 63:16, and not the people.

⁸² See Dille, *Mixing metaphors*, 10.

⁸³ Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja. 3. Teilband. Kapitel 28-39* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 1136.

structure the whole of chapters 28-33.⁸⁴ 29:15-16 is directed at the self-willed policy makers. It is remarkable that 29:24, through the reference that those who err in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction, identifies those who from now on will sanctify Yahweh with these self-willed policy makers.⁸⁵

Beuken has emphasised that Isaiah 29:15-24 abundantly draws on vocabulary and themes of Proto-Isaiah, explicitly pointing to the woe-cry concerning Assyria in 10:5-34.⁸⁶ On the other hand, there seems to be a number of allusions in 29:17-21 to texts in Second Isaiah.⁸⁷ That leads to the impression that verses 17-21 are a later addition.⁸⁸ Becker regards verses 22-24 as a supplement to verses 17-21. He views the phrase "who redeemed Abraham" in verse 22 and the word "his children" in verse 23a as glosses to verses 22-24.⁸⁹

By the time the reader who is reading the book of Isaiah from the start reaches chapter 29, he would already have encountered the proper names "Jacob" and "Israel" repeatedly. In the divine title "the Holy One of Israel" the name "Israel" usually has the people as a whole in view. Sometimes it is, however, confined to the group of the poor (29:19) or a remnant of Israel (10:20-23).⁹⁰ When "Jacob" and "Israel" are used either individually or parallel to each other, they either designate the monarchies of Israel and Judah, their respective capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem, or the people of God.⁹¹ Jacob brings the patriarchal narratives to mind and the combination with Israel points to the

⁸⁴ Gary Stansell, "Isaiah 28-33: Blest be the Tie that Bind (Isaiah together)," in *New Visions of Isaiah* (eds. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 70.

⁸⁵ See Willem A. M. Beuken, "Isa 29,15-24: Perversion Reverted." in *The Scriptures and the Scrolls. Studies in Honour of A. S. van der Woude on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (eds. Garzia F. Martinez, Anthony Hilhorst, and Cas J. Labuschagne. Leiden: Brill, 1992), 62.

⁸⁶ Beuken, "Isa 29,15-24," 63.

⁸⁷ Although the tripartite division of the book of Isaiah can no longer be taken for granted, the three major sections into which the book has been divided are still being called First, Second and Third Isaiah. Wildberger mentions the following links between Isaiah 29:17-21 and chapter 35, whose connections with chapters 40-55, have long been recognised. 29:17 is related to 35:2 (and 41:19; 51:3). 29:18 is reminiscent to 35:5 (also 42:16, 18). See Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1138. According to Williamson Isa 35 is from a literary point of view dependent on both First and Second Isaiah. See Hugh G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 214.

⁸⁸ See Uwe Becker, *Jesaja – von der Botschaft zum Buch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 234.

⁸⁹ Becker, *Jesaja*, 234.

⁹⁰ See Reinhard G. Kratz, "Israel in the Book of Isaiah," *JSOT* 31/1 (2006): 109.

⁹¹ Kratz, "Israel in the Book of Isaiah," 111-112.

renaming of Jacob in Genesis 32:29 and 35:10.⁹² The proper name Abraham, encountered in 29:22 for the first time, does however openly call the patriarch to mind. The return of God to his people is a continuance of his earlier saving grace toward them.⁹³

Although it is impossible to point to any specific event in the biblical narratives to which the redemption of Abraham, mentioned in Isaiah 29:22, would allude,⁹⁴ the promise of the land obviously is not in mind. Childs believes that 29:22 is a paraphrase of Yahweh's constant concern for Abraham throughout the patriarchal tradition.⁹⁵ While פדה refers to the return from exile in 51:11, it invokes the exodus in Deuteronomy. According to Deuteronomy 7:8 Yahweh redeemed Israel from Egypt because he loved them and kept the oath he had made to their ancestors. In Isaiah 29:22 פדה is seemingly applied to Abraham with the intention of emphasising that as Abraham was delivered by Yahweh, the house of Jacob would participate in the deliverance.⁹⁶ It is furthermore noteworthy that the name "Jacob" can even be applied to those who proudly defy Yahweh.⁹⁷ The insertion of the word "his children" in verse 23 was apparently an attempt to relate the future salvation with Yahweh's promise of a large posterity to Jacob.

Sweeney has remarked that Isaiah 1-39 is presented in the final form of the book of Isaiah as the preface that looks forward to chapters 40-66.⁹⁸ The reference to Abraham in 29:22 anticipates those in 41:8 and 51:2.

3 Isaiah 41:8 within its context

Isaiah 41:8-13, which encourages Israel not to fear, probably has an actual or imaginary lament of the exiled people as background.⁹⁹ Yahweh promises to help Israel, his servant; Jacob, whom he had chosen; the offspring of Abraham.¹⁰⁰ The adversative *wāw*, which introduces verses 8-13, sets up a contrast

⁹² Kratz, "Israel in the Book of Isaiah," 112.

⁹³ Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament* (Trans. Keith Crim. Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1991), 73-74.

⁹⁴ Possible texts are Gen 12:10 and 20. Extra-biblical traditions describe the deliverance of Abraham from the idolators in Mesopotamia. See Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja. Kapitel 13-39* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 223.

⁹⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2001), 220.

⁹⁶ Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1136.

⁹⁷ See Beuken, "Isa 29,15-24," 64.

⁹⁸ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 7.

⁹⁹ Jürgen van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion. Eine literarkritische und redaktions-geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 54.

¹⁰⁰ John Goldingay, "Isaiah 40-55 in the 1990s: Among other Things, Deconstructing, Mystifying, Intertextual, Socio-critical, and Hearer-involving," *BI* 5/3 (1997): 228 thinks that the audience is invited to see at least both Abraham and Cyrus in the conqueror mentioned in Isa 41:1-4.

with verses 5-7. Several verbal repetitions highlight this contrast.¹⁰¹ While the nations have been bidden to fear in verse 5, Israel is told not to fear in verse 10. The juxtaposition of 41:5-7 and 41:8-13 was, however, not original.¹⁰² 41:14-16 should also be taken as a distinct unit¹⁰³ despite the fact that it reinforces the assurance in 41:8-13 in the final form of the text by emphasising Yahweh's power to save.¹⁰⁴ In 41:8-13 the emphasis is on Yahweh's acts in the past and the present. In contrast 41:14-16 focuses on his acts in the future.¹⁰⁵ The inclusio which is formed through the use of the same divine names and the contrast אֲנִי - אֱתֶה¹⁰⁶ in verses 14b and 16b, testifies to the fact that the call to fear in verse 14a introduces a separate oracle.¹⁰⁷

The extensive introduction in Isaiah 41:8-9 prepares the ground for the promise of assistance by Yahweh. The people should not fear because he was with them. He would destroy all their powerful enemies. The unit is rounded off by a reassurance that returns to the themes of election and support in verses 8-9.¹⁰⁸ The use of the verbs חֲזַק (verses 9, 13), עֲזֵר (verses 10, 13), and אֲמֹץ (verse 10) underlines Yahweh's strength and his assistance to his people.¹⁰⁹

In Isaiah 41:8 Yahweh addresses Israel, his servant; Jacob, whom he had chosen; the descendants of Abraham, his friend.¹¹⁰ The name "Israel" and his description as "Abraham's offspring" show that the figure being addressed in

¹⁰¹ For example עֲזֵר (verses 6, 10, 13) and חֲזַק (verses 6, 7, 9, 13). Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 96 has also drawn attention to other ties between Isa 41:1-7 and 41:8-13. A word play on קָרָא is apparent (verses 4, 9). By juxtaposition Yahweh's power to "call the generations" (verse 4) is connected with him having called Israel (verse 9). Finally, the phrase אֲנֹשֵׁי רִיבֵךְ (verse 11) reminds of the nations in verses 1-7, who appear in the trial against Yahweh (and by implication, his people).

¹⁰² See Karl Elliger, *Deuterijasaja. 1. Teilband. Jesaja 40,1-45,7* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 137.

¹⁰³ Contra Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 2006), 199; Rosario P. Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte: Eine Untersuchung von Jes 40-48* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 136-137.

¹⁰⁴ See Schoors, *I am God your savior*, 47.

¹⁰⁵ See Henk Leene, *De Vroegere en de Nieuwe Dingen bij Deuterijasaja* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1987), 83.

¹⁰⁶ Jan L. Koole, *Jesaja II. Deel I* (Kampen: Kok, 1985), 111.

¹⁰⁷ See Van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence Boadt, "Isaiah 41:8-13: Notes on Poetic Structure and Style," *CBQ* 35 (1973): 25.

¹⁰⁹ See Hendrik C. Spyerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah with Special Reference to the Polemics against Idolatry* (Meppel: Krips Repro, 1976) 69.

¹¹⁰ Boadt, "Isaiah 41:8-13," 23 and Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte*, 139 believe that אֱתֶה refers to זָרַע and not to אֲבֵרָהם.

verse 8 is the personification of God's people.¹¹¹ Although "Jacob" and "Israel" are regularly used in Isaiah 40-55 in parallel,¹¹² the order Israel/Jacob is exceptional.¹¹³ Boadt suggests that the reversal of the order is intentional because the change prepares for the prominence given to Abraham in the emphatic third position as the original recipient of the promise.¹¹⁴ The juxtaposition of the names "Jacob" and "Abraham" makes sense. The promises given to Abraham are transferred to Jacob in Genesis. The second-person forms קראתִּיךָ, החזקתִּיךָ, בחרתִּיךָ and מאסתִּיךָ make it clear that the clauses refer to the addressee and not the patriarchs.¹¹⁵ The perfect forms of the verbs, nonetheless, demonstrate that Yahweh's relationship with his people is not new, but is rooted in the past.¹¹⁶ The phrase קצות הארץ אשר החזקתִּיךָ, which refers to the places in Mesopotamia to which the people of Judah had been transported by the Babylonians,¹¹⁷ also brings the call of Abraham in Haran to mind.¹¹⁸ This association would, however, be lost if Fohrer's suggestion that the phrase אברהם אהבי זרע should be regarded as an addition to the original oracle,¹¹⁹ is accepted.¹²⁰

In the phrase זרע אברהם אהבי, זרע אהבי relates to Abraham, and not to זרע.¹²¹ The Masoretic punctuation of אהבי suggests that Abraham loved Yahweh. The idea of people loving God is not unknown to the Old Testament.¹²² In Isaiah 43:4 and 48:14, however, Yahweh is the subject of the verb אהב.¹²³ In

¹¹¹ Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah. A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Trans. Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 96.

¹¹² Seventeen times. The regular order Jacob/Israel is found in Isa 40:27; 41:14; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1, 5, 21, 23; 45:4; 46:3; 48:1, 12; 49:5, 6.

¹¹³ Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte*, 138, argues that the construction with אשר is not peculiar to Second Isaiah and regards Isa 41:8αβ as secondary. Van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion*, 54 has, however, noted that the construction with אשר is also attested in 43:10αβ, a text that definitely can be attributed to Second Isaiah. Köckert, "Abrahamüberlieferung," 111 believes that 41:8b-9ab should be regarded as a secondary addition to the oracle of salvation.

¹¹⁴ Boadt, "Isaiah 41:8-13," 27-28.

¹¹⁵ See Walsh, "Summons to Judgment," 362.

¹¹⁶ See Yehoshua Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion. A Study of Isaiah 40-48* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981), 107.

¹¹⁷ McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Walsh, "Summons to Judgment," 362.

¹¹⁹ Georg Fohrer, "Zum Text von Jes XLI 8-13," *VT* 5(1955):241-242.

¹²⁰ Conrad has justly criticized Fohrer. See Edgar W. Conrad, *Patriarchal Traditions in Second Isaiah* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982), 130-132. Also Schoors, *I am God your Savior*, 51.

¹²¹ Peter Höffken, "Abraham und Gott, oder: wer liebt hier wen?" *BN* 103 (2000): 18.

¹²² For example, according to 1 Kgs 3:3 Solomon loved Yahweh.

¹²³ See also Hos 3:1; 9:15; 11:1; Deut 4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15. The existence of Israel as people of Yahweh is based on his love. See Antje Labahn, *Wort Gottes und Schuld Israels. Untersuchungen zu Motiven deuteronomistischer Theologie in Deuterjesaja-*

accordance with the Septuagint reading of α' $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\tau\omicron\upsilon$ μου a passive participle¹²⁴ seems to be the original reading. Yahweh loved Abraham.¹²⁵ That implies a more intimate relationship than עָר , the customary word for "my friend."¹²⁶

The intimate relationship between Yahweh and his people is also expressed by Yahweh addressing the people in the second person throughout Isaiah 41:8-13¹²⁷ and him calling them "his servant" (verse 8). Abraham is also called the servant of Yahweh.¹²⁸ In Isaiah 41:8, however, the emphasis is on the servanthood of the people.

Through the reference to Abraham, Israel is assured that their painful fate did not in any way imply the annulment of the promise to Abraham.¹²⁹ On the contrary, as Yahweh took Abraham from the ends of the earth, he will bring the seed of Abraham back to the land from which they were taken into exile. In contrast to Ezekiel 33:24 Isaiah 41:8-9 thus appeals to the Abraham tradition in positive terms.¹³⁰

The oracle in Isaiah 41:8-13 as well as the complementary oracle in 41:14-16, should be read against the background of the complaint against Yahweh in 40:27 that the people's lot was hidden from him. Yahweh assures them in 41:8-13 that he will be with them (verse 10) and destroy their enemies (verses 11-12). It is remarkable that in contrast to 40:27 the people are not only addressed as Israel and Jacob in 41:8, but also as the offspring of Abraham. They could rely on Yahweh, who is depicted as the master of human events in Isaiah 41:1-42:13.¹³¹

4 Isaiah 51:2 within its context

In the oracle of comfort¹³² in Isaiah 51:1-8 the theme of Abraham's call and blessing is picked up in verses 1-2.¹³³ The vocatives in verse 1, which is pre-

buch mit einem Ausblick auf das Verhältnis von Jes 40-55 zum Deuteronomismus (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 141.

¹²⁴ For example Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 100. See discussion in Höffken, "Abraham und Gott," 19-22.

¹²⁵ See Elliger, *Deuterojasaja*, 138.

¹²⁶ Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 97.

¹²⁷ See Gitay, *Prophecy and persuasion*, 109.

¹²⁸ See Gen 26:24; Deut 9:27; Ps 105:42.

¹²⁹ See Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte*, 175.

¹³⁰ See Tiemeyer, "Abraham," 53.

¹³¹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 69-72.

¹³² See Kenneth J. Kuntz, "The contribution of rhetorical criticism to understanding Isaiah 51:1-16," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (eds. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 146.

ceded by the so-called third servant song in 50:4-11, introduce a separate oracle. Although 51:9-16 repeats the motifs of comfort and joy (51:3), the metaphor of the arm of Yahweh (51:5) and the encouragement not to fear a mortal being (51:7),¹³⁴ it is evident that a dramatic shift occurs in Isaiah 51:9. The object of the imperative in 51:9 is no longer the faithful Israel, but the arm of Yahweh.¹³⁵ In 51:1-8 a male audience is addressed in contrast to 51:9-52:12, in which Zion reappears.¹³⁶ It should also be noted that רדפי צדק in 51:1 corresponds with ידעי צדק in 51:7.¹³⁷

Isaiah 51:1-8¹³⁸ can be subdivided into verses 1-3; 4-6 and 7-8.¹³⁹ Each subsection is introduced by a call to listen.¹⁴⁰ Westermann regards verse 3 as a unit in itself which at best should be regarded as a fragment of a hymn of praise.¹⁴¹ The shift from second-person plural address to third person singular address might be a sign of redactional activity.¹⁴² In the present form of the text verse 3 does, however, form an integral part of the subsection, verses 1-3. In each of the subsections in verses 1-8 the call to listen at the beginning of the specific section is followed by an announcement of salvation providing a reason for hearing.¹⁴³ The description of the manner in which Yahweh would comfort Zion, provides the reason for listening to the call in verse 1. Although כִּי in verse 3 are sometimes taken as emphatic,¹⁴⁴ it evidently introduces a temporal

¹³³ Van Seters, "In the Babylonian Exile," 81; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 347. In the light of Gen 22:17 Korpel and De Moor suggest that the rather peculiar choice of the verb חוּל in Isa 51:2 was created by the desire to create a word play with the noun חוּל "sand." See Marja C. A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 481.

¹³⁴ See Stephen Lee, *Creation and Redemption in Isaiah 40-55* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1995), 180.

¹³⁵ Knutz, "Isaiah 51:1-16," 150.

¹³⁶ Willey, "The Servant of YHWH," 285.

¹³⁷ See Jan L. Koole, *Jesaja II. Deel II* (Kampen: Kok, 1990), 114.

¹³⁸ Mettinger notes that a brief glance at scholarly attempts to disentangle the compositional structure of Isa 51-52 is enough to inspire caution. See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "In search of the Hidden Hstructure: YHWH as King in Isaiah 40-55," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretive Tradition. Volume I* (eds. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 146. Knutz, "Isaiah 51:1-16," 166 regards Isa 51:1-16 as a coherent whole.

¹³⁹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 84; Childs, *Isaiah*, 401; John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55. A Literary-theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 418.

¹⁴⁰ Verses 1a, 4a and 7a.

¹⁴¹ Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 189. See also Van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion*, 247-248; Labahn, *Wort Gottes*, 108.

¹⁴² Labahn, *Wort Gottes*, 108 regards verse 3 as a gloss.

¹⁴³ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 84. Isa 51:1-8 might be a redactional construct. See Labahn, *Wort Gottes*, 109.

¹⁴⁴ See Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja, Deel IIB* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach, 1983), 110; Koole, *Jesaja II, Deel II*, 120.

clause: "When Yahweh has comforted Zion, has comforted all her ruins, has made her desert like Eden, her bare valley like the garden of Yahweh, gladness and joy will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of singing."¹⁴⁵

The people addressed in verses 1-3 are apparently disheartened since Jerusalem still lies in ruins.¹⁴⁶ The phrase "pursuers of right" could describe the people who, according to Isaiah 49:14 had said: "Yahweh has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me."¹⁴⁷ They are called upon to look to the rock from which they were cut and to the quarry from which they were hewn, to Abraham, their father, and to Sarah, who gave them birth. In 33 instances in the Old Testament צור is a metaphor of God. However in the context of Isaiah 51:1-3 a reference to Abraham and Sarah seems preferable.¹⁴⁸ Steck relates the metaphor of the rock to Zion since it is frequently associated with a wonderful source of water (Ps 46:5; Ezek 47; Joel 4:18).¹⁴⁹ This argument depends on the notion that Isaiah 51:2 disturbs the coherence between 51:1b and 3. In its present form 51:1-3, however, seems to be a unified whole.

Isaiah 51:2 is the only place in the Old Testament outside Genesis where Sarah is mentioned. This is possibly due to the fact that Yahweh gave Abraham a great offspring despite the fact that Sarah could no more, humanly speaking, have children.¹⁵⁰ Yahweh will likewise transform Zion from a wilderness to a garden of Yahweh.¹⁵¹ Unlike Ezekiel 36:35 it is Zion which will be transformed into a garden of Yahweh, and not the desolated land.¹⁵² A close verbal parallel is discernable between Isaiah 51:2 and Ezekiel 33:24.¹⁵³ In both texts the word "one" is contrasted with a word containing the Hebrew root for

¹⁴⁵ See Korpel & De Moor, *The structure of classical Hebrew poetry*, 481-482.

¹⁴⁶ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 326.

¹⁴⁷ See Goldingay, *The message of Isaiah 40-55*, 419.

¹⁴⁸ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 326; Childs, *Isaiah*, 402; Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 420; Kuntz, "Isaiah 51:1-16," 153; Koole, *Jesaja II. Deel II*, 114; Beuken, *Jesaja IIB*, 109; Schoors, *I am God your Savior*, 161. Baltzer thinks that Deut 32:18 offers a key for an understanding of Isaiah 51:1-2. Yahweh is the rock in Isa 51:1-2 as in Deut 32:18. See Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 346.

¹⁴⁹ Steck, "Jes 51," 84-85.

¹⁵⁰ See Barend J. van der Merwe, *Pentateuchtradities in die prediking van Deuterosejasa* (Djakarta: Wolters, 1956), 113.

¹⁵¹ Schoors, *I am God your savior*, 164; Melugin, *The formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 158.

¹⁵² See Ulrich Berges, "Gottesgarten und Tempel: Die neue Schöpfung im Jesajabuch," in *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten. Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* (eds. Othmar Keel and Erich Zenger; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 81-82.

¹⁵³ This does not necessarily point to one text's borrowing from the other. The verbal parallel may result from common use of a theme (See Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 133).

"many."¹⁵⁴ This is probably the reason why some scholars argue that in Isaiah 51:2 the solitary Abraham is set against his "many" descendants.¹⁵⁵ Although the theme of Zion's repopulation is attested in 49:19-21,¹⁵⁶ 22-23, a line runs from 51:2 (the promise to Abraham) to 51:3 (Zion).¹⁵⁷ The idea of the repopulation of Zion is, at most, in the background.

In Isaiah 51:2 the reference to Abraham acts as a motive of confidence. Just as God brought Abraham from childlessness to a great offspring, so he will transform Zion from a wilderness to the garden of Yahweh.¹⁵⁸ Isaiah 51:1-8 forms part of the larger unit, 51:1-52:12. The latter proclaims the restoration of Zion as the location from which Yahweh will rule.¹⁵⁹ The restoration of Zion is to be expected just as Yahweh had given Abraham a large offspring despite the barrenness of Sarah.

C AN INTERTEXTUAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN ISAIAH 63:16 AND THE OTHER ABRAHAM TEXTS

When the book of Isaiah is read as a whole, it is clear that the various texts, which have the proper name Abraham in common, interact. The redemption of Abraham, mentioned in Isaiah 29:22, anticipates his and Sarah's blessing in 51:2.¹⁶⁰ Likewise the way is prepared for 41:8, which encourages the identification with Abraham. On the other hand, the contrast between 63:16, and the texts which appeal to the Abraham tradition in positive terms, is highlighted. Yahweh's promises made to Abraham and Jacob were no longer to be depended on. Zion was still a desert (64:9). Therefore the people relied on the most intimate relationship between Yahweh and themselves, expressed through the twofold reference to Yahweh as their "Father." The fact that 63:7-64:11 like 41:8-13, calls Israel Yahweh's servant, does not tone down the contrast between 63:16 and 41:8. On the contrary, 63:17 emphasises that Israel, despite being called the servants of Yahweh, was still in a precarious situation. 29:22, 41:8 and 51:2 are not replaced by 63:16, but displaced from their positions of

¹⁵⁴ Janzen's attempt to relate אָחָא in Isa 51:2 to Yahweh is unconvincing since Abraham is obviously the one that was called by Yahweh. See Gerald J. Janzen, "An Echo of the Shema in Isaiah 51:1-3," *JSOT* (1989): 69-82.

¹⁵⁵ See Kuntz, "Isaiah 51:1-16," 154; Koole, *Jesaja II, Deel II*, 119-120; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 327; Tiemeyer, "Abraham," 56; Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, 421.

¹⁵⁶ Koole, *Jesaja II, Deel II*, 119 suggests that אָחָא in Isa 51:2, corresponds with לְבָדִי in 49:21, where Zion laments that she was left without children. However, in 51:3, unlike in 49:21, Zion is not directly addressed, but is merely the city with its ruins.

¹⁵⁷ See Beuken, *Jesaja, Deel IIB*, 110.

¹⁵⁸ See Schoors, *I am God your Savior*, 164; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 125. Spykerboer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 169 argues that the reason for looking up to Abraham and Sarah (Isa 51:1-2) is to be found in the fact that Yahweh will comfort and restore Zion (51:3).

¹⁵⁹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 83-84.

¹⁶⁰ See Stansell, "Isaiah 28-33," 98.

authority.¹⁶¹ 63:16 has the last word in the book of Isaiah as far as the patriarch Abraham is concerned. The impact on the reader of the statement in 63:16 that Abraham does not know the people is that trust in Yahweh himself is the only option. The parallel statement that Israel does not acknowledge the people, in the same way displaces the promise in 58:14 that they will enjoy the heritage of Jacob. Although limitations of space do not allow a thorough analysis, there is in all likelihood also an intertextual dialogue between 63:16 and 1:2-3, where Yahweh is depicted as the parent which Israel does not know.

Steck regards Isaiah 51:2 as a retort to 41:8.¹⁶² When Isaiah is read from beginning to end 51:2 indeed depicts the situation in Zion as still desperate. In 41:8-9, however, the emphasis is on the return from exile in contrast to 51:2-3, which describes the expected transformation of Zion. In addition, the reference to Abraham acts as a motive of confidence both in 41:8-9 and 51:2.

As was noted earlier, intertextuality also functions in the production of texts. Authors do not write in a vacuum of words, but in response to other discourse.¹⁶³ Biblical texts often reworked their precursors when older words were no longer perceived as adequate for an altered situation.¹⁶⁴ Blenkinsopp makes the observation that some passages in Isaiah 56-66 can be shown to relate to passages in chapters 40-55 as commentary to text.¹⁶⁵ In view of the complexity of the book of Isaiah it is, however, doubtful whether the chronological order in which the so-called Abraham texts, was written can be determined. In Isaiah 29:22 the phrase "who redeemed Abraham," is in all likelihood a gloss to 29:22-24, which itself seems to be an addendum to 29:15-21. As far as the references to Abraham in 41:8 and 51:2 are concerned, Labahn is of the opinion that Abraham did not have any salvation-historical significance for Second Isaiah.¹⁶⁶ Various scholars do not regard Isaiah 41:8 and 51:8 as belonging to the original layer of Second Isaiah, but attribute these texts to later redactional layers. Albertz, for instance, attributes 41:8b-9 to the first edition of the Book

¹⁶¹ See Peter D. Miscall, "Isaiah: New heavens, new earth, new book," in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Dana N. Fewell; Louisville, Ky: Westminster / John Knox, 1992), 45.

¹⁶² Odil H. Steck, "Zions Tröstung. Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Jesaja 51,1-11," in *Gottesknecht und Zion. Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Deuterjesaja* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992), 89-90. He thinks that Isa 29:17-24 is probably younger than the layer of 51:1ff.

¹⁶³ Willey, "The Servant of YHWH," 273-274; Kamp, *Inner worlds*, 86.

¹⁶⁴ Willey, "The Servant of YHWH," 275. See James A. Loader, "Intertextuality in multi-layered texts of the Old Testament," *OTE* 21/2 (2008): 391-403 for a recent discussion of the phenomenon of intertextuality in multi-layered texts.

¹⁶⁵ Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah," 95.

¹⁶⁶ Labahn, *Wort Gottes*, 147.

of Deutero-Isaiah dating from around 520 B.C.E..¹⁶⁷ Von Oorschot has suggested the possibility that the reference to Abraham in 41:8 was inserted by the redactional layer of which 51:2 forms part.¹⁶⁸ Labahn regards 51:2 as post-prophetic.¹⁶⁹ If 63:16 belongs to a text that received its current form in the early post-exilic period, there is a strong possibility that it might be the oldest of the so-called Abraham texts in the book of Isaiah.

D CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discomfort which is experienced by some modern scholars with regard to the position of Isaiah 63:7-64:11 within chapters 55-66, testifies to the fact that the former passage is in intertextual dialogues with other texts in the book of Isaiah. As far as the so-called Abraham texts are concerned, it is impossible to determine that the intertextual connections between these texts rose from the intentional use of earlier texts. The "unified" whole into which the redactors shaped the book of Isaiah, nonetheless led to the situation where an intertextual dialogue can be observed between the so-called Abraham texts when the book of Isaiah is read from beginning to end. In this intertextual dialogue between 63:16 and 29:22, 41:8 and 51:2, 63:16 displaces the texts which appeal to the Abraham tradition in positive terms from their former positions of authority. In contrast to 41:8 which encourages the identification with Abraham, and 51:2-3 which announces that the restoration of Zion is to be expected just as Yahweh had given Abraham a large offspring despite the barrenness of Sarah, 63:16 asserts that trust in Yahweh himself was the only option for the people.

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¹⁶⁷ Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile. The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Trans. David Green; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 375-376.

¹⁶⁸ Van Oorschot, Von Babel zum Zion, 54.

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